The Collective Voices of Asian International Doctoral Students in Counseling Psychology in the U.S.: Recommendations for Faculty and Training Programs

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THE COLLECTIVE VOICES OF ASIAN INTERNATIONAL DOCTORAL
STUDENTS IN COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN THE U.S.:
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FACULTY AND
TRAINING PROGRAMS

by

Miki Koyama

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Advisor: James Croteau, Ph.D.

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THE COLLECTIVE VOICES OF ASIAN INTERNATIONAL DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY IN THE U.S.: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FACULTY AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

Miki Koyama, Ph.D.
Western Michigan University, 2009

There is growing interest among scholars to understand the training experiences of international students in applied psychology. Few empirical studies have specifically investigated international doctoral students in counseling psychology. The purpose of the present study was to create an opportunity for the voices of Asian international students in U.S. doctoral counseling psychology programs could be expressed, and to convey their collective voices.

Twelve Asian international students, predominately women from East Asia, participated in two phone interviews. Participants were asked to illustrate their overall training experiences, share helpful and unhelpful aspects of their training, and identify recommendations for faculty and training programs. A phenomenological approach to data analysis was conducted to identify the essence of Asian international students' training experiences in the U.S.

Two main findings emerged. First, participants highlighted the significance of understanding Asian international student training experiences. Participants hoped that faculty would have understanding of: the significance of peer relationships, the impact of Asian cultural backgrounds, their internal adjustment and acculturation processes, the
experience of using English as a second language, the impact of racism, and financial concerns related to training. The second main finding revealed specific culturally sensitive behaviors that participants desired from faculty including: listen to Asian international students’ voices, cultivate positive faculty-student and supervisor-supervisee relationships and interactions, search for cross-culturally sensitive ways to accommodate Asian international students’ unique needs, address the applicability of U.S. counseling psychology training to other cultures, address career development issues, appreciate Asian international students’ strengths and resiliency, and recognize the benefits of recruiting Asian international students.

Findings of the present study provide a valuable opportunity for faculty to listen to Asian international students’ candid voices about their overall training experiences. Notably, almost all of the participants expressed hesitations about communicating their honest voices to faculty, and the majority of participants stated that they had never given feedback or recommendations about their training experiences to faculty prior to this study. Thus, data that emerged from this study provide new and rarely revealed insights, as well as useful implications for improving the training experiences of Asian international students in counseling psychology.
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CHAPTER I

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the late 20th century, multiculturalism has been an important and fast-growing movement in the counseling psychology field in the United States (Pedersen, Draguns, Lonner, & Trimble, 1996). Advocating and promoting diversity has been one of the essential values for the field of counseling psychology (Howard, 1992). As a result, many counseling and psychology training programs in the U.S. have been committed to increasing the number of students they admit who have diverse demographic backgrounds, such as nationality, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation (Chung, 1993; Gutierrez, 1982; McNeil, Hom, & Perez, 1995). Currently, approximately 6% of students in doctoral psychology programs are nonresident aliens or international students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008). International students contribute to diversity in counseling psychology programs by bringing different cultural values and perspectives, experiences, and ideas as well as diverse social, linguistic, spiritual, and political backgrounds (Chung, 1993; Nilsson & Anderson, 2004). The presence of international students can stimulate awareness about diverse perspectives in the world, and in turn, can foster cross-cultural understanding (Rai, 2002).

The Definition of International Students

Paige (1990) defines international students as, “...individuals who temporarily reside in a country other than their country of citizenship...in order to participate in international educational exchange as students” (p. 162). That is, international students
are living in a foreign academic setting for the purpose of attaining their educational goals (Thomas & Althen, 1989). “Regardless of their diverse cultural, social, religious, and political backgrounds” (Mori, 2000, p. 137), international students share “unique” characteristics because of their differing cultural backgrounds and status as a temporary resident (Thomas & Althen, 1989).

The Characteristics of Asian International Students

The majority of international students in the United States come from East and South Asia. Approximately 59% of all international students are from East and South Asia (Chin, 2009). In 2008-09, students from India (15.4%) consisted of the largest subgroup of international students, followed by China (14.6%), South Korea (11.2%), Japan (4.4%), and Taiwan (4.2%) (Chin, 2009). Even though Asians “are made up of physically and culturally diverse groups with different languages, customs, and values” (Min, 1995, p. 25), Constantine, Kindaichi, Okazaki, Gainor, and Baden (2005) claimed that they share certain “fundamental cultural similarities” (p. 163). Sociolinguists, Scollon and Wong-Scollon (1990) also observed that even though there is rich diversity within Asians, “when it comes to educational settings there is some commonality among ‘Confucian Asians,’ … includ[ing] Taiwanese, Mainland Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Singapore[n]s, and residents of Hong Kong” (as cited in Liberman, 1994, p. 175).

Several researchers underscore that Asian international students are more likely to experience adjustment difficulties and acculturative stress than non-Asian international students (Abe, Talbot, & Geelhoed, 1998; Althen, 1995; Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986;
Yang and Clum (1995) hypothesize that greater adjustment difficulties are due to the great cultural distance between Asian and U.S. cultures. Paige (1993) claimed that “it is not cultural similarities which challenge us, but cultural differences. And the greater those differences in value orientations, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, patterns of thinking, and communication styles, the more challenging and stressful the intercultural immersion will be (p. 5).” Several researchers highlight that the larger the degree of cultural discrepancy, the more likely international students are to experience adjustment difficulties (Heggins, III, & Jackson, 2003; Hull, 1978; Huntley, 1993; Searle & Ward, 1990; Sheehan & Pearson, 1995; Wan, Chapman, & Biggs, 1992; Ying & Liese, 1990). In addition, Asian international students may prefer the cultural values and practices of their own nationality as well as prefer to use their first language, which make their adjustment to the U.S. difficult (Sadowsky & Plake, 1992). Consequently, many Asian international students may be challenged by the unfamiliar educational system, academic demands exacerbated by use of non-native language, financial pressure, language difficulties, homesickness and loneliness, perceived non-assertiveness, individualistic and competitive environment, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination (Lin & Yi, 1997). Given the broad range of typical challenges faced by Asian international students in particular, it is essential for training programs to identify and address the needs of this international student group.
The Purpose and Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study is threefold: (a) to create an opportunity in which voices of Asian international students in APA-accredited doctoral counseling psychology programs in the U.S. are heard; (b) to describe and understand the training experiences of Asian international students; and (c) to present recommendations to counseling psychology programs in regards to providing cross-culturally sensitive and effective training and support for current and prospective Asian international students. Findings from this study will increase awareness among training program faculty members regarding Asian international students' overall training experiences. Results will illuminate Asian international students' suggestions and recommendations for training programs and provide examples of helpful training interventions.

The objective of this chapter is to review the relevant theoretical and empirical literature on the training needs and concerns of Asian international students in counseling psychology programs. Due to the limited number of articles specific to Asian international students in counseling psychology programs, the broader literature on the academic, social, and psychological adjustment of international students in general or across various academic disciplines will be reviewed for the purpose of obtaining information which can be applied to Asian international students' training needs in counseling psychology programs. Additionally, this review draws upon the literature focusing on international students in counselor education, psychiatry, and social work programs.
Thus far, research and scholarship have identified a variety of general training issues pertinent to international students from diverse countries and who represent a variety of disciplines. The main focus of this study is international students from Asian countries. The main areas that have been researched or discussed as influential to Asian international students' academic adjustment include (1) adapting to cultural differences between Asian and U.S. academic environments, (2) Asian students' language proficiency, (3) social support, (4) financial concerns, (5) career needs, and (6) experiences of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination.

Although limited in number, scholars and researchers have begun to explore training issues relevant to international students enrolled in counseling psychology programs or similar mental health disciplines. Scholarship and research in mental health disciplines are reviewed in a seventh section, Asian international counseling psychology student training issues. The following sections of the literature review are organized in seven categories, each reviewing the theoretical literature as well as empirical evidence when available. The major sections are often not completely independent from one another and thus there are overlaps in content. This chapter focuses mainly on Asian international students' experiences as learners. However, Asian international graduate students often also find themselves in the role of teaching assistants or instructors in order to fund their education. Because the presence of a teaching assistant may not be as common in other countries (Bailey, 1984, cited in Plakans, 1997), Asian international students may not be familiar with role expectations. Therefore, when appropriate, this chapter also addresses Asian international students’ experiences as teaching assistants.
Adapting to Cultural Differences Between Asian and U.S. Academic Environments

A transition from familiar to unfamiliar learning environments can pose a variety of academic challenges. As Asian international students enter graduate programs in the U.S., one of the primary issues they encounter is a successful adjustment to the new educational system and its culture. Many scholars recognize that the novelty of, and unfamiliarity with, the U.S. academic culture, environment, and system can create challenges to Asian international students' academic adjustment (Anderson & Powell, 1991; Aubrey, 1991; Chung, 1993; Constantinides, 1992; Garner, 1989; Gulgoz, 2001; Huntley, 1993; Johnson, 1997; Kaikai, 1989; Khoo, Abu-Rasain, & Hornby, 2002; Lin & Yi, 1997; Robinson, 1992; Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998; Thomas & Althen, 1989). The learning experiences that are familiar and expected in Asian countries may differ significantly from the learning experiences in the U.S. Hence, due to great cultural differences between their previous and new learning/educational environments, many Asian international students may find it challenging to adjust to the new academic environment (Chung, 1993; Khoo, Abu-Rasain, & Hornby, 2002; Lin & Yi, 1997).

Anderson and Powell (1991) observe that people generally perceive the familiar learning environment as representative of, or a model for, what a learning environment should be. Although “these culturally based environmental images do not generalize (p. 208),” each student brings expectations and beliefs about educational practices from his/her previous learning environment into his/her new setting. Every aspect of an educational system and practice, such as a teaching method, a pattern of classroom
interactions/communications, and a purpose of education, reflect values of a particular culture (Anderson & Powell, 1988). Different cultures endorse different classroom behaviors and practices. Thus, Asian international students have established a set of culturally based assumptions and expectations about classroom culture, behaviors, and practices prior to arriving in the U.S. Anderson and Powell (1991) underscore the importance of recognizing cultural differences in various educational settings and that there is no one absolute or superior educational system and practice. The following three subsections identify important aspects of cultural differences between Asian and U.S. educational settings, and illustrate how these differences impact Asian international students in the U.S. There are overlaps among these subsections.

*Power Distance Between Teachers and Students*

The “power distance” between teachers and students differs across cultures (Hofstede, 1986, p.307). Scholars have observed that Asian students come from hierarchical or teacher-centered educational systems, which endorse a great power distance between teachers and students (Chung, 1993; Crittenden, 1994; Skow & Stephan, 1999). The status of teachers in Asia is markedly higher than that of students (Skow & Stephan, 1999). Constantinides (1992) argues that in Asian cultures, teachers are often seen as “authority or parental figures” (p. 8). On the contrary, U.S. students are accustomed to egalitarian, student-centered educational systems, which endorse a small power distance between the teacher and students (Crittenden, 1994; Skow & Stephan, 1999). In U.S. learning environments, status differences between teachers and students
are much more relaxed. Indeed, teachers and students are considered equal partners in the learning process in the U.S. (Skow & Stephan, 1999). A great power distance is associated with the culturally determined learning patterns that traditional Asian societies have adopted, whereas a small power distance is linked to the learning pattern that U.S. society has adopted. Skow and Stephan (1999) assert that international graduate students from Asia often encounter difficulty making a transition to the egalitarian, student-centered classrooms in the U.S. Furthermore, research also indicates that making a shift from Asian to U.S. learning environments can be difficult for many Asian international students. In a focus group of Taiwanese graduate students studying in the U.S., participants described their difficulty adjusting from a large to a small power difference between teachers and students. Specifically, participants perceived that adapting to a more “equalized” power difference in the U.S. was one of their greatest and most significant difficulties (Swagler & Ellis, 2003). For instance, these participants reported that communicating face to face with their teachers was a new struggle as international students in the U.S.

Adapting to a new power differential between students and teachers is also an issue for Asian international students when they are in the role of teaching assistants. Scholars have argued that Asian international teaching assistants (ITAs) may face challenges in U.S. classrooms due to having dissimilar educational experiences from U.S. students (Bernhardt, 1987). Crittenden (1994) claims that U.S. undergraduates complain about Asian ITAs’ “god-like,” aloof and arrogant attitudes toward students (p. 4). For instance, a Chinese ITA may not make eye contact with his/her students in the classroom.
in order to maintain an “appropriate” social distance between the instructor and students (Christy & Rittenberg, 1988; Skow & Stephan, 1999). Yet, the U.S. students may perceive the Chinese ITA’s nonverbal behavior as signs of disinterest and rudeness.

Similar problems that Asian ITAs experience were found in an ethnographical examination of Chinese ITAs (Xia, 2000). Xia found that Chinese ITAs experienced conflicts due to differences between Chinese and U.S. teacher-student power dynamics. Chinese ITAs in the study recognized that the power distance between teachers and students in the U.S. was different as they perceived it as “reversed,” compared to that in China; however, their teaching behaviors were still very much influenced by their Chinese cultural practice. For instance, Chinese ITAs reported maintaining the distance with their undergraduates through avoiding eye contact and addressing their students by their full names. They also reported asserting their authority in the classroom by frequently using imperative phrases as well as absolute, definitive tones. In a case study, Jenkins (2000) found that according to faculty’s perspectives, ITAs’ “culturally different behavior had ‘turned off students’ because they did not conform to undergraduates’ expectations” (p. 492).

Classroom Norms

Transmission of Knowledge

How knowledge is transmitted in classrooms varies across cultures. In hierarchical or teacher-centered educational systems in Asia, one-way classroom communication is a salient characteristic (Crittenden, 1994). Anderson and Powell
(1991) claim that “in traditional Asian societies, wisdom comes with age and all important learning is” through “older people disseminat[ing] their knowledge to younger, less experienced, and less knowledgeable individuals” (pp. 209-210). Kuroda (1986) states that in Asian learning situations, the transmission of information is always “unilateral” from teachers to students because education is considered something to be taught by teachers. Chung (1993) concurs that it is common for Asian students to receive “one-way lecturing” from teachers in educational settings (p. 57). Scollon and Wong-Scollon (1991) have observed that in Asian classrooms, conversation topics are always introduced by teachers. Within Asian classroom cultures, it is disrespectful for students to directly introduce topics because it implies that teachers have failed to “intuit” the needs of students (p. 121). In Asia, a teacher is considered “the repository of truth” (Constantinides, 1992, p. 8) and “the dispenser of knowledge” (Jenkins, 2000, p. 480). Hence, Asian students, who come from highly authoritarian educational systems, expect that “truth” comes from teachers since it is not perceived as appropriate for students to question teachers who are considered “the knower[s] and transmitter[s] of truth” (Constantinides, 1992, p. 14). In Asian classrooms, teachers’ knowledge should not be questioned by students (Xia, 2000).

In the U.S., knowledge is not merely passed down from teachers to students. Information may be shared, generated, discussed, and challenged through dialogue among the teacher and students. Unlike formal learning atmospheres in Asia, U.S. classrooms offer a more relaxed and informal learning environment where there is a small power distance between teachers and students (Gulgoz, 2001). Anderson and Powell (1991)
claim that in the U.S., knowledge is considered to be relative and negotiable by teachers. “Knowledge is [also considered to be] better generated in Socratic dialogue than passively handed down” by teachers in Western societies (Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991, p. 121). U.S. society has adopted a learning pattern which allows and encourages younger people with more updated knowledge to contribute to the learning of older members of the society (Skow & Stephan, 1999). Younger students are also allowed and encouraged to inform or even disagree with older teachers (Anderson & Powell, 1991).

In the U.S., it is not perceived as disrespectful if students express opposing views from the teacher’s (Skow & Stephan, 1999). Equality and two-way classroom communication are prominent characteristics of classrooms in the U.S., which embrace egalitarian or student-centered educational systems (Skow & Stephan, 1999). The expectation in egalitarian classrooms is that teachers and students are to be equally involved in the learning process (Robinson, 1992; Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991). Indeed, Asian international students in Liberman’s (1994) qualitative study identified that learning in U.S. classrooms involves the encouragement of classroom discussion including criticism of professors’ views, the emphasis of critical analysis, and the intimacy between students and professors.

Cultural differences between Asian and U.S. styles of knowledge transmission may impact Asian international students’ classroom behaviors. As students and learners, Asian international students may find it difficult to challenge teachers’ knowledge. Based on her teaching experiences, Tyler (1995) asserts that even if Korean students think that a teacher is wrong, they would not dare to question her/him because it would be
embarrassing for both parties. Korean students are unlikely to even ask questions in class “because to do so is thought to be an indication that the teacher somehow failed in her/his responsibility to anticipate the students’ needs” (p. 140). As teaching assistants, Asian ITAs may feel pressured to provide “the truth” and may feel uncomfortable admitting their mistakes. In an ethnographical examination of Chinese ITAs, one participant reported believing that as a teacher, he must disseminate “right” knowledge and should not admit his own mistakes in front of his students since he would lose face (or credibility and authority) (Xia, 2000).

Classroom Communication

How classroom communication takes place differs across cultures. Scholars have observed that in Asian countries, teachers are mostly in charge of classroom communication and interactions, while students are expected to respect and defer to authority figures (Chung, 1993; Crittenden, 1994; Hofstede, 1986; Skow & Stephan, 1999). Asian students tend to express their deference to teachers by “silent displays of attention” (Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991). Jenkins (2000) states that in China, “…the teacher controls the classroom and does not expect student participation or interaction” (p. 480). As a result, students in teacher-centered educational systems come to expect the teacher to initiate communication and invite them to speak up in class (Hofstede, 1986).

Research supports that authoritarian teachers’ expectations are well-embedded in Asian students’ behaviors. In a case study, a Taiwanese graduate student shared that not challenging a teacher was so ingrained in his personality that he would never consider

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initiating conversation with his professors. In Asia, this student was never required to interact with professors (Angelova & Rizanntseva, 1999). In a quantitative study of classroom interaction patterns among international students, Asian students in ESL classes used “bidding,” or signaling teachers to express their desire to speak before starting class discussion more often than non-Asian students (Sato, 1982). Sato concludes that Asian students’ class participation depended upon teachers’ solicitation because of the students’ strong felt need to obtain permission from teachers.

Asian students are accustomed to classroom behaviors such as sitting in class quietly and taking verbatim lecture notes, as well as learning styles such as memorizing, reproducing/repeating materials taught by teachers, and solely relying on lecture notes for examinations (Aubrey, 1991; Garner, 1989; Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998). In Asian academic environments, students are not encouraged to actively participate and speak up in class (Garner, 1989; Huntley, 1993). Rather, the tasks for students are to memorize, accept, take in, and absorb knowledge without questioning, challenging, or disagreeing with teachers (Constantinides, 1992; Skow and Stephan, 1999). Since rote learning is endorsed in school environments in their home countries, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese students may have difficulties expressing their opinions, asking questions, and opposing teachers’ point of views (Johnson, 1997). Due to Asian learning patterns, Asian students are not attuned to the idea that class discussion is a mode of learning, and may not consider their classmates’ comments as being valuable (Constantinides, 1992).

Classroom communication takes place very differently in the U.S. compared to Asian countries. Teachers in egalitarian or student-centered educational systems are
perceived as facilitators and collaborators of class interactions (Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991; Skow & Stephan, 1999). Egalitarian teachers expect students to initiate communication, engage in two-way interactions with teachers, and to speak up spontaneously in class (Hofstede, 1986; Skow & Stephan, 1999). Research indicates that meeting expectations of egalitarian teachers may be particularly difficult for Asian international students. In a quantitative study of classroom interaction patterns among international students, Sato (1982) found that Asian students in ESL classes were less likely than non-Asian students to initiate classroom discussions without teachers' invitations. Asian students took significantly fewer speaking turns and took fewer initiatives to participate in class discussions than non-Asian students. Notably, the Asian students always responded to direct/personal invitations from the teachers, yet the teachers called upon Asian students significantly less than the non-Asians.

In a student-centered system, U.S. students are expected to debate, challenge study materials and/or others' point of views, and engage in independent and critical thinking and learning (Constantinides, 1992; Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998; Skow & Stephan, 1999). Additionally, U.S. students are encouraged to learn from their peers (Skow & Stephan, 1999). Anderson and Powell (1991) point out that lively class discussions play an important role in the U.S. egalitarian learning environment. U.S. students are permitted to freely and openly ask questions and are expected to actively participate in class discussions (Gulgoz, 2001). Scholars underscore the importance of active class participations and discussions in the U.S. classrooms, especially in graduate programs (Aubrey, 1991; Constantinides, 1992).
Research supports that an egalitarian mode of learning poses challenges to many Asian international students. Lee (1997) asked international graduate students from a variety of disciplines to identify the major problems they encountered in U.S. classrooms. Participants reported that their adjustment to U.S. learning environments was challenging because they were required to actively interact with professors and express their thoughts clearly and explicitly. In Liberman's (1994) qualitative study, Asian international students expressed that they appreciated new opportunities in the U.S. to ask questions, think critically, express their opinions, engage in classroom discussion, interact with professors, and challenge professors' opinions. However, these students also reported that they found participating in class discussions difficult due to a lack of experience and practice in class participation.

Being unaccustomed to U.S. style of classroom communication challenges Asian international students not only as students, but also as teaching assistants/instructors. Crittenden (1994) argues that some Asian international teaching assistants are criticized by U.S. undergraduates for handling "questions from students poorly, becoming flustered, actively discouraging questions, or giving vague, confusing responses to student requests for clarification" (p. 4). In a phenomenological examination, while international teaching assistants found active teacher-student verbal interactions in U.S. classrooms positive, they felt "unnecessarily challenged" by their U.S. undergraduates (Ross & Krider, 1992, p. 284). These Asian teaching assistants reported feeling ridiculed, disrespected, or tested for their knowledge when U.S. students asked questions.
Cultural Values and Knowledge in Classroom Communication

Scholars have recognized that differing cultural values are fostered by Asian and U.S. learning environments (Gulgoz, 2001; Lin & Yi, 1997). While Asian academic environments place an emphasis on cultural values, such as collectivism, collaboration, harmony, deference for authorities, patience, and modesty, the U.S. academia promotes values, such as individualism, competition, equality, informality, pragmatism, personal right, and assertiveness (Lin & Yi, 1997; Robinson, 1992). Robinson (1992) claims that Asian international students may be unfamiliar with salient yet implicit values and assumptions of the U.S. classroom culture. Robinson points out that these values are reflected through “the emphasis on independent learning and thinking and individual responsibility” (p. 4), the grading system utilizing a percentile curve, open and informal relationships between teachers and students, and the direct reasoning style, in which “the ‘point’ should be stated clearly by the writer/speaker” (p. 10). Due to the discrepancy between the two cultures, Asian international students may feel uncomfortable with the nature of the U.S. classrooms (Lin & Yi, 1997). For example, in Constantine et al.’s (2005) qualitative study, some Asian international female students reported encountering greater overt competition in the U.S. than in Asia.

Some scholars have attributed Asian international students’ hesitations in class participation to their cultural values (Garner, 1989; Johnson, 1997; Lin & Yi, 1997). Asian cultural values (e.g., an importance of maintaining harmony, being deferential, and respecting authorities) may contribute to Asian international students being less likely to assert their opinions or disagree with others, especially those in authority. Since being
outspoken, candid, and direct is considered offensive, they may find it inappropriate or even disrespectful to challenge or disagree with their teachers. Kao and Gansneder (1995) sought to learn why some Asian international students are reticent to participate in class discussion. Problems speaking English and being less assertive were related to speaking up less in class. Kao and Gansneder believe that certain Asian cultural traditions deter students from expressing opinions or challenging teachers.

Some scholars and researchers have pointed out that limited knowledge of U.S. culture and society may impact international students’ understanding of lectures and classroom discussions. Coleman asserts that lack of “a common body of social and cultural knowledge” about the U.S. is a big problem since faculty often incorporate “colloquial expressions or references to domestic politics, events, history, figures, or even comic strips, movies, and songs” in their lectures (p. 56). In Lee’s survey (1997), international students reported that differing cultural backgrounds could be a hindrance in the classroom especially when professors explain concepts through “‘Americentric’ examples” (p. 95). International teaching assistants (ITAs) in Ross and Krider’s (1992) qualitative study reported feeling poorly informed about the culture of a U.S. university and overall U.S. culture prior to teaching in U.S. classrooms. In addition, they were concerned about their inability to draw examples from U.S. culture to explain concepts. For Asian ITAs, the complexity of U.S. culture (i.e., subcultures and social issues within the subcultures) posed challenges. One ITA reported feeling incompetent as a teacher. Another ITA reported assuming the role of the facilitator when U.S. students discussed unfamiliar subcultures.
Implicit Rules of Classroom Communication

Implicit rules that govern classroom communication vary across cultures. Asian international students may encounter challenges when they are unaware of the implicit rules of U.S. classrooms (Archer, 1994; Robinson, 1992; Stoddard, 1986). Archer (1994) asserts that every culture has covert or implicit rules, which people often take for granted and assume that everyone else should know the same. Hence, these “unconscious rules” can create misunderstandings among individuals from various cultures. Stoddard (1986) states that “members of every cultural group share a common knowledge based on the defining characteristics of the community” (p. 123). Stoddard explains that it is redundant to make the shared knowledge explicit when a member of a particular group interacts with fellow members. Therefore, in order to eliminate this redundancy, the shared information is made implicit or merely taken for granted. Robinson (1992) observes that “American students and teachers share certain unstated values, assumptions and expectations about classroom behavior and practice...The problem for international students is that often the assumed knowledge or context is implicit rather than explicit” (pp. 3-4). Some examples of implicit classroom rules include how to take turns, how to start/interrupt conversations, and how to approach professors during their office hours (Archer, 1994). International students may not be aware that actively participating in class discussion, asking questions, thinking critically, and expressing creative ideas are essential behaviors of students in the U.S. classrooms (Robinson, 1992). These behaviors are critical for class participation and may ultimately impact the teacher’s determination of their grades. Moreover, “international students may be accustomed to different signals
of getting the floor, backchanneling during a conversation (nodding, confirming ‘uh-uh’s) and maintaining eye contact while listening,” which make it difficult for these students to participate in discussion even if they wish to do so (Robinson, 1992, p. 12).

Stoddard argues that keeping a shared knowledge implicit creates problems for individuals from another cultural group, such as international students in the U.S. because “they are excluded from fully understanding what they read or hear” (p. 123). Therefore, it may be difficult for international students to follow lectures and discussions and to comprehend reading materials because they have not acquired sufficient cultural knowledge to understand implicit information. “[W]hat is not explicit may be non-interpretable to non-native speakers because they have not acquired appropriate knowledge frames (Minsky, 1975, as cited in Stoddard, 1986) for particular aspects of the unfamiliar culture, or the knowledge frames they do have are inadequate” (p. 123). International students “need to understand the importance of what is not stated, as well as what is stated” (p. 124).

Robinson’s (1992) study (as cited in Archer, 1994) on classroom communication and interactions found that there is a striking difference in covert cultural rules between U.S. and Asian students. Robinson recognizes that U.S students have learned to identify appropriate interaction patterns with their teachers in their earlier educational settings (i.e., from grade school to high school). Thus, by the time they enter the university, they are capable of unconsciously engaging in expected interaction patterns with their professors. U.S. students are familiar with “specific rules governing which questions to ask, when to ask them, and how to ask them” (as cited in Archer, 1994, p. 80). According
to Robinson, Asian international students are accustomed to functioning by different implicit rules. In their home countries, these students were used to less verbal interaction patterns with their teachers. For instance, Asian international students had learned to make eye contact when “bidding” for a turn in classrooms. Robinson underscores that being unaware of covert cultural rules, which govern classroom communication, is a hindrance to successful learning and teaching.

*Styles and Standards of Communication*

Styles of oral and written communication differ across cultures. Fox (1996) states that communication strategies are “so basic to our conception of ourselves, learned so early and internalized so thoroughly that we hardly consider them cultural at all, but rather ‘effective communication’ or ‘good writing’” (pp. 1-2). Yet, research indicates that styles of as well as standards for good oral and written communication are distinctively different between Asian and U.S. academic environments (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999; Fu & Townsend, 1998).

*Asian Style of Communication*

In Asia, a primary goal of oral and written communication is effective listening and interpretation (Fox, 1996). “Indirect forms of discourse” are preferred, “the goals of the group” are promoted, and “ancient knowledge and wisdom” are valued in Asian communication (p. 1). Contextual, circular, inductive, and reader/listener responsible understanding (i.e., audiences or receivers of information mainly being responsible for
understanding messages) are salient characteristics of Asian communication. Stewart and Bennett (1991) describe the style of Asian communication as “contextual”. That is, the task of the speaker is to provide the context in which a conclusion can be attained: the listener’s job is to deduce the conclusion implied by the context. Thus, communication relies “more on the context of the situation than its content for meaning” (Johnson, 1997, p. 51). Johnson (1997) claims that Chinese style of oral and written communication is “circular,” which encourages individuals to “write and speak discursively [by] coming back to the same points to show the interrelatedness of things” (p. 51). Scollon and Wong-Scollon (1991) describe Asian conversation pattern as “inductive,” thus Asian speakers typically assume that the first thing mentioned will not be the key point of a conversation; instead, the dialogue begins with a substantial period of small talk, and the main point/topic may be introduced later in the conversation. For instance, a Japanese international student may write each paragraph with abstract, broad comments, which gradually lead to the main point because he/she expects that the reader is willing to wait for the meaning to emerge (Fox, 1997).

Stewart and Bennett (1991) assert that in Asian cultures, “the listener is more responsible for deriving meaning from the nonverbal and relational cues surrounding an often ambiguous verbal message” (p. 158). Fox (1996) concurs that subtle and discursive Asian communication places a great amount of responsibility for accurate interpretation and understanding on the audience rather than on the speaker/writer. According to Fox, in a culture that values group solidarity and harmony, Asians have learned very early the importance of paying close attention to others’ unexpressed thoughts and feelings. The
speaker/writer is supposed to “know” what others are experiencing; therefore, he/she does not need to be explicit or articulate everything into words. Since Asians expect others to pay attention to their unexpressed thoughts and feelings, they assign greater responsibility for miscommunications to the audience. Thus, Asians may leave out details that are considered critical from a Western point of view. In Asian dialogues, the speaker/writer is supposed to “hint and imply”, and the audience is supposed to “get it” (p. 3).

Research supports that great responsibility is placed on audiences in Asian communication. In a case study, a Taiwanese international student reported that Chinese communication style is “reader responsible” (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999). This participant explained that in Chinese communication, it is not necessary to present one’s ideas in a logical manner, and it is not important to state one’s ideas clearly because there is an assumption that the audience understands what the speaker/writer means.

Reader/listener responsible Asian communication is indirect and subtle. Johnson (1997) points out that in Asian communication “quite a bit is left unsaid; there are many shared assumptions, and important points are likely to be made in a very subtle and indirect manner, rather than explicitly stated” (p. 51). The subtlety of nuance and silence are commonly used, and clarity and specificity are not expected (Stewart & Bennett, 1991).

**U.S. Style of Communication**

In the U.S., “straightforwardness and specificity” are preferred, “the goals of the individual” are promoted, and “novelty and the peculiar kind of creativity that comes
from the idea of an independent mind” are valued (Fox, 1996, p. 1). Some scholars summarize the nature of U.S. communication as problem-oriented, direct, explicit, personal, and informal (Johnson, 1997; Stewart & Bennett, 1991). In U.S. communication, linear, deductive, and speaker/writer responsible are salient characteristics.

Stewart and Bennett (1991) describe the style of U.S. communication as “linear”, where the speaker/writer is “expected to come to the point by moving in a straight line of logical thought through the subject to an explicitly stated conclusion” (p. 156). Johnson (1997) asserts that clarity, specificity, and conciseness are important in U.S. style of communication, and therefore, the expected format for oral and written communication is “one of getting to the point: being direct by stating the main point explicitly, followed by supporting evidence for the main idea, or the other way around” (p. 51). Robinson (1992) concurs that the speaker/writer must clearly state “the point”, which is the central idea or purpose of oral and written communication and that merely presenting an opinion without facts (i.e., numbers or statistics) is not adequate.

Scollon and Wong-Scollon (1991) assert that Western conversation pattern is “deductive.” That is, important topics are introduced early in a conversation. Western individuals will typically assume that the first thing said in a dialogue will be the main topic. Stewart and Bennett (1991) claim that in U.S. culture, “the responsibility for meaning falls mainly to the speakers, whose job it is to formulate ideas into clear language. The more lucid speakers are, the more highly they are regarded as communicators” (Stewart & Bennett, 1991, p. 158).
Miscommunications Between Asians and People in the U.S.

Skow and Stephan (1999) assert that communication problems occur in cross-cultural settings “when people use their own cultural rules instead of applying the rules of the culture in which they are communicating” (p. 364). Tyler (1995) claims that misunderstandings arise because when speakers from two different speech communities engage in dialogues, they are likely to judge each other’s remarks according to the vantage of their own community-specific norms without considering possibilities of differing interpretations. Fu and Townsend (1998) argue that miscommunications are frequently attributed to international students’ inadequate English skills while failing to recognize cultural differences between students and teachers.

Being a graduate student in a U.S. academic program demands an abundance of oral and written communication (Gulgoz, 2001). When Asian international students communicate in English, they must interact with U.S. audiences (i.e., professors) with whom they share little understanding of accepted communication styles, criteria for effective communication, literary traditions, or aesthetic tastes (Fu & Townsend, 1998). When Asian international students approach writing and speaking from their native cultural standards, U.S. professors are likely to judge their writing and speaking based upon criteria of Western tradition (Fu & Townsend, 1998). Hence, those who are nonnative English speakers are at a disadvantage since they are expected to meet the same stringent standards for oral and written communication as their native English speaking peers (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999).
Scholars and researchers have argued that distinct cultural differences between Asian and U.S. communication styles as well as a lack of awareness of these culturally different patterns create various challenges for Asian international students during their academic pursuits in the U.S. Additionally, scholars and researchers have recognized that an interpretation of culturally different behaviors through one’s own cultural lenses, a lack of awareness of culturally specific expectations, and an expectation for minority/low status group members to conform to standards/expectations of majority/high status group members contribute to challenges in an academic adjustment of Asian international students.

Research shows that Asian international students’ culturally different communication patterns and unawareness of faculty’s expectations, as well as the faculty’s lack of awareness of these students’ communication styles resulted in the faculty’s inaccurate or negative interpretations/perceptions of the Asian international students. In a case study that explored communication patterns between Chinese international teaching assistants (ITAs) and their faculty in Mathematics, Jenkins (2000) found that Chinese ITAs’ experiences were significantly different from faculty’s perceptions of them. Faculty in the study overestimated mathematics abilities of Chinese ITAs and negatively perceived their behaviors (i.e., uncooperative) as teaching assistants. Jenkins explains that Chinese ITAs’ reliance on Chinese communication patterns such as the use of silence and avoidance as well as their reliance on their Chinese peers for seeking help contributed to faculty’s misperceptions. Since Chinese ITAs never expressed their academic struggles or lack of understanding regarding teaching
assignments, faculty assumed that these ITAs had no difficulties with their coursework and that they simply ignored faculty’s oral and written instructions. Chinese participants reported that they did not reach out to faculty because they believed that “students gave a better impression of themselves if they were able to comprehend the material without having to question the professor and thus risk hinting that the lecture had been less than clear” (pp. 490-491). Therefore, Chinese ITAs explained that they depended on their Chinese peers for solving difficult math problems and clarifying faculty’s instructions. This study shows that Chinese ITAs’ culturally different attempts to express their eagerness to cooperate and present themselves as competent students were largely misunderstood and negatively translated by faculty. Jenkins concludes that faculty were unaware that Chinese ITAs employed Chinese communication styles to protect faculty’s and their own face and that they would not frankly admit their problems or lack of understanding. At the same time, Chinese ITAs did not realize that faculty expected them to openly acknowledge their difficulties and seek help if needed and that silence would be translated as agreement and understanding.

Research also demonstrates that purposes and standards of writing differ between Asian and U.S. academic environments and that a lack of awareness of cultural differences and culturally specific expectations affect Asian international students’ academic performance since they may not meet U.S. faculty’s expectations. In a qualitative study, Fu and Townsend (1998) found that Chinese students believed “a major purpose of writing was to show mastery of the established forms, to demonstrate knowledge of literary tradition, and... to display artistic ability” (p. 129). Chinese
students in this study thought that “originality in writing means using classical phrases in unusual ways; the purpose of academic writing is to display one’s artistic abilities; and an excellent writer is one who can appropriately apply a rich knowledge of the literary tradition” (p. 131). Fu and Townsend report that Chinese students were unfamiliar with Western styles of academic writing, and thus, they put forth efforts achieving something that U.S. students are discouraged to do in their academic writing (e.g., memorizing well-known phrases such as “as big as a horse” and trying hard to utilize them in their writing). This study demonstrates that there was a large discrepancy between writing, that Chinese students and U.S. professors appreciated. Additionally, this research shows that the U.S. and Chinese academia have significantly different standards for what constitutes good writing; as a result, what is considered excellent writing in China may be viewed as poor writing in the U.S. Fu and Townsend underscore that differences are not indications of incompetence, ignorance, or limited language proficiency and conclude that U.S. faculty need to help international students not only learn U.S. academic writing standards but also appreciate their own writing styles as well as their existing abilities to think, learn, and write.

Research supports that stylistic differences in Asian and U.S. communications result in negative perceptions, stereotypes, and miscommunications between Asian and U.S. individuals, as well as influence Asian international students’ academic performance. Some scholars argue that cross-cultural miscommunication may occur between Asian international teaching assistants (ITAs) and U.S. undergraduates when Asian ITAs use “roundabout, indirect ways of expressing an opinion and go to great
lengths to be polite and maintain harmony” (Kuroda, 1986; Skow & Stephan, 1999, p. 364). Asian ITAs may perceive U.S. students, who employ the direct style of communication, as disrespectful and offensive (Skow & Stephan, 1999). On the other hand, U.S. students, who are unfamiliar with an Asian behavior of making great efforts to be polite, may find Asian teachers “inarticulate, disingenuous, or even deceptive” (p. 364). Indeed, Tyler’s (1995) qualitative study, which examined the sources of miscommunication between a Korean ITA and a U.S. undergraduate student, reports similar dynamics occurring between these participants. An actual tutoring session between the Korean ITA and the U.S student was videotaped, and subsequently the videotaped session was reviewed with each participant independently. The study indicates that there were significant and distinctive differences in ways that these participants interpreted their interactions. The Korean ITA reported that he was inexplicit about his knowledge and experience in order to be modest and utilized indirect and silent responses in order to save face of the U.S. student and remain polite. The Korean ITA also reported that he found the U.S. student’s direct challenge rude and disrespectful. On the other hand, the U.S. student reported experiencing the Korean tutor being partially knowledgeable, failing to assert authority, being contradictory and confusing, and “playing games with [her] head” (p. 144). Both participants interpreted each other’s behavior as uncooperative.

Scollon and Wong-Scollon (1990) emphasize that differences between the Asian inductive and the Western deductive patterns contributes to cross-cultural miscommunication and stereotypes. For instance, Asians may perceive Western
individuals as abrupt or rude, while Westerners may consider Asians as evasive or inscrutable. Tyler and Davis’s (1990) qualitative study supports Scollon and Wong-Scollon’s argument that differences in inductive and deductive communication patterns contribute to cross-cultural misunderstanding. In this study, a problematic dialogue between a Korean ITA and a U.S undergraduate in a physics lab course was observed and videotaped by the investigator. Subsequently, the videotape was reviewed by the investigator, the Korean ITA, and Korean and U.S. student consultants. Tyler and Davis found that the Korean ITA used the “inductive” communication strategy. That is, the Korean ITA purposely started to explain a relatively minor reason why the student received a low grade because the ITA believed that it would be less threatening or embarrassing to the student and that the student would gladly agree. The Korean ITA’s approach was to present the argument by gradually moving from minor to main points. Tyler and Davis also found that U.S. students generally anticipated the “deductive” strategy, in which they expected the ITA’s first response to provide “a general overview of the problem or a statement of the most important error” (p. 400). Consequently, U.S. undergraduates interpreted the Korean ITA’s initial argument as “a statement of the main problem”, which led them to believe that the ITA gave the student the low grade not because the student failed to understand the essential parts of the assignment, but because the student missed minor details (p. 400). Tyler and Davis conclude that due to the difference in Asian and U.S. communication approaches, the negotiation between the Korean ITA and the U.S. undergraduate resulted in an unsatisfactory, frustrating, and irritating experience for both parties.
In an ethnographic examination of four international graduate students’ experiences in writing in the U.S., the majority of the professors acknowledged that nonnative English speakers’ writings differ in their structure and rhetoric (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999). One professor reported that “English is writer responsible, the reader wants to know where the paper is going… [International students] don’t understand the required rhetoric of paper” and that they do not follow the common structure of the U.S. writing (p. 510). Angelova and Riazantseva point out that due to the “lack of knowledge regarding the rhetoric of U.S. academic papers, sometimes the organization of nonnative speakers’ papers did not meet the expectations of their professors” (p. 510). In this study, the international students reported feeling that professors expected them to discover standards of U.S. academic writing “inductively,” and the professors reported feeling frustrated with their students for failing to ask questions or articulate their problems (p. 520). One professor complained that unless international students clearly express their concerns, their difficulties would not be recognized. Angelova and Riazantseva criticize that although professors were sometimes aware of cultural differences in international students’ writings, they did not apply this awareness into any actions that could be helpful for their students.

According to Jenkins (2000), miscommunications are often attributed to behaviors of minority/“lower status” group members for not conforming to “pragmatic and linguistic (pragmalinguistic)” expectations defined by majority/“higher status” group members (p. 478). The norms of behaviors in communication are generally determined by the majority language group, and thus, the responsibility and expectation are typically
placed on the minority language group to adapt its pragmalinguistic behavior to conform to majority language behavior. In socially unequal situations, an important factor determining successful communication may be the “lower status” group’s ability to conform to the “higher status” group’s expectations (Jenkins, 2000). Jenkins points out that Asian international graduate students, who are non-native English speaking teaching assistants, are expected to modify their pragmalinguistic behaviors to meet expectations of both their faculty (higher status) and their undergraduates (majority language group). In addition, Asian international teaching assistants are required to conform to the norms of the U.S. classroom (Jenkins, 2000).

Language Proficiency

Scholars and researchers identify language difficulties as one of the most critical factors influencing international students’ academic adjustment (Barratt & Huba, 1994; Coleman, 1997; Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986; Huntley, 1993; Mori, 2000; Perkins, Perkins, Gugliemino, & Reiff, 1977; Surdam & Collins, 1984; Wan, Chapman, & Biggs, 1992; Ying & Liese, 1990). Although English may be one of the official or commonly used languages for some Asian students (e.g., Singaporeans, Malaysians, and Hong Kongers), research indicates that many Asian international students consider difficulty with language as a major challenge in their academic pursuits (Constantine et al., 2005; Heggins & Jackson, 2003; Heikinheiro & Shute, 1986; Lin & Yin, 1997). In a phenomenological study, all of the 22 Taiwanese graduate participants from various disciplines identified English as their “number one problem” while studying in the U.S.
(Swagler and Ellis, 2003, p. 423). English language proficiency impacts not only Asian international students' academic adjustment, performance, and success (Chapman, Yuan, & Ming, 1989; Coleman, 1997; Constantinides, 1992; Quirino & Ramagem, 1985; White, Brown, & Suddick, 1983; Xu, 1991), but also satisfaction with their academic program (Fletcher & Stern, 1989), satisfaction with their academic appointment as teaching or research assistants (Perrucci & Hu, 1995), self-esteem (Lee & Lodewijks, 1995), and emotional well-being (Ying & Liese, 1990). Additionally, English proficiency affects Asian international students' abilities to engage in various academic activities in and outside of the classroom (e.g., taking lecture notes and writing research papers/dissertations) in the U.S. In the next three sections, I discuss how linguistic issues such as limited English proficiency, confidence in English language ability, and speech accent influence Asian international students in U.S. learning environments.

Limited English Language Proficiency

Scholars have discussed how inadequate language skills may hinder the scholastic activities of some Asian international students. Constantinides (1992) suggests that without strong listening comprehension, reading, writing, and speaking skills in English, international students are unable to adequately perform at the university level. Graduate students in particular need to have sophisticated writing skills because they must produce scholarly writings and complete a thesis or dissertation. In addition, scholars point out that limited English proficiency hinders Asian international students' abilities to read and write quickly, and therefore, these students often spend large amounts of time reading
assigned course materials and writing research papers (Constantinides, 1992; Lin & Yi, 1997). Other scholars assert that limited English proficiency affects Asian international students’ abilities to understand lectures, take notes, participate in class discussion, raise and answer questions, and take exams within time limits (Gulgoz, 2001; Coleman, 1997; Huntley, 1993). International students who have not yet developed a strong command of English could be lost in the middle of a lecture if they do not understand certain words or phrases (Constantinides, 1992).

Lin and Yi (1997) assert that Asian international students with inadequate English skills experience great distress and encounter significant obstacles when attempting to succeed in their academic programs. These students frequently encounter difficulties in articulating their knowledge, thoughts, and ideas on essay exams or research papers due to their limited vocabulary. Sarkodie-Mensah (1992) claims that language is a main factor affecting how students are graded and treated in class. Sheehan and Pearson (1995) recognize that due to a lack of proficiency in English, Asian international students may be perceived as passive and shy. Hence, fluency in English is a key factor for academic adjustment, performance, and success of Asian international students.

The impact of limited language proficiency has also been investigated through several empirical studies. In a study of over 300 international graduate students, Chapman, Yuan, and Ming (1989) found English language proficiency to be one of main predictors of positive academic adjustment. In a qualitative study investigating the adjustment of Asian and African international students in Canada, Heikinhemo and Shute (1986) found that Asian international students had less practice speaking English
than African students upon an entry to a Canadian university. The researchers assert that
due to inadequate language skills, many Asian international students experienced serious
problems in understanding lectures, taking notes, answering question, and writing essays.
The Asian participants reported that poor language skills also interfered with their
performances on exams, class participations, and interactions with professors.

Constantine et al. (2005) conducted a qualitative study investigating the cultural
adjustment experiences of 15 Asian international undergraduate women. These Asian
international students reported encountering academic problems due to language
difficulties. Specifically, the students were concerned about their ability to communicate
clearly in English with professors and peers. Kao and Gansneder (1995) performed a
quantitative investigation of international students’ class participations. These
researchers compared the speaking frequency among various international students, and
found that female students from Asian countries where English is not the official
language spoke the least in class compared to non-Asian male and female international
students as well as Asian male and female international students from countries where
English is the official language. Asian international students in this study were
significantly more likely to cite problems in English as a reason for not speaking in class
than non-Asian students. Kao and Gansneder conclude that for Asian international
students, having problems with spoken English is associated with hesitancy in
participating in class discussion.

English language problems are further found to affect international students’
psychological adjustment to their academic programs. Fletcher and Stern (1989)
surveyed international students at a Canadian university in order to examine the relationships among overall university experience, students’ appraisal of their academic program, and English language facility. The majority of the students (56.6%) were from Asia or the Pacific. Fletcher and Stern concluded that “to have difficulty with English in one’s courses undermines satisfaction with the academic program in which the student is enrolled and as a consequence the student’s satisfaction with his or her overall experience at the university is eroded” (p. 306).

Additionally, difficulties with English may impact international students’ self-confidence and esteem. In Ross and Krider’s (1992) phenomenological examination of international teaching assistants, participants reported feeling inadequate, unintelligent, and less confident as effective communicators even when speaking in their native language.

Confidence in English Language Ability

Although English language proficiency is recognized as a critical factor affecting Asian international students’ academic adjustment and success, several researchers have found that students’ subjective confidence in English fluency may be even more influential (Swagler & Ellis, 2003; Wan, Chapman, & Biggs, 1992; Xu, 1991; Ying & Liese, 1990). Swagler and Ellis conducted multiple studies investigating the adjustment of Taiwanese graduate students in the U.S. The first study was a phenomenological examination of the adjustment experiences of 22 Taiwanese graduate students from a variety of majors. English was the participants’ top concern in the U.S.; however,
research findings indicate that confidence in English fluency was a better predictor for assessing adjustment than actual language ability. Swagler and Ellis described how the participant who appeared most well adjusted demonstrated and acknowledged stronger linguistic confidence than other Taiwanese participants who appeared shy and reticent. Next, Swagler and Ellis created a survey based on their original findings. Responses from nearly 70 Taiwanese graduate students indicate that an objective measure of English language proficiency (TOEFL scores) was not related to the Taiwanese students’ apprehension about speaking English. However, the participants’ apprehension about speaking English was positively associated with their hesitancy about speaking their native language (Chinese). In their third study, Swagler and Ellis conducted a focus group with four Taiwanese graduate students. The participants acknowledged experiencing difficulties in speaking English, referring to it as language “limitation” and “barrier.” These students underscored the importance of having confidence in their English abilities, which helped motivate them to improve their English, and in turn, have satisfying academic and social lives in the U.S.

The importance of student perception of language ability was supported by Ying and Liese’s (1990) quantitative study of 172 Taiwanese students. Participants in this study who assessed themselves as having higher English proficiency also reported higher emotional well-being. Surprisingly, higher TOEFL scores predicted poorer emotional well-being after entry to the U.S. Hence, Ying and Liese conclude that “what is important is not how well one performs on the TOEFL, but rather how confident one is about one’s English ability” (p. 841).
Perception of confidence was also found to be highly influential among international students in Wan, Chapman, and Biggs' (1992) quantitative study. These researchers examined factors associated with academic stress of international graduate students (68% of the participants were from Asian countries) from a variety of academic fields. Results indicate that the international students “who perceived themselves as having better English-language skills perceived the same academic situations as less stressful than did students who perceived themselves to have weak language skills” (p. 617). Wan et al. conclude that “international students’ perceived language skills have the most significant influence on their appraisal of the stressfulness of classroom situations” (p. 617). International students with stronger perceived English skills were less likely to interpret academic situations as stressful and believed they were more capable of handling the stress they did experience.

Xu (1991) conducted a quantitative study to investigate the impact of English proficiency on international graduate students’ perceived academic difficulty. The majority of the subjects (74.6%) were from Asia. Xu found that students “who believed that their English was adequate encountered less academic difficulties than those who believed it to be inadequate” (p. 567). These findings suggest that TOEFL, an objective assessment of English fluency, was not a significant predictor of the level of academic difficulties international students faced. Instead, self-rated English proficiency was the most significant predictor of students’ perception of academic difficulty.
Lack of confidence in one’s English skills may affect class participation of international students. In Lee’s (1997) survey, international students reported that lack of confidence in their oral communication skills kept them from speaking up in class.

*Speech Accent*

A speech accent is an important factor that influences Asian international students’ successful functioning in U.S. academic environments. Accents impact not only teachers’ evaluations of students (Edwards, 1982) but also students’ evaluations of teachers (Gill, 1994; Rubin, 1994; Rubin & Smith, 1990). Scholars argue that accents may affect classroom communication since it can be challenging to immediately adjust to hearing unfamiliar sounds (Skow & Stephan, 1999). Accents are considered powerful interpersonal markers that affect how speakers are evaluated by listeners (Fuertes, Potere, & Ramirez, 2002). Research indicates that individuals prefer standard, “nonaccented” speech to non-standard, accented speech and that people perceive those who have similar accents more positively than those who have dissimilar accents (Fuertes, et al., 2002; Gill, 1994).

In a quantitative study, Gill (1994) examined perceptions of 90 North American English accented undergraduate students toward accented teachers (American, British, and Malaysian) as well as how the teachers’ accents affect the listeners’ comprehension. Results demonstrated that participants perceived the North American English accent and North American English accented teachers most favorably and found North American English accented teachers most understandable. Participants perceived the Malaysian
accent least favorably and Malaysian teachers least understandable. In addition, participants recalled greater amounts of information from North American English accented teachers than from foreign accented teachers.

Many graduate students hold appointments as teaching or research assistants (Perrucci & Hu, 1995). When assuming a role of a teacher, Asian international teaching assistants who speak English with non-standard accents may encounter challenges in U.S. classrooms. Research indicates that in a formal context, such as a school/classroom setting, accented speakers are more likely to be perceived or evaluated negatively by listeners because listeners are less tolerant of speakers with accents in a formal context than in an informal setting (i.e., bus stop) (Fuertes, et al., 2002). Hence, Asian international teaching assistants may face intolerance and negative judgments by their own students in classrooms. Indeed, in Rubin and Smith’s (1990) quantitative study, out of 88% of the students who had encountered a nonnative English-speaking teaching assistant at least once during their academic pursuits, more than 40% of them had decided to drop or withdraw a class because they found out that the instructor was a nonnative speaker of English. Although students could not discriminate between strong and moderate accents, when students believed an instructor’s accent to be “foreign,” they automatically considered him or her to be a poor teacher.

Scholars and researchers have identified that Asian international teaching assistants’ accented English as well as English proficiency are major complaints from U.S. students and parents. Standard accented students and parents commonly complain about foreign accented teachers as being “unintelligible” (Gill, 1994). Many U.S.
students complain that they are unable to understand international teaching assistants due to their accented, “broken”, and “inarticulate” speech (Crittenden, 1994; Gunesekera, 1988; Lin & Yi, 1997). Gulgoz (2001) suspects that some students may even blame international teaching assistants as an excuse for their own poor performance. In a quantitative study investigating approximately 55 U.S. students’ expectations and attitudes toward Asian international teaching assistants, Gunesekera (1988) found that half of participants possessed negative expectations toward Asian international teaching assistants, while 40% presented more open attitudes. Research shows that the majority of participants expected Asian international teaching assistants to be unintelligible and expressed concerns about potential communication problems due to foreign accents.

Although people often blame an instructor’s/speaker’s accented, non-standard style of speech for poor classroom communication, scholars and researchers argue that the responsibility of classroom communication lies with both the instructor/speaker and students/listeners. Crittenden (1994) states that many U.S. students “tune out” when they see a “foreign” face. Sarkodie-Mensah (1998) believes that “Americans have a reputation for making the least effort to understand how non-Americans speak” (p. 219). Bernhardt (1987) claims that non-Caucasian teaching assistants, even when they are native English speakers, are ones who often receive complaints from students about teaching incompetence due to inadequate language proficiency.

In a case study exploring communication patterns between Chinese international teaching assistants and their faculty in a Mathematics department, the Chinese participants reported that they sensed impatience on the part of their listeners, which
discouraged them from interacting with U.S. individuals (Jenkins, 2000). Rubin (1994) conducted a set of two quantitative studies examining non-language factors affecting U.S. undergraduates’ perceptions toward nonnative English speaking teaching assistants. In the first study, over 60 North American undergraduates listened to a four-minute-speech sample either on science or humanities, recorded by a native North American English speaking doctoral student in speech communication, who was highly respected by her undergraduate students for effective and clear classroom communication. A photograph of either a Caucasian or an Asian woman was presented while students listened to a speech sample. Interestingly, results indicate that an accent was perceived as more foreign and less standard when participants saw the Asian instructor’s photograph, even though accent differences did not exist in reality. It is important to note that comprehension was lower for those who were exposed to an Asian face, and higher for those who saw a Caucasian photograph. Rubin concludes that listening comprehension was undermined merely by visually recognizing the instructor as Asian. These findings suggest that it is too simplistic to solely attribute classroom communication problems to Asian international teaching assistants’ accented, non-standard ways of speaking English and that listeners share (at least) equal responsibilities.

In the second study, approximately 150 undergraduates listened to either high or moderate Chinese accent, or standard American English accent in combination with either a science or humanities topic. While listening to a lecture sample, a photograph of an Asian teaching assistant was presented to half of the participants, a Caucasian face was shown to one third, and no photograph was displayed to one-sixth. Rubin found that the
more foreign the accent was perceived, the lower teacher’s effectiveness was rated. Results indicate that comprehension was higher for students who had taken more classes from nonnative English speaking teaching assistants, which suggest that being exposed to international teaching assistants helps listeners develop abilities/skills to understand different accents and/or styles of speech.

Individuals who speak accented English may encounter biases or prejudice of being perceived as less educated or coming from a lower social class by U.S. people (Hein, 1997). The unfortunate burden is often placed solely on foreign accented speakers or the minority language group to put forth effort to improve their skills in English, to reduce accents, and to modify their “pragmalinguistic” behaviors in order to conform to the majority language group (Hein, 1997; Jenkins, 2000; Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998). Skow and Stephan (1999) underscore that speaking with an accent does not mean one’s English is insufficient or inaccurate and that university classrooms can offer opportunities to be exposed to variations of English accents and to develop an appreciation for diversity in “world Englishes” (Skow & Stephan, 1999, p. 366).

Social Support in the U.S.

Upon relocation to the U.S., international students often leave many of their important social support resources, such as their immediate and extended family members as well as friends, in their home countries (Leong & Sedlacek, 1986). Familiar social support networks may not be readily accessible or available to many Asian international students due to a large geographical distance between their home countries and the U.S.
Indeed, a quantitative study demonstrates that international students (the majority of participants represented Asian and graduate students) report having less social support resources than U.S. students (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & Van Horn, 2002). Another quantitative study by Trice (2004) indicates that East (e.g., China, Korea, and Japan) and Southeast... (e.g., Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand) Asian students often were socially isolated from U.S. students and were concerned about their isolation. In this study, students from South Asia (e.g., India and Pakistan) had more contact with U.S. students and expressed fewer concerns about their interactions with U.S. students than those from East and Southeast Asia expressed. In Yang, Terakoka, Eichenfield, and Audas’ (1994) quantitative study, the majority (51%) of Asian international students reported feeling socially isolated and having only superficial relationships with U.S. students.

According to Yang and Clum (1995), social support for international students refers to the quality and the quantity of contact with people from home and host cultures. Wan, Chapman, and Biggs (1992) define social support more narrowly in terms of support given in the host culture only. These authors define social support as “the extent to which [international] students have a network of friends in the host culture who offer them encouragement, support, and advice” (p. 609). The central focus of the present study is limited to Asian international students’ experiences in the U.S.; therefore, in this chapter, I will use Wan et al.’s definition, and focus primarily on social support as it refers to the quality and the quantity of interpersonal connections with individuals whom
international students have encountered in the new academic environment (or during their
academic endeavor) in the U.S.

Scholars have emphasized the importance and benefits of developing and
maintaining social support. Social support is crucial because a person’s sense of self is
validated/affirmed by significant others in his/her life (Arthur, 1997; Pederson, 1991).
Mallinckrodt and Leong (1992) claim that “Not only is social support crucial in itself for
positive well-being, but social support also provides a powerful coping resource for
persons experiencing stressful life changes, including the stress of adjusting to an
unfamiliar culture” (p. 71).

Research has consistently demonstrated that social support is a critical factor
affecting international students’ academic and non-academic adjustment. International
students are more likely to have positive academic and non-academic experiences if they
enjoy satisfying contact with the host community (Hull, 1981, as cited in KaiKai, 1989).
Based upon reviewing previous research, Hammer (1992) concludes that international
students’ ability to achieve their goals in U.S. academic environments is significantly
affected by the quality and quantity of social interactions with U.S. individuals. Boyer
and Sedlacek (1988) conducted a quantitative study which examined non-cognitive
predictors of international students’ academic achievement. Results indicated that one of
the best non-cognitive predictors of academic achievement was whether or not
international students had solid social support resources. In another quantitative study,
Hechanova-Alampay, et al. (2002) found that the more international students interacted
with U.S. individuals, the greater adjustment they reported. Wan et al.’s quantitative
study (1992) found that “International students who had a stronger social support network in their new academic environment tended to rate the same academic situations as less stressful than did students with less well-developed social networks” (p. 615). Additionally, results indicate that “Students who reported more social support tended to have more confidence in their ability to cope with stressful academic situations” (p. 617). In a qualitative study on adaptation of international students in Canada, Asian students who had more interactions with Canadians reported fewer problems in terms of cultural, academic, and social adjustment than those who were isolated (Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986).

Without established social support systems in their proximity, research suggests that isolated Asian international students are more likely to suffer from problematic academic adjustment, poor academic performance, and greater academic stress, while feeling less confident in their ability to effectively manage stressful academic situations (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1988; Hammer, 1992; Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986; Wan, Chapman, & Biggs, 1992). Hence, establishing new social support networks is critical for Asian international students to facilitate successful adjustment to university lives in the U.S.

**Student-Faculty Relationships**

Faculty members play an important role for international students who have not yet developed strong social support networks. Some scholars claim that the faculty advisor is the most important figure for international graduate students whose primary purposes in the U.S. are to achieve their academic and professional goals (Coleman,
1997; Gulgoz, 2001). Additionally, "faculty advisers can play a key role in the successful completion of [international] students' degree programs (Rai, 2002, p. 29).

Research shows that the faculty advisor had a significant impact on the process of dissertation writing of international doctoral students (Shaw, 1991). Additionally, research supports the significance of relationships between faculty and international students. Leong and Sedlacek (1986) conducted a quantitative study which compared international and U.S. first-semester freshmen's preferences for help sources. Results indicate that international students were more likely to seek help from faculty members especially for educational-vocational problems and even for emotional-social problems when compared to U.S. students. Leong and Sedlacek conclude that the incoming international students expected to rely on "formal sources of help designated and provided by the school (i.e., faculty members and counselors)" because they had not yet developed informal social networks.

Mallinckrodt and Leong's (1992) quantitative study demonstrates that receiving support from one's academic department had both "direct and buffering" effects on international graduate students' stress symptoms (p. 71). Results indicate that relationships with faculty members were especially crucial for male students, while "tangible" support, relationships with other students, and flexible curriculum were particularly important for female students. Mallinckrodt and Leong conclude that "quality relationships with faculty, faculty interest in students' professional development, and the quality of instruction perceived by students" are potent preventative factors mitigating the development of psychological symptoms of international students (p. 76).
Lewthwaite (1996) conducted a qualitative study on cross-cultural adaptation of Asian international graduate students in New Zealand. Asian participants reported that faculty members’ approachable attitudes, profound interests in students, hospitality, guidance, and friendship strongly contributed to their satisfaction with their experiences in a host country.

Lundberg and Schreiner (2004) conducted a quantitative study investigating whether quality and frequency of faculty-student interaction predict learning among racially and ethnically diverse undergraduate students. Quality of relationships with faculty was a particularly strong predictor for Asian/Pacific Islander students’ learning. Based on their training experiences with Taiwanese international nursing students, Ryan, Markowski, Ura, and Liu-Chiang (1998) assert that “developing faculty-student relationships that promote mentoring and foster professional role development” is one important educational strategy (p. 69).

**Student-Student Relationships**

Research has demonstrated that social interactions, contact, and networks with U.S. peers are beneficial for international students in promoting satisfying academic and nonacademic experiences in U.S. universities (Trice, 2004). Perrucci and Hu (1995) conducted a quantitative study, which examined factors impacting international graduate students’ academic satisfaction. The majority of participants were from Asian countries and represented various disciplines. Results suggest that one of the most crucial factors affecting international graduate students’ satisfaction with their academic program and
their academic appointment was contact with U.S. graduate students. Perrucci and Hu conclude that having a good connection with U.S. peers can contribute to satisfying educational experiences of international graduate students.

Westwood and Barker (1990) conducted a quantitative study, which examined whether there was a relationship between participation in an eight-month peer-pairing program, academic achievement, drop-out rates, and social adjustment among first-year international students in Canada and Australia. Westwood and Barker found that international students who participated in the peer-pairing program had higher academic achievement rates and lower drop-out rates than those who did not. Westwood and Barker conclude that social contact with individuals from a host country is positively associated with greater academic achievement and retention for international students.

In addition to having an impact on academic adjustment, contact with students in the U.S. has been shown to impact Asian international students’ social adjustment. Surdam and Collins’ (1984) quantitative study indicates that international students who spent more time with U.S. friends were considerably better adjusted than those who spent more time with people from their own countries. Similarly, Zimmermann (1995) conducted a quantitative study with international undergraduate and graduate students. Results indicate that the most essential factor impacting international students’ adjustment to U.S. was the quantity of contact with U.S. students. As mentioned earlier, Mallinckrodt and Leong’s (1992) quantitative study demonstrates that relationships with other students were particularly important for female international students’ psychological well-being.
Hindering Factors to Establishing Social Support

Several variables which may hinder international students from developing social support networks in a new culture have been explored through research. For example, heavy academic workload, excessive amount of study time, limited English proficiency, cultural differences, fears of discrimination, financial constraints, and perceived negative attitudes of U.S. faculty and students may discourage international students from pursuing meaningful relationships with people in the U.S. A quantitative study by Trice (2004) indicates that the greater cultural differences, language barriers, and discrimination international students experience, the more difficult and unlikely it is for them to develop social relationships with U.S. students.

A few empirical studies explored Asian students' perceptions of why difficulties exist in forming social connections with U.S. students. Yang, Teraoka, Eichenfield, and Audas (1994) conducted a quantitative study examining variables which hinder or facilitate meaningful relationships between Asian and U.S. individuals (e.g., undergraduate and graduate students, visiting scholars, staff, and faculty). Asian participants who had limited relationships with U.S. people frequently cited the lack of opportunities, cultural differences, the lack of time due to the heavy academic load and the large amount of time studying, and perceived lack of interests in U.S. individuals for forming relationships as barriers to establishing meaningful cross-cultural relationships. Perceived lack of interest on the part of U.S. individuals appears to be supported by another quantitative study conducted by Matross, Paige, and Hendricks (1982). These researchers investigated U.S. student attitudes toward international students, and found
that few U.S. students value and engage in meaningful relationships with international students. Results from this study indicate that less than a third of U.S. students believe that there were meaningful connections with international students and that less than one-sixth of U.S. students believed that international students contributed to their university education.

Lewthwaite (1996) conducted a qualitative study on cross-cultural adaptation of Asian post-graduate students from a range of disciplines in New Zealand. Participants reported that the academic workload, the excessive amount of time spent for studying in order to succeed academically, and their limited English facility made it difficult for them to meet and develop relationships with people from the host country. Additionally, Asian students reported feeling hesitant to approach faculty members who appeared very busy and stressed. These participants also found their faculty advisors’ frequent absence and unavailability problematic. In another qualitative study on adaptation of Asian and African international students in Canada, participants considered cultural differences, focus on academic work, and financial restraints as hindering to interactions with Canadian people (Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986). Heikinheimo and Shute speculate that “a fear of being discriminated against” may be another factor which deters international students from interacting with White Canadians (p. 403).

Financial Concerns

Research has demonstrated that financial problems are one of the greatest stressors and concerns for many international students (Deressa & Beavers, 1988;
Harman, 2003; Parr, Bradley, & Bingi, 1992; Quirino & Ramagem, 1985; Rai, 2002; Trice, 2001). In a quantitative study, which examined academic and non-academic needs of international students in home economics, Deressa and Beavers (1988) found that among five concerns (i.e., English facility, relevance of coursework, personal and social problems, housing needs, and financial needs), international students reported financial needs as the greatest concern. The majority of the participants in this study were Asians (50%) and graduate students (51%). In Parr, Bradley, and Bingi’s (1992) quantitative study, international students reported financial concerns as one of the four greatest concerns. Specifically, they were concerned about having adequate financial support as well as finding on-campus jobs. Similarly, Quirino and Ramagen (1985) surveyed Brazilian international students in agriculture and found that financial support was one of the five greatest problems for them. Trice (2001) conducted a qualitative study which examined faculty members’ perceptions of international graduate students in various disciplines (e.g., public health, architecture, and engineering). Results suggest that a large number of faculty members were aware of financial difficulties that international students faced. Another qualitative study, which investigated faculty members’ perspectives on international graduate students in social work programs, found that 40% of the faculty participants were aware that international students suffered from financial problems (Rai, 2002).

Scholars have also argued that many international students experience great financial pressures and constraints/limitations during their academic pursuits in U.S. universities due to their unique immigration statuses (Cadieux & Wehrly, 1986; Huntley,
Because of immigration policies in the U.S., international students must maintain a full-time student status during their enrollment in school and do not have an option for a part-time status (Lin & Yi, 1997; Thomas & Althen, 1989). International students are also required to pay out-of-state tuition throughout their enrollment in school (Charles & Stewart, 1991; Lin & Yi, 1997). Arthur (1997) claims that due to "the differential costs of daily living standards and tuition fees," living and educational costs of international students can be four times as expensive as those of domestic students (p. 262). Thus, considerable, exorbitant expense is involved with international students' studies in U.S. universities (Charles & Stewart, 1991; Lin & Yi, 1997; Pedersen, 1991). In addition, international students are usually limited to on-campus employment and are ineligible for most off-campus jobs due to visa restrictions (Arthur, 1997; Cadieux & Wehrly, 1986; Huntley, 1993; Khoo, et al., 2002; Plakans, 1997; Thomas & Althen, 1989).

Although some statistics indicate that the majority of international students (63.4%) fund their U.S. education through their personal and family sources (the Institute of International Education, 2005), some scholars caution against the inaccurate assumption that many international students come from wealthy family backgrounds (Arthur, 1997; Cadieux & Wehrly, 1986). Although international students have to "demonstrate adequate and appropriate financial support through their own finances, parents/guardians, private agencies, institutional support in the U.S., or other legitimate means" prior to being admitted to U.S. universities, life circumstances can suddenly
change (Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998, p. 219) (e.g., a family crisis and an economic crisis in their home country). Some international students may face "financial difficulty due to problems in support from their government or other organizations, unexpected changes in the supporting family, friends or relatives, or cuts in the student scholarship and assistantship budgets in the American universities" (Rai, 2002, p. 26). When encountering unexpected financial problems, international students have very limited financial resources and options for resolutions (Huntley, 1993; Khoo, et al., 2002; Thomas & Althen, 1989). Their financial problems may be "unresolvable" (Thomas & Althen, 1989), as they are unable to disrupt their studies to work in order to save money and return to school (Thomas & Althen, 1989) and have little or no access to financial aid programs (e.g., student loans, scholarships, and welfare benefits) (Cadieux & Wehrly, 1986; Khoo, et al., 2002; Lin & Yi, 1997; Thomas & Althen, 1989). Hence, when faced with financial crises, some international students may have no choice but to discontinue their studies and to return to their home countries.

Scholars have discussed the impact/consequences of financial stress, pressure, and problems on international students. Academic overload can be problematic as international students may "cram" excessive numbers of credit hours/courses within a short period of time and "accelerate" their programs in order to graduate as soon as possible (Cadieux & Wehrly, 1986; Charles & Stewart, 1991; Huntley, 1993; Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004). Burdened by heavy academic loads, international students may experience great psychological and physical stress and their well-being may be endangered (Huntley, 1993; Khoo, et al., 2002). Obtaining and maintaining
assistantships can be stressors for international graduate students. For example, academic departments may offer graduate assistantships as an incentive to international graduate students during the recruitment (Plakans, 1997), and those who are awarded an assistantship may experience great pressure to maintain the financial support from U.S. universities (Svarney, 1991) especially if it is their main source of income. In Deressa and Beavers’ quantitative study (1988) mentioned earlier, international students expressed a need to receive help to find assistantships or part-time jobs on campus. Finally, financial concerns in general “can be troublesome worries that can detract international students from their academic focus and impact their emotional sense of stability” (Arthur, 1997, p. 262). Especially, “unexpected” financial problems may affect international students’ academic progresses by consuming their emotional energy (Cadieux & Wehrly, 1986; Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998).

Career Concerns

Although limited research has examined career-related issues of international students, the existing studies have demonstrated that career concerns are important. Bontrager, Birch, and Kracht (1990) surveyed international students from various countries, “with Asia and Latin America most frequently represented” (p. 24). Results show that the highest ranked concern for international students was career related (i.e., finding or maintaining a job), followed by homesickness, anxiety, lack of leisure time and social life, as well as financial problems.
In another quantitative study, incoming international undergraduates (54% were East and South Asians) reported having greater career development needs (e.g., exploring interests, values, and abilities; learning how to prepare for careers) than U.S. students (Leong & Sedlacek, 1989). Leong and Sedlacek’s (1989) study indicates that specific career needs for international students differ significantly from the career needs of U.S. students. While obtaining work experience in career areas of interest was identified as the most essential need by both international and U.S. students, the relative importance of other needs varied between the two groups. For instance, learning how to prepare for preferred careers and speaking with a counselor about career plans were the second and third highest concerns for international students. For U.S. students, exploring job opportunities for people with their major and developing effective job seeking skills were the second and third highest needs.

A few other studies have also examined international students’ career needs. Spencer-Rodgers and Cortijo’s (1998) qualitative study (i.e., focus group) as well as Spencer-Rodgers’ (2000) quantitative study (i.e., survey) explored and examined career development needs of international students from various disciplines. The majority of international students in both studies were Asians and graduate students. Results from the two studies were very similar in that obtaining work experience, developing job-search skills, and engaging in career planning activities were three major areas of international students’ career needs. Specifically, in regard to work experience, international students were interested in obtaining 12-month practical training experience in the U.S. after graduation, long-term/permanent employment in the U.S., and part-time,
on-campus employment while in school. In the area of job-search skills, international students expressed needs in learning to write a resume or curriculum vitae appropriate for U.S. or their home country, in acquiring U.S.-style interview techniques, and in overcoming language and cultural barriers in the U.S. job interview. In the area of career planning and preparation, international students were eager to learn about immigration rules, speak with an advisor or counselor about career plans and goals, and learn about the job market in the U.S. or their home country. In another quantitative study of international students predominantly from Asia, the effects of implementing “job search clubs” were evaluated (Bikos & Furry, 1999). Participants reported that the most important skills they learned were regarding resume writing, interviewing, and drafting cover letters/job search correspondence.

Some researchers have investigated factors that influence international students’ career issues. International students’ career needs, plans, and choices are often affected by various factors such as family and friends (Singaravelu, White, & Bringaze, 2005). For example, in a quantitative study, which examined factors influencing career decisions of Asian international, non-Asian international, and U.S. undergraduate students, Singaravelu et al. (2005) found that the influence of family and friends was greater on Asian and non-Asian international students than U.S. students.

International students’ future residency plans are another significant factor influencing career issues for Asian international students (Shen & Herr, 2004; Spencer-Rodgers, 2000). International students may have different future residency options after completing their education in the U.S. “[T]hey could try to stay permanently in the
United States, stay temporarily and then return to their home countries, return to their homelands directly, or even go to other countries” (Shen & Herr, 2004, p. 19). In a phenomenological examination of career placement concerns and needs of international graduate students from various countries and disciplines, Shen and Herr found that international students’ future residency plans are impacted by a range of factors. Those who planned to return home immediately reported reasons such as commitment to one’s own country, sense of security back home, family ties/connections, and career promotion opportunities. Those who planned to stay in the U.S. indefinitely cited reasons including family expectations, opportunities for professional development, rewarding salary, better living and working environment, sense of job dignity, and no job opportunity in one’s own country. For those who were unsure about leaving or remaining in the U.S., the main reason was uncertainty about the location of a satisfying job.

According to Spencer-Rodgers, although some earlier scholars and researchers may have assumed that most international students would return to their home countries upon graduation, and thus require “reentry” or “pre-return” career assistance (Walter-Samli & Samli, 1979), other researchers have found that many international students plan to stay in the U.S. after completing their education. For example, in the quantitative study, Spencer-Rodgers found that 23% of international students planned to return to their home countries, while 69% planned to live permanently in U.S. Eight percent were uncertain or undecided. Another quantitative study by Parr, Bradley, and Bingi (1992) found that 50% of international students planned to remain in the U.S. upon graduation,
while only eight percent planned to return to their home countries. Forty-two percent were unsure or undecided about their future residency plans.

Spencer-Rodgers’ quantitative study (2000) found that international students’ career development needs were affected by whether they are oriented toward the U.S. job market (“U.S.-focused”) or foreign job markets (“return-focused”) (p. 33). Results show that “U.S.-focused” international students reported great needs for obtaining U.S. style interviewing techniques and learning about the U.S. job market, while “return-focused” students identified writing a curriculum vitae appropriate for their countries and learning about foreign job markets as great needs.

Only one empirical study was found that explored the resources that international students rely on regarding their career concerns. Shen and Herr’s (2004) qualitative study indicated that international graduate students utilized their own academic fields, professional activities, academic departments, family, friends, and colleagues as help sources when addressing career placement concerns, instead of the career services offered by a university. Participants reported that they were not aware that the career services would help international students and that these services appeared geared toward undergraduate students.

**Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination**

Scholarship and research indicate that some international students, especially those from the non-western hemisphere such as Asia, are likely to experience stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination due to their race, ethnicity, and cultural backgrounds.
Linguistic prejudice in particular has been discussed in the language proficiency section. Sandhu and Asrabadi (1994) conducted a qualitative study in order to develop an acculturative stress scale for international students. The researchers concluded that perceived discrimination was the highest concern for international students from various disciplines and countries. In a qualitative study of Asian international undergraduate women’s cross-cultural adjustment experiences in the U.S., most participants reported having been exposed to prejudice and discrimination in their new country (Constantine, Kindaichi, Okazaki, Gainor, & Baden, 2005). Of participants in Surdam and Collins’ (1984) study, 33% of international students reported experiencing discrimination. In another qualitative study of Asian and African international students in Canada, 91% of participants believed that even though it was “subtle or silent,” racial discrimination existed in their host country (Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986). It is unclear whether or not these participants actually experienced covert discrimination.

Participants in a variety of studies described a range of situations which they perceived to be discriminatory. In Constantine et al.’s (2005) study, many participants experienced being subjected to model minority stereotypes about Asians (e.g., being expected to excel in math) and being teased by their peers due to their limited English proficiency. In Heikinheimo and Shute’s (1986) study, Asian and African international students stated that “service workers in cafeterias seemed less polite and teachers seemed less helpful toward non-White, foreign students than toward White Canadians, and sometimes teachers used derogatory examples in class or seemed to favor Canadian students in grading” (p. 403). In Lewthwaite’s (1996) qualitative study of Asian
international graduate students from various disciplines in New Zealand, some participants reported experiencing subtle forms of racial discrimination. For example, Asian students stated that they felt being “look[ed] down” upon by some instructors as well as being “underestimate[d]” and “patroni[zed]” by local people (p. 180). They also reported hearing “prejudice against Asians” and receiving “derogatory comments” from people in the community (p. 180). Lewthwaite did not elaborate on how Asian students were underestimated by local people or what entailed prejudice against Asians.

Research has examined attitudes of U.S. citizens/permanent residents toward international students. Not only do Asian international students report experiencing discrimination, a few studies indicate that U.S. students also experience communication difficulties and cultural discomfort when interacting with international students. For example, Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2002) conducted a quantitative study of a diverse body of U.S. undergraduate and graduate students in order to investigate their attitudes toward international students. Results suggest that many U.S. students felt uncomfortable, impatient, and frustrated when experiencing communication challenges with international students on their campuses. Results also indicate that “factors such as accented speech, cultural differences in non-verbal communication styles, and cultural variations in values, norms, and customs” contributed to these cross-cultural communication difficulties.

Scholars and researchers have investigated and discussed the impact and consequences of exposure to various forms of oppression of Asian international students. Several scholars have speculated that experiences of stereotypes, prejudice, and
discrimination may hinder Asian international students’ psychological well-being and cultural adjustment (Constantine et al., 2005), lower their motivations for developing social connections (Hayes & Lin, 1994), and create a sense of isolation and alienation (Klomegah, 2006; Svarney, 1989). In addition, stereotyped, negative, or inaccurate perceptions of Asian international students may deter their academic adjustment. Chung (1993) and Lin and Yi (1997) observe that Asian international students may be at risk of being perceived or stereotyped by U.S. professors and students as quiet, reserved, reticent, shy, passive, non-assertive, uninvolved, and worse, incompetent. Constantinides (1992) claims that teachers may perceive Asian international students who are less likely to express their opinions, challenge perspectives of others, and ask questions as unprepared, uninterested, or incompetent. Constantinides also recognizes that teachers may consider Asian international students extremely competent, assuming that they understand everything, thus, do not need to ask questions.

Robinson’s study (1992) (as cited in Archer, 1994) on classroom communication indicates that incorrect stereotypes deter relationships between Asian and U.S. students. For instance, U.S. students may think that Asians are “reserved, withdrawn, without opinions of their own, unsure, or perhaps even hostile,” while Asians may think that U.S. students are “arrogant, egocentric, pushy, domineering, or impatient” (Archer, 1994, pp. 80-81). Robinson concludes that stereotypes often stem from cultural differences. Surdam and Collins (1984) conducted a quantitative study of adjustment experiences of international students from various disciplines and countries. Results indicate that “international students who perceived that discrimination had been a problem for them

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during the first 3 months of their stay were significantly less well adapted than those for whom discrimination had not been a problem...In addition, students who were experiencing discrimination at the time of the study were significantly less well adapted than those who did not report discrimination...” (p. 243). In another quantitative study which examined factors influencing satisfaction among mostly Asian international graduate students from various disciplines, Perrucci and Hu (1995) found that perceived discrimination and perceived attitudes toward their home country were important factors associated with international students’ satisfaction with their academic program. Researchers concluded that “international graduate students who were satisfied with their academic program felt that they were living in a social environment that did not discriminate against them and did not reveal negative attitudes toward their country” (p. 502).

Thus far, six broad training issues of Asian international students across disciplines have been identified and discussed based upon a wide range of the international student literature. Scholars and researchers have argued the significant impact of cultural differences between Asian and U.S. academic environments, language proficiency, social support, financial concerns, career concerns, and stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination on Asian international students’ academic adjustment and success in the U.S. The focus of the current study is on training experiences of Asian international students in APA-accredited counseling psychology programs in the U.S. In the next section, Asian international students’ training issues specific to the field of counseling psychology or similar mental health disciplines are addressed.
The Training Issues of Asian International Counseling Psychology Students

There is an increasing awareness among scholars and researchers that international students’ training issues have been understudied in the field of counseling psychology and/or applied psychology in general (Chen, 2004; Chung, 1993; Fuller, 2005; Nilsson, 1999; Nilsson & Anderson, 2004; Nilsson & Dodds, 2006). Upon exhaustive literature search of psychological journals, two non-empirical articles (Chung, 1993; Giorgis & Helms, 1978) and eight empirical studies (Chen, 2004; Fuller, 2005; Helms & Giorgis, 1982; Mittal, 2002; Mittal & Wieling, 2006; Nilsson, 1999; Nilsson & Anderson, 2004; Nilsson & Dodds, 2006) were found. Of the eight empirical studies, three are unpublished doctoral dissertations (Fuller, 2005; Mittal, 2002; Nilsson, 1999). Two of these dissertations (Mittal, 2002; Nilsson, 1999) have been recently published in psychological journals (Mittal & Wieling, 2006; Nilsson & Anderson, 2004); therefore, Mittal’s (2002) as well as Nilsson’s (1999) dissertations are cited only when relevant findings are not covered by their published articles. Hence, the two non-empirical articles and the six empirical studies (Chen, 2004; Fuller, 2005; Helms & Giorgis, 1982; Mittal & Wieling, 2006; Nilsson & Anderson, 2004; Nilsson & Dodds, 2006) are discussed in great detail in the following subsections.

In the mental health fields of social work and psychiatry/medicine, scholars and researchers have been cognizant of international trainees’ presence and have attempted to understand their training needs, concerns, and challenges through scholarship and research (Arthur, Brooks, & Long, 1979; Bendfeldt & Armstrong, 1998; Cetingok & Hirayama, 1990; Cheng, 1974; Desai & Brieland, 1970; Fiscella & Frankel, 2000; Haj-
Yahia, 1997; Haveliwala, 1979; Knoff, Oken, & Prevost, 1976; Mcdermott & Maretzki, 1975; Murase, 1961; Muslin & Val, 1980; Oliver & Fingas, 1986; Rai, 2002; Palmer, 1957; Weintraub, 1997). This body of related mental health literature is integrated with the counseling psychology literature in order to compliment, support, reinforce, and/or contradict the applied psychology literature as it relates to training issues of Asian international counseling psychology students.

Non-Empirical/Theoretical Discussions

As mentioned earlier, only two non-empirical published articles addressing the training issues of international students in counseling psychology or applied psychology have been found. Although Giorgis and Helms' (1978) article was published approximately three decades ago, their central arguments appear applicable to the current circumstance of many international students today. Giorgis and Helms assert that “American psychology has neglected the training of international students” especially from developing countries (p. 945). These authors expressed concerns about psychology in the U.S. becoming “the study of ‘Western human behavior’” and argued for a shift toward “internationalizing” U.S. applied psychology training programs in order to meet the needs of international students from developing nations. Drawing upon the first author’s training experience as an international clinical psychology student from Ethiopia, Giorgis and Helms discuss three key issues to consider when attempting to develop cross-culturally sensitive training programs for international students from developing countries: “the needs for (a) partial acculturation into American society, (b) relevance of
the training experiences to other cultures, and (c) continued immersion of the student in his or her own culture” (p. 946). These scholars also identify major challenges international students are likely to encounter, such as limited language skills, cultural differences, difficulty relating to U.S. students’ concerns in counseling (e.g., Giorgis experienced difficulty empathizing with U.S. students who felt depressed over relationship break-ups when people in his home country struggled with basic survival), and limited relevance of training experiences to their home countries. Finally, Giorgis and Helms discuss ways in which psychology training programs could do more to become culturally sensitive (e.g., exposing students to a formal acculturation program, providing broad/general training and encouraging students to take various courses in different fields, and facilitating continued immersion with the student’s own culture).

Another theoretical article was published in the 1990s by an Asian international doctoral student in counseling psychology. Chung (1993), the first scholar to point out an absence of research specifically on international students in counseling psychology programs, asserted that their training needs and concerns have been largely neglected. Relying heavily on personal communication resources and his own experiences, this scholar identifies and discusses “unique” educational needs and challenges of international counseling psychology students during their training in the U.S. Chung addressed issues related to the admission process (e.g., clarification of programs’ as well as international students’ expectations), the impact of limited language proficiency and cultural differences, adjustment to the U.S. learning environment, the relevance of U.S. training to their home cultures, potential problems in clinical and research training, and
reentry challenges. Some of the training issues highlighted by Chung have been addressed and studied by more recent scholarship and research in counseling psychology, applied psychology, or other mental health disciplines.

In summary, Giorgis and Helms (1978) as well as Chung (1993) were early scholars who raised important training concerns for international students in counseling psychology and applied psychology in general. Many of the training issues identified by them are still relevant to current international trainees. Yet, it was not until recently that researchers have begun to empirically explore and examine this understudied area with the bulk of research published in 2004 or later.

Empirical Studies

In this subsection, six relevant empirical studies are reviewed in a chronological order of their publication year. Approximately 25 years ago, Helms and Giorgis (1982) surveyed the 85 training directors of the American Psychological Association (APA)-accredited psychology programs in order to ascertain the number of international doctoral students enrolled in applied psychology (counseling, clinical, and school) as well as investigate "whether choice of specialization was influenced by the level of development of the student’s country of origin" (p. 736). Helms and Giorgis report utilizing an instrument which contained 15 questions (it is unclear whether the instrument is developed for this study by the researchers). Results indicate that "the modal number of international students currently enrolled in applied doctoral programs was one or two" across different specialties (p. 737). Forty-six percent of the clinical programs, 23% of
the counseling programs, and 66% of the school programs reported that no international students were enrolled at the time of the survey. The study also suggests that doctoral psychology students are more likely to come from developed than developing countries. Helms and Giorgis conclude that “[a] number of international psychologists are being trained in the United States and Canada, but they are being trained by only a few programs” (p. 742).

As a few researchers have acknowledged, the recent, exact number of international students in counseling psychology or applied psychology in general is not known (Fuller, 2005; Nilsson, 1999; Nilsson & Anderson, 2004). Helms and Giorgis’ (1982) survey results are outdated today; a similar study is needed in order to better understand the current international student population in applied psychology.

More recently, Chen (2004) conducted a qualitative study (i.e., a narrative case study following ethnographic research) investigating the career-development experiences of non-western counselor trainees in Canada. Eight participants (four women and four men) were either enrolled in or completed a counselor education and/or counseling and guidance training program in a Canadian university. Six were master’s level trainees while two were guidance diploma level students. Participants represented various countries including Japan, Hong Kong, Kenya, “a Middle East nation”, Mexico, and Argentina (p. 140). Chen did not identify a specific country referred to as “a Middle East nation”. Of the eight participants, five identified themselves as new immigrants to Canada, and three identified themselves as international students who planned to return to their home country after completing their education. The ages of the participants ranged
from 27 to 55 years old. The length of their stay in Canada varied from 2 to 10 years. Chen conducted semi-structured interviews in order to investigate three phases of participants' career development: experiences before coming to Canada, initial adjustment experiences in Canada, and counselor training experiences in a Canadian university. In the process of data analysis, individual narratives as well as a general narrative, which incorporated major themes from eight individual stories, were developed.

Chen (2004) reported that the results of his study support theoretical perspectives that career development is understood by life process (non-western trainees' life experiences impacted their career experiences, and vice versa), individual agency (non-western trainees were "conscious, intentional, and purposeful" in their career actions), and meaning making (non-western trainees were constantly engaged with "meaning interpretation and meaning exploration") (p. 148). In this study, non-western trainees generally experienced the transition process that adult learners go through: managing role changes, regaining social connections, and increasing academic competence through self-exploration and personal growth. Chen found that non-western trainees were challenged by using English regardless of their level of fluency and the magnitude and intensity of these language problems depended upon their self-perceived language skills. Adjusting to the new learning environment was also a critical issue for participants. Developing social connections in the new environment was important in their coping process.

Nilsson and Anderson (2004) conducted a quantitative study examining clinical supervision issues of international doctoral students in APA-accredited professional
psychology programs (i.e., clinical, counseling, and school psychology programs).

Particularly, the researchers were interested in the relationships among acculturation, counseling self-efficacy, role ambiguity, and the supervisory working alliance. Nilsson and Anderson's (2004) study is a part of Nilsson's (1999) dissertation study, which is the very first empirical research to address any aspect of international students' training issues (i.e., supervision) in U.S. applied psychology. Nilsson and Anderson surveyed 42 international students. Participants were enrolled in the following applied psychology programs: clinical (62%), counseling (31%), and school (7%). They came from 20 countries and 6 continents: Asia (40%), Europe (21%), South America (19%), North America (14%), Africa (2%), and Australia (2%). 62% were women, and 38% were men. Their years in training programs varied; 34% were first or second year doctoral students, 52% were third, fourth, or fifth year doctoral students, and 14% were completing their pre-doctoral internship. Their length of stay in the U.S. also varied from less than 3 years to more than 8 years. 76% of international students had earned a previous degree (i.e., a bachelors or master’s degree) in the U.S.

assesses acculturation levels to the U.S. majority culture (4) the Supervisory Working Alliance Inventory-Trainee Form by Efstation, Patton, & Kardash (1990) (as cited in Nilsson & Anderson, 2004), which measures supervisees’ perceptions of the working alliance with their supervisors, and (5) the International Student Supervision Scale by Nilsson and Dodds (2004) (as cited in Nilsson & Anderson, 2004), which assesses cultural discussions and relational dynamics in supervision.

Hierarchical regression was utilized for data analysis. Nilsson and Anderson found that international supervisees’ acculturation predicted their perceived rapport with their supervisors (an aspect of the supervisory working alliance). Second, international supervisees’ acculturation did not moderate the relationship between role ambiguity and supervisory working alliance. Third, international supervisees’ acculturation as well as the linear combination of acculturation, cross-cultural discussion, and the supervisory working alliance predicted their counseling self-efficacy. Additionally, the researchers found correlations among the study variables: (1) less preference for using English and greater perceived prejudice were correlated with weaker supervisory working alliances, greater role ambiguity, and cross-cultural discussion with supervisors, (2) less acceptance of the U.S. culture was correlated with greater role ambiguity, and (3) cross-cultural discussion with supervisors was correlated with time in training. Nilsson and Anderson (2004) conclude that there are “significant relationships between lower levels of acculturation and less supervisory working alliance, less counseling self-efficacy, more role ambiguity, and more discussion of cultural issues in supervision for international students in APA-accredited programs” (p. 310).
Fuller (2005), who identified herself as a European-American, conducted a qualitative study (a grounded theory) exploring how non-western international doctoral students persevere in APA-accredited counseling psychology programs in the U.S. While Nilsson and Anderson’s (2004) study focused on supervision aspects of clinical, counseling, and school psychology training for all international students, Fuller’s study is the first empirical study to specifically examine the overall counseling psychology training experiences of non-western international students in the U.S. Participants were recruited by email as well as opportunistic sampling procedures (i.e., ask participants/professionals for referrals and consult with international student peers). Eight advanced counseling psychology students or graduates from these programs (seven women and one man) participated in the study. Four were preparing for their pre-doctoral internship, two were on their internship, and two had graduated with a doctoral degree within twelve months. International trainees came from India (n = 1), Japan (n = 2), Korea (n = 1), Russia (n = 1), and Taiwan (n = 3). Their ages varied from 28 to 40 years old, and their years in the U.S. ranged from three to 12 years. Fuller conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants through “simultaneous email,” or e-mail interviewing (p. 66). After the initial interviews, follow-up questions were sent to the participants; however, only three responded. Fuller used grounded theory to analyze data. The data analysis process involved open coding, which develops categories and subcategories, as well as axial coding, which develops a theory of a phenomenon under an investigation.
Fuller reported six basic components of her theory which explains how non-western international students persevere through their doctoral counseling psychology training: (1) pre-existing conditions of persevering, (2) internal processes related to persevering, (3) contexts in which participants persevered, (4) intervening external conditions, (5) strategies for persevering, and (6) consequences of persevering. Upon entering their counseling psychology programs, non-western international trainees brought various pre-existing conditions (e.g., national, cultural, racial and linguistic identities, values and worldviews, as well as previous education and training experiences), which impacted their training experiences in the U.S. For instance, some participants reported becoming more highly aware of their racial or ethnic identities as well as differing cultural values or worldviews in the U.S. Three internal processes, which were influenced by the pre-existing conditions, occurred during persevering in counseling psychology programs: (1) self-awareness, (2) confidence, and (3) being open-minded and forgiving. Non-western international students had to persevere in two contextual settings, academic and clinical, during their training. Several types of intervening external conditions (e.g., program issues, needs of significant others, administrative issues, and perceived opportunities in the U.S. and their home countries) influenced non-western trainees' choice of strategies for persevering. The persevering strategies that non-western trainees utilized included seeking support from others (e.g., U.S. and international peers, mentors, and therapists) and taking action (e.g., entertaining or distracting themselves, engaging in self-care, and addressing problems). As a result of selecting strategies for persevering through the training programs, non-western
international students experienced various consequences, including optimism, frustration, and finding alternative solutions.

Mittal and Wieling (2006) conducted a phenomenological study examining the academic and clinical training experiences of international doctoral students in marriage and family therapy programs in the U.S. Their research comes from Mittal’s (2002) dissertation, which is the first qualitative study exploring the overall training experiences of international students in a mental health discipline (as Fuller (2005) conducted her study three years later). Thirteen participants were recruited through purposive sampling methods including eight current students and five graduates from accredited marriage and family therapy programs. Participants came from India (n = 4), Mexico (n = 2), Malaysia (n = 2), Germany (n = 1), Canada (n = 1), Japan (n = 1), Iran (n = 1), and South Africa (n = 1). 85% identified English as their second or third language. Their ages ranged from 26 to 51 years old. 62% were women, and 38% were men. The majority of participants (n = 10) had studied in the U.S. prior to pursuing a doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy. Data were collected through face-to-face or telephone interviews and an e-mail survey.

Mittal and Wieling (2006) organized their findings into four major categories. In the first category, experiences related to perceptions of the self, two major themes emerged. First, several participants experienced conflicts and struggles due to identifying themselves as “outsiders” to the U.S (e.g., a sense of inferiority toward U.S. natives and concerns about how U.S. clients/community members perceive their various differences). Second, a number of participants reported having anxiety due to using English and
encountering challenges in speaking and writing English in their training. In the second category, experiences related to relationships with systems external to self, five main themes were identified. First, several participants reported experiencing conflicts due to identifying themselves either as outsiders or insiders based on messages from others. Specifically, international students' experiences differed depending upon geographical locations of their universities. These students' experiences were impacted by whether or not community members (within and outside the university) appreciated cultural diversity. While European/White international students received privileges or experienced invisibility (community members assumed these students' worldviews were similar to theirs), international students of color experienced pressure to "assimilate" to the mainstream U.S. culture (e.g., be assertive and confrontational, express feelings, and speak up in class). Second, participants' experience of connectedness or disconnectedness depended on the presence or absence of social support from other international students and/or U.S.-based students during their training. Third, several participants reported feeling "minimized, insulted, and/or marginalized" due to being exposed to stereotypical, prejudicial, and/or discriminatory attitudes, reactions and comments from their faculty, peers, and/or clients (p. 376). Fourth and fifth, participants reported positive experiences in which they felt supported or cared for by their faculty, as well as negative experiences which led them to feel unsupported or uncared for by their faculty. For instance, several participants reported feeling supported when their faculty were open to cultural differences. On the other hand, many participants reported feeling uncared for when their faculty did not take any initiative to ask how they were doing in
their programs. In the third category, “experiences related to other factors” (e.g., differing cultural contexts and a different education system), three major themes emerged (p. 378). Participants reported challenges experienced due to cultural differences between U.S. and their home educational environments. They described disappointments/frustrations with their training program, and they explained satisfactions with their training program. In the fourth category, strategies that helped international students to cope, three main strategies for coping were identified: developing confidence about their differences, standing up for themselves, and having perseverance.

Nilsson and Dodds (2006) conducted a quantitative study to develop a scale, the International Student Supervision Scale (ISSS), which measures “unique” supervisory needs of international students in their counselor training. Of the 115 international graduate student participants, 79% were enrolled in American Psychological Association (APA)-accredited professional psychology programs while 21% were enrolled in Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)-accredited counseling programs. The participants came from 39 countries and six geographic regions including Asia/Middle East (37%), Europe (28%), Central/South America/Caribbean (15%), North America (14%), Africa (4%), and Australia (3%). Seventy percent were women, and 30% were men. The ages of the participants varied from 21 to 49 years old. The length of their stay in the U.S. ranged from less than one year to more than eight years. Seventy-five percent reported that English was not their first language. Participants reported the race or ethnicity of their supervisors: The
majority, 85% of the supervisors were identified as White, 7% were Asian/Pacific Islander, 3% were Hispanic/Latino, and 2% were Black or African American.

Nilsson and Dodds (2006) utilized two instruments: (1) the ISSS, a 17 item Likert-type scale, which was developed for and is the main focus of this study, in order to assess international supervisees’ needs and (2) Sodowsky and Plake’s (1991) American-International Relations Scale (AIRS) (as cited in Nilsson & Dodds, 2006), which measures international people’s acculturation to the U.S. mainstream culture. Participants were also asked to rate their satisfaction with supervision as well as their supervisors’ cross-cultural sensitivity and report the race/ethnicity of their supervisors.

Nilsson and Dodds (2006) report that factor analysis suggests “an underlying structure of two uncorrelated factors”: (1) Multicultural Discussion (ISSS-MD), which measures the frequency with which cultural issues “unique” to international trainees are discussed during supervision, and (2) Supervisees’ Cultural Knowledge (ISSS-SCK), which assesses international trainees’ perceived cultural knowledge and eagerness to discuss cultural issues when compared with their supervisors (p. 58). The researchers found three correlations among the study variables. First, international students with lower acculturation engaged in more cultural discussions during supervision (ISSS-MD) and felt more culturally competent than their supervisors (ISSS-SCK). Second, international students who engaged in more cultural discussion (ISSS-MD) were more satisfied with supervision and rated their supervisors as more culturally sensitive. Third, international students who felt more culturally knowledgeable (ISSS-SCK) than their supervisors were less satisfied with supervision and rated their supervisors as less
culturally sensitive. The findings from one-way analysis of variance suggest that non-western students who were from geographical regions that are culturally dissimilar to the U.S. mainstream culture (e.g., Asia, Africa, and South/Central America) reported more cultural discussions in supervision than did western students (e.g., North America, Europe, and Australia). In addition, international students engaged in more cultural discussion when their supervisors were persons of color than White. Nilsson and Dodds conclude that it is critical for supervisors, especially White supervisors, to pay close attention to and actively address cultural issues when supervising international trainees.

In summary, research interest in the examination of training experiences, concerns, and needs of international students in counseling psychology and/or related mental health fields has grown. Thus far, researchers have studied enrollment of international students in U.S. doctoral applied psychology programs (Helms & Giorgis, 1982), career development experiences of non-western international/immigrant counselor trainees in Canada (Chen, 2004), supervision issues of international students in U.S. doctoral applied psychology programs (Nilsson & Anderson, 2004), training experiences of non-western (mostly Asians) international students in U.S. doctoral counseling psychology programs (Fuller, 2005), training experiences of international students in U.S. marriage and family therapy programs (Mittal & Wieling, 2006), and supervision needs of international students in U.S. applied psychology as well as counselor education programs (Nilsson & Dodds, 2006).
The previous section reviewed empirical and non-empirical articles most relevant to the current study. In this section, the training issues pertinent to Asian international students in counseling psychology programs or other mental health disciplines are discussed. First, the relevance of the six broad training issues to scholarship and research in the counseling psychology and/or related mental health fields is reviewed. Six training issues emerged from reviewing the literature on international students in general. These training issues are: adapting to cultural differences between Asian and U.S. academic environments, language proficiency, social support, financial concerns, career concerns, and stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. Second, training issues, which are germane to Asian international students in counseling psychology and/or related mental health disciplines yet have not previously mentioned, are identified and discussed. These are issues such as clinical and supervision experiences and transferability of training.

Adapting to Cultural Differences Between Asian and U.S. Academic Environments

Academic settings.

International students' (including Asians) adjustment challenges due to cultural differences in previous and current academic environments were addressed in one theoretical article and three empirical studies. In a theoretical article, Chung (1993) claims that Asian international students, who are accustomed to “great power differences between teachers and students” as well as “one-way lecturing,” may “feel inadequate in
counseling psychology classes in which interactions among instructor and students are intense” (p. 57). Chung states that Asian international students may feel challenged or frustrated while adjusting to U.S. learning styles which require students’ active class participations (e.g., present ideas, ask questions, and challenge others). Chung’s perspectives are largely supported by the following empirical studies.

In a narrative case study, Chen (2004) found that adapting to the U.S. learning style/format was a critical issue for non-western counselor trainees. Many participants were accustomed to a learning format of “professor-talking plus students-listening,” or “up-down one-way communication” in their home countries, and therefore, adjusting to a new style of “interactive teaching and learning” in the U.S. created a challenge (p. 146). Chen reports that non-western trainees generally felt “very uncomfortable and bewildered” when realizing that class participation was an integral part of counselor training (p. 146). The study suggests that perceived language competence and cultural values and habits negatively impacted trainees’ willingness to participate in class. In contrast, the study indicates that previous professional experience, age, maturity, and flexible personal style facilitated trainees’ eagerness to participate in class.

Similarly, in a phenomenological examination, Mittal and Wieling (2006) found that several participants (international students and graduates of marriage and family therapy programs), experienced difficulties in adjusting to a new learning environment in the U.S. Specifically, these participants struggled with unfamiliar aspects of U.S. learning environments, such as informal relationships between professors and students, active class participation, competitiveness among students, and/or focus on critical
thinking. Utilizing a grounded theory tradition, Fuller (2005) also found that “learning to negotiate across structural and stylistic differences” between U.S. and non-western educational systems and practices was a central issue for non-western counseling psychology trainees. Some participants reported that learning to become independent, individualistic, and/or assertive was difficult. However, regarding the power distance between teachers and students, Fuller reports a differing perspective: A Russian participant challenged a perception of the U.S. educational system being egalitarian as “an illusion” while believing that “there is a high power distance between faculty and a student just like in any other culture” (p. 113).

Clinical settings.

Several scholars have argued that cultural differences between home and host countries as well as the limited knowledge of host country culture impact the clinical work of mixed groups of international students in counseling psychology and/or other mental health fields. In theoretical articles, Cheng, (1973) and Haveliwala (1979) claim that international medical graduates in psychiatry may experience difficulties understanding and communicating with U.S. clients, as well as interacting with clinical supervisors and peers due to various cultural differences, which exist in worldviews, values, basic assumptions about human nature, and appropriate relations between individuals (e.g., gender roles, parental roles, and relationships with authority figures). Upon conducting a quantitative study, Nilsson and Dodds (2006) point out that many international counselor trainees face difficulties due to their limited knowledge of the
U.S. culture, which may be “a prerequisite for empathizing with U.S. clients’ feelings and experiences” (p. 51). Addressing minority counselor training issues in a theoretical article, Gutierrez (1982) also asserts that many international counselor education students encounter challenges understanding the complexity of U.S. culture such as “the nuances of ethnic, racial, and minority relations” (p. 223). Cheng (1973), Chung, (1993), and Giorgis and Helms (1978) discuss that some international trainees in counseling psychology, applied psychology, or psychiatry may not be familiar with certain social problems that are perceived to be more common in the U.S. than in their home country. These scholars identify child sexual abuse, social isolation of older adults, and U.S. college students’ developmental crises as examples. Consequently, some trainees may find it difficult to fully understand/emphasize with clients who present such problems.

Chung (1993) argues that “education in counseling psychology often involves modification of a student’s value system, ethics, attitudes, and interpersonal skills” (p. 56). Given the field specific expectations such as adherence to the APA’s ethics codes and multicultural guidelines, some international students may be challenged by differing cultural/world views and need to learn to negotiate cultural differences/value conflicts. Chung believes that an adjustment to the field of counseling psychology may not be a simple process for some international students. For example, “Inability in acculturation may result in social rejection and academic failure. On the other hand, success in acculturation may lead to another conflict. International students have to deal with the cultural conflicts when they interact with peers from their home country and when they return home” (p. 57).
For the most part, scholarship and research support that similar to the international student population as a whole, mixed groups of international trainees in counseling psychology and/or related mental health fields encounter various educational challenges due to cultural differences between their previous and current learning environments. Additionally, cultural differences may influence international trainees’ clinical work when attempting to build relationships with clients as well as interacting with supervisors and peers.

Language Proficiency

English language proficiency has been studied and discussed in research and scholarship in counseling psychology and/or other mental health fields. Several scholars have speculated that English proficiency impacts the training of international students in counseling psychology, counselor education, and psychiatry/medicine. Chung (1993) as well as Nilsson and Dodds (2006) claim that English proficiency may be particularly important for international students in counseling psychology and counseling related programs, compared with other academic disciplines, for the following reasons: (1) language facility impacts communication skills, which are found to be an essential factor determining the success of counseling psychology students in Chung, Kirkpatrick, and Harmon’s unpublished study (1992) (as cited in Chung, 1993), and (2) effective communication skills with clients and supervisors are expected of counselor trainees. Chung as well as Nilsson and Dodds argue that international students may find it
challenging to effectively interact/communicate with clients due to linguistic differences (e.g., students’ accented speech and use of different expressions).

Upon discussing the training issues of minority counselor education students, Gutierrez (1982) asserts that non-native English speaking counselor trainees may experience language problems, which impact their ability to understand and respond to clients. Gutierrez also argues that international counselors may be perceived as “less skilled” than U.S. counselors “with respect to smoothness, shortness, and clarity of reflections when speaking English” (p. 222). Therefore, language proficiency may impact international students’ “self-image” as counselors (p. 222).

In a literature review on international psychiatric residents in Canada, Cheng (1973) claims that verbal communication skills, which are associated with spoken English skills, are particularly important for international psychiatric residents when interacting with clients. Cheng believes that “a sophisticated knowledge of the nuances, idioms and slang of the spoken language” is necessary for empathic understanding and effective communication. In a brief literature review on international medical graduates, Fiscella and Frankel (2000) point out that even if international medical graduates are fluent in English, their unfamiliarity with regional dialects, colloquial speech, body language, and speech inflection could make communication with clients challenging. In an opinion paper, Haveliwala (1979) claims that some international psychiatrists may not be recognized or appreciated for their work due to limited language proficiency. Haveliwala also argues that international psychiatrists’ limited knowledge of or
unfamiliarity with slang, colloquial speech, and local humor may become a hindrance to conducting effective therapy.

Upon reviewing the literature on the effects of speech accents on interpersonal evaluations, Fuertes, Potere, and Ramirez (2002) conclude that speech accents affect listeners’ evaluations of/perceptions toward “accented” counseling psychologists/therapists. Fuertes et al. report that speech accents are associated with unfavorable evaluations of therapists with regard to their expertness, attractiveness, and solidarity. The scholars also report that “speech accent effects” may be mediated by a listener’s level of cross-cultural awareness (p. 352).

Research supports that English proficiency and confidence in English impact mixed groups of international students training in counseling psychology/mental health. In a narrative case study, Chen (2004) found that mastering English was a major concern for non-western counselor trainees regardless of their English proficiency. Chen points out that counselor training programs are “language-intensive” and thus, many non-native English speaking trainees encounter great challenges in utilizing their second language. This study indicates that participants’ perceived language competence is significantly impacting their reactions toward language challenges. Importantly, “neither anticipated nor experienced language difficulty became a deterrent that threatened” participants’ “resolution to pursue this language-intensive professional training” (p. 149). Chen reports that for many participants, “the acquisition of professional knowledge and skills in counseling goes hand-in-hand with the enhancement of their language capacity in English, a parallel learning process” (p. 145).
Through a grounded theory tradition, Fuller (2005) found that confidence in English facility was critical for non-western counseling psychology trainees and that regardless of the level of perceived English proficiency, “everyone had something to say about their English language skills” (p. 109). For many participants, struggles with English often lead to self-doubt. While utilizing English as their second language, non-western participants felt self-conscious, encountered difficulties fully expressing ideas or finding appropriate words in discussion, found writing in English time consuming, spent a larger amount of time reading and writing than did U.S. students, and even experienced being ridiculed in class. A few participants stated that greater skillfulness with English assisted their counseling skills and cultural competency.

In a phenomenological examination, Mittal and Wieling (2006) found that the majority of participants, international trainees in marriage and family therapy programs, experienced anxiety as well as challenges regarding speaking and/or writing in English during their training. For some participants, speaking up in class, engaging in multi-tasks (i.e., follow, think, and talk), and presenting ideas clearly (e.g., to the point, straightforward) were difficult. For others, writing in English as well as writing in the U.S. style (e.g., to the point, very specific) posed challenges.

Scholarship and research support that mixed groups of international students in counseling psychology and/or other mental health disciplines also face challenges due to limited English proficiency. Research also supports that confidence in English skills and speech accents are also important factors influencing counselor training experiences.

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Social Support

Three empirical studies highlight the importance of developing social support for mixed groups of international students in counseling psychology and/or other mental health disciplines. In a narrative case study, Chen (2004) found that although many participants experienced a sense of social isolation, “a positive and supportive training environment appears to be of crucial importance to trainees’ healthy adaptation to their unique professional learning experience in a cross-cultural context” (p. 146). Having “constructive” relationships with fellow students, professors, and supervisors helped trainees cope with various challenges during their counselor training. Chen concludes that without positive interpersonal relationships, non-western trainees were likely to feel isolated, discouraged, and negative regarding their training experiences.

Mittal and Wieling’s (2006) phenomenological examination reported that “being connected to other international as well as US-based students was important” during their training (p. 375). Several trainees discussed difficulties being the first or only international student in their training program or cohort. A couple of participants reported positive experiences due to having other international students (including students from their own country) in their program. Several participants underscored the importance of having positive relationships with U.S. peers. Some trainees experienced a sense of isolation and a lack of belonging in their programs due to being disconnected from U.S. peers. Additionally, many participants reported that “faculty involvement, flexibility, and their caring as well as supportive attitudes toward international students” had a positive, facilitative impact on their academic and clinical training experiences (p. 86).
International students appreciated faculty’s openness to cultural differences, collegial relationships with faculty, and faculty’s willingness to discuss cross-cultural/international issues. On the other hand, several participants reported that “their faculty members lacked initiative to ask about them and completely neglected to ever inquire about their needs” (p. 377). Some trainees perceived their faculty being ill-prepared to support students with diverse backgrounds.

Fuller’s (2005) grounded theory examination found that seeking support from others was one central strategy which non-western international participants utilized to persevere in their counseling psychology training programs. Many participants reported seeking support from U.S. and international peers as well as fellow nationals. Some reported having found faculty mentors in their doctoral programs while others identified their clinical supervisor, therapist, and/or master’s program advisor as their mentors. A few participants spoke of seeking therapy during their doctoral training. Particularly, one participant reported perceiving his therapist as an advisor and mentor when lacking advising and mentoring in his academic program.

Although limited, existing research findings appear consistent that re-establishing social connections in new learning environments in their host country is important for mixed groups of international students in counseling psychology and/or other mental health disciplines. Specifically, developing positive relationships with faculty, supervisors, and U.S. as well as international peers is likely to impact international students’ educational experiences and satisfactions.
Financial Concerns

Two empirical studies addressed financial concerns for mixed groups of international students in counseling psychology and/or other mental health disciplines. In a narrative case study, Chen (2004) concluded that counselor trainees with international student status could be vulnerable to financial difficulties during the middle of their training. Chen states that for international trainees with limited financial resources, financial concerns may negatively impact their psychological and physical well-being. In Fuller’s (2005) grounded theory examination, while some non-western international participants had limited financial concerns due to receiving financial support from their parents, others who needed to support themselves as well as their family struggled with financial worries. Paying higher tuition than U.S. peers, supporting themselves solely on assistantship stipends, and learning about their department’s policy which gave assistantship priority to U.S. students exacerbated international trainees’ financial anxiety. Few financial resources led some trainees to feel pressure to finish their programs within a short period of time (e.g., 3 to 4 years) and experience extreme psychological stress while trying to secure an assistantship.

Only a few studies have examined financial concerns of mixed groups of international students in counseling psychology and/or other mental health fields. Existing research findings may suggest that financial worries affect some international students more than others. Still, paying high tuitions and having limited financial resources may become psychological stressors for many international students.
Career Concerns

Two empirical studies address non-western (mostly Asians) international students' career concerns. Chen's (2004) narrative case study explored the career development experiences of non-western counselor trainees. Many participants reported having had successful and productive professional careers prior to coming to Canada; yet, due to a variety of motivating/triggering factors, they had developed "the yearning for change" in their career journey (p. 143). For some participants, the decision to become a professional counselor marked a crucial turning point in their career development. Chen reports that factors such as, self-awareness/self-understanding, significant others, and personal drives impacted their career decision making. Chen concludes that participants' life and career experiences were closely connected, their career actions were intentional and purposeful, and they were engaged in the meaning making process.

Using a grounded theory research approach, Fuller (2005) found that perceived career opportunities in the U.S. and/or their home country influenced non-western international participants' plans after graduation. Upon graduation, five participants planned to stay in the U.S., one planned to return home, and two planned to stay in the U.S. for a limited time (e.g., 2 to 3 years) before returning home. Non-western international trainees reported a variety of career options including teaching, research, and clinical work. For some participants, having bicultural experiences, being bilingual, and having developed confidence through doctoral training experiences helped them feel positive and optimistic about attaining future career opportunities. For others, having visa restrictions due to the international student status, experiencing covert
discrimination, and receiving inadequate training in certain areas (e.g., research) affected their future career/residence plans.

Very few studies have addressed career concerns of mixed groups of international students in counseling psychology and/or other mental health fields. Chen (2004) explored non-western counselor trainees’ career development process while Fuller (2005) addressed non-western international counseling psychology students’ plans after graduation as well as factors affecting their career plans.

Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination

Three empirical studies address mixed groups of international students’ negative training experiences and/or encounters with perceived prejudice and discrimination. In Chen’s (2004) narrative case study, some non-western participants reported encountering negative counselor training experiences (no specific example was illustrated) and perceived “a lack of cross-cultural sensitivity and interest from some instructors and fellow students” as one possible reason behind their hindering training experiences. However, Chen (2004) concluded that his qualitative study did not support “the claim that racial discrimination and prejudice were highly visible in higher education institutions in North America” (p. 149). Chen states that no participant reported that “he or she experienced explicit discrimination and prejudice in this training context” (p. 150).

In Fuller’s (2005) grounded theory study, several non-western international participants in counseling psychology programs reported having “invalidating and discriminatory” training experiences due to their training programs’ lack of cross-cultural
awareness and competence with diversity issues (p. 88). Participants reported feeling hurt, angry, frustrated, marginalized, unsafe, invisible, and discouraged when encountering their faculty’s and/or peers’ ethnocentric attitudes/assumptions, resistance to raising awareness about diversity, limited experience with or interest in diversity, invalidation toward their cultural perspectives, and/or lack of eye contact in group settings. Participants also reported feeling resentful when needing to educate their faculty and peers about diversity issues, feeling marginalized for racial, cultural, linguistic, and sexual orientation differences and needing to “fight to exist, be visible, [and] be heard” (p. 95) They also reported feeling exhausted at having to “work harder to earn necessary credibility” as a therapist (p. 108).

In Mittal and Wieling’s (2006) phenomenological examination, several international participants reported training experiences which led them to feel minimized, insulted, and/or marginalized. For instance, several participants reported that some faculty and peers made stereotypical comments toward their culture and people from their culture, lacked awareness of different countries and within group differences, and expected them to be cultural representatives during discussions on diversity. Some participants stated that their faculty and clinical supervisors made discriminatory, prejudicial, and culturally insensitive comments. Additionally, several trainees spoke of “their experiences with covert and overt racist and discriminatory attitudes from clients” (p. 377).

Among three qualitative studies, there seem to be contradictory interpretations of international students’ negative training experiences. Participants in Chen’s (2004) study
identified cross-cultural insensitivity by their faculty and peers as a possible reason behind their hindering training experiences. Chen did not interpret cross-cultural insensitivity as prejudicial or discriminatory; yet, they may be closely connected. Fuller’s (2005) as well as Mittal and Wieling’s (2006) findings support previous research which suggest that perceived prejudice and discrimination are critical issues for at least some international students.

The next two sections present issues that are unique to international students in counseling psychology or related mental health fields. Training issues including counselor-client relationships and interactions, supervisor-supervisee relationships and interactions, and transferability of training will be discussed for the first time.

Counselor-Client and Supervisor-Supervisee Relationships and Interactions

Clinical training such as practicum and internship is an integral part of counseling psychology programs. Although limited, the existing scholarship and research have addressed challenges that international counselor trainees may encounter with clients, supervisors, and clinical sites.

Counselor-client relationships and interactions.

In a theoretical article, Chung (1993) asserts that many international students in counseling psychology find practicum and internship challenging due to linguistic and cultural differences. Chung claims that some clients may feel uncomfortable working with an international counselor and may prematurely terminate counseling due to the lack
of confidence in the international counselor’s competence. Chung’s perspectives seem supported by the following research. In a qualitative study, Fuller (2005) found that linguistic and cultural differences created challenges for several non-western international participants in counseling psychology programs upon working with clients. One participant stated that she needed to work harder to obtain credibility as a therapist. A few participants had experiences in which some clients wanted to change therapists or did not want to work with international therapists. In another qualitative study, Mittal and Wieling (2006) found that several international trainees in marriage and family therapy programs experienced “covert and overt racist and discriminatory attitudes from clients” (p. 377). Specifically, one participant reported that some clients requested a U.S.-born therapist after making an initial phone call to schedule a first appointment. Another participant also reported that a few clients refused to work with her because she was from a different country.

*Supervisor-supervisee relationships and interactions.*

Clinical supervision of counselor trainees has been recognized as an essential component in facilitating trainees’ continuous development of counseling skills, case-conceptualization skills, self-awareness, and professional behaviors (Garrett, Borders, Crutchfield, Torres-Rivera, Brotherton, & Curtis, 2001). Although limited, the existing scholarship and research has addressed international supervisees’ challenges in supervision as well as ways in which supervisors could better assist international supervisees.
In a theoretical article, Haj-Yahia (1997) illustrates how non-western cultural values (e.g., collectivism, conformity, harmony, hierarchical relationships, and following predecessors) may pose conflicts when international social work students engage in supervision and clinical work in the U.S. Though the scholar mainly focuses on Arab international students, some of the cultural value conflicts discussed in this article seem relevant to Asian international trainees. For instance, Haj-Yahia argues that non-western international students who are familiar with hierarchical relationships may experience “tension, ambiguity, and anxiety” when encountering egalitarian student-supervisor relationships (p. 170). In addition, being accustomed to cultural values such as conformity and obedience, non-western students may struggle with critical, independent thinking which is expected by western supervisors. In another theoretical article, Chung (1993) claims that it is critical for supervisors who work with international supervisees to become sensitive to cultural factors which may impact the supervisees’ clinical work. In particular, Chung suggests that supervisors should avoid ethnocentric views on how to conduct counseling and help the supervisees become aware of the impact of cultural differences on their therapeutic relationships, counseling approaches/skills, and therapeutic outcomes. Chung asserts that it may be necessary for supervisors to spend extra time in supervision when working with international trainees.

In a qualitative study, Fuller (2005) reports that a few non-western international students in counseling psychology programs had invalidating experiences in clinical supervision. One participant reported feeling “grated against” by her young intern supervisor who treated her as if she were “a middle school student” when in fact the
participant had more life and professional experiences than her supervisor (p. 116). Another participant reported feeling “disconcerted” by her supervisor’s “covert” re-assignment of a client, who requested a different therapist who was not an international student after having a brief conversation with the participant to schedule a first appointment (p. 116).

In other qualitative studies, Mittal (2002) as well as Mittal and Wieling (2006) found that while some international students in marriage and family therapy programs received supportive and encouraging supervision, a few participants reported experiencing faculty supervisors’ culturally insensitive remarks. Mittal (2002) also found that while some participants reported having discussions of diversity and cultural differences with their supervisors, others reported having no such discussions.

In her dissertation study, Nilsson (1999) conducted a survey to compare international and U.S. students in U.S. applied psychology programs in regard to acculturation, counseling self-efficacy, and role difficulties in supervision. Of the 310 participants (70% were women and 30% were men), 83% identified as U.S. citizens, and 14% identified as international students (3% identified as permanent residents). U.S. participants identified themselves as the following: 66% European, 10% African, 10% Hispanic, 5% Asian, 5% multiracial, 2% Native Indian, and 2% other. International participants came from 20 countries and all continents: Asia (40%), Europe (21%), South America (19%), North America (14%), Africa (2%), and Australia (2%). Results indicate that international students reported less counseling self-efficacy than U.S. majority students. Nilsson argues that a positive supervisory working alliance may be particularly
crucial for international supervisees because high supervisory working alliance was positively associated with these students’ feelings of counseling self-efficacy and negatively associated with role difficulties.

In a quantitative study on international applied psychology students’ supervision issues, Nilsson and Anderson (2004) found significant relationships between international trainees’ acculturation levels, supervisory working alliance, counseling self-efficacy, role ambiguity, and cultural discussions in supervision. Based upon their findings, the researchers underscore that it is important for supervisors who work with international students to (1) assess international trainees’ acculturation levels, (2) discuss cultural issues in supervision, (3) develop a strong supervisory working alliance, and (4) clarify supervisory expectations.

Nilsson and Dodds’ (2006) quantitative study highlights the importance for supervisors to actively engage in cultural discussion when supervising international trainees. In this study, participants “rated greater satisfaction with supervision and viewed their supervisors as more sensitive to diversity issues when more discussions concerning cultural issues took place” (p. 60).

Experiences with clinical training sites.

Just one study addresses international counselor trainee’s experiences with clinical training sites. In a qualitative study, Fuller (2005) found that non-western international students in counseling psychology programs had widely varied experiences and degree of satisfaction in clinical training sites. One participant reported feeling
pleased with having an access to a variety of practicum sites due to her highly recognized doctoral program. Whereas, another participant reported experiencing limited access to desirable practicum sites and struggling with accumulating enough direct contact hours with clients due to his language differences.

In summary, the existing scholarship and research suggest that Asian international students in counseling psychology experience various challenges during their clinical training. While some experiences working with clients and/or supervisors are described as positive and rewarding, other experiences are reported to be negative and discouraging.

Transferability of Training

Sue (1999) argues that “[c]ounseling and psychotherapy have traditionally been conceptualized in Western individualistic terms,” and different counseling theories “share certain common components of White culture in their values and beliefs” (p. 59). Although the literature is limited, some scholars and researchers have raised concerns regarding the relevance of and transferability of U.S. counselor training experiences to international students’ clinical work in their home countries upon graduation.

In a theoretical article, Giorgis and Helms (1978) question whether the existing psychology training programs in the U.S. meet the needs of international students, especially from developing nations, and argue that the traditional, western model of psychology (e.g., one-to-one psychotherapy models) may not be applicable to developing countries where “there is a shortage of mental health experts for the number of patients who require treatment” (p. 947). Giorgis and Helms propose alternative treatment
approaches such as “the use of paraprofessional and technical specialists and the development of large-scale treatment programs” (p. 947). The scholars suggest that U.S. psychology programs must offer “multifaceted disciplinary training” where students can be trained in diverse areas such as economics, cross-cultural psychology, politics, and anthropology, in order to become generalists or “a jack of all trades” (p. 948). In another theoretical article, Chung (1993) claims that the relevance of U.S. counseling psychology training experiences to their home culture is a significant concern for many international students. Chung believes that “[s]ome students may selectively pay attention to materials that are applicable to their culture. Others may be well adjusted to the American materials but have difficulty in applying the knowledge to their own culture” (p. 57).

Upon an extensive literature search of psychological journals on international students, Fuller (2005) reports that there was no literature which addressed the relevance and applicability of U.S. training to international students’ careers in their home countries. Fuller states that “international students’ transfer of U.S. counseling psychology training to home countries is an area in need of research” as “there is no published research on U.S.-trained international counseling psychology students returning home to apply their training” (pp. 24-25).

Very few studies provide empirical data about transferability of training from the U.S. to students’ home country at a later time. Desai and Brieland (1970) surveyed and interviewed international social work students and their field instructors. The researchers report that international students who had prior social work educational backgrounds and work experiences in their home countries were most likely to discuss transferability of
U.S. social work training. Participants identified “skills such as interviewing, diagnosis and treatment, principles of establishment of relationship, and use of one’s self as a tool” as transferable aspects of training. In addition, supervision techniques and professional development were considered helpful in their countries.

In contrast, Mittal’s (2002) qualitative study found that some international students in marriage and family therapy programs expressed concerns about the relevance of training to their home countries. A few participants reported that their training programs did not help “international practitioners translate and integrate their learning in their work in the U.S. or their home countries upon graduation” (p. 108). Mittal criticizes the field of marriage and family therapy for “training international students to think and act in ways that fit the dominant American culture, which is often not productive for international trainees” (p. 120).

Nilsson and Anderson (2004) surveyed international applied psychology students and found that 57% of participants planned to return home upon graduation. The researchers speculate that an effective training goal would be to help international students become bicultural so that they could function as therapists in two cultures. Nilsson and Anderson encourage clinical supervisors to ask “international supervisees about their professional plans, and, if appropriate, explore how the clinical knowledge they have obtained in the United States can be transferred to their home countries” (p. 311).

In summary, some scholars and researchers have identified the relevance of U.S. counselor training to international students’ home countries as an important training
concern. However, there is very limited research exploring and examining the issue of the transferability of training, and future research is much needed in this area.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed literature on the following areas pertinent to the current study: 1) adapting to cultural differences between Asian and U.S. academic environments, 2) language proficiency, 3) social support, 4) financial concerns, 5) career concerns, 6) stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination, 7) clinical and supervision experiences, and 8) transferability of training. Although the field of counseling psychology has been committed to multiculturalism and has recently begun to focus on internationalization, the former often addresses diversities within the U.S., and the latter focuses more attention on counseling psychology outside of the U.S. As a result, training issues of international counseling psychology students in the U.S. have not received adequate attention.

Nilsson (1999), Nilsson and Anderson (2004), and Fuller (2005) are a few of the pioneers who have contributed specifically to the exploration of training issues of international students in U.S. counseling psychology programs. The current study differs from these previous studies in the following ways: this study 1) focuses on international students who identify themselves as Asian; 2) utilizes a phenomenological approach to examine training experiences of these students in depth; 3) explores not only the overall training experiences of Asian international students but also their suggestions and recommendations for faculty and supervisors about how to provide high quality, satisfying training experiences.
CHAPTER II

METHODS

The purpose of this study was threefold: (a) to create an opportunity in which voices of Asian international students in APA-accredited doctoral counseling psychology programs in the U.S. are heard; (b) to describe and understand the training experiences of Asian international students; and (c) to present recommendations to counseling psychology programs in regards to providing cross-culturally sensitive and effective training and support for current and prospective Asian international students. This study was guided by the primary research question: “What is the overall training experience of Asian international students in APA-accredited doctoral counseling psychology programs in the U.S.?” In this chapter, I will first discuss the rationale for selecting qualitative research. Second, I will present the rationale for choosing phenomenological approach in particular. Third, I will describe the selection and recruitment of participants. Fourth, I will discuss the methods of collecting and storing data. Fifth, I will present the steps to analyze data. Finally, I will describe the researcher’s background, experience with the research topic, and assumptions.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research has been slowly yet steadily gaining recognition and solidifying its place in the field of psychology. Counseling psychologists in particular have been actively involved with advocating and endorsing qualitative methods
Openness and commitment of counseling psychologists to this methodological diversity are evidenced by major counseling psychology journals devoting recent issues to qualitative methods including a special issue in the Journal of Counseling Psychology in 2005 and two special issues in The Counseling Psychologist in 2007. Morrow (2007) asserts that “[c]ounseling psychologists have been in the forefront in psychology in calling for expanded methodological diversity, in particular qualitative research methods, to adequately explore the depth and complexity of the human experience” (p. 209). Morrow also claims that “[q]ualitative methods are particularly suited to counseling psychology research” for various reasons, including “the relevance of qualitative approaches to multicultural counseling and psychology” (p. 209).

Qualitative researchers have presented several rationales for when it is appropriate and informative to conduct qualitative research. First, qualitative research is useful and valuable when the research topic or problem has not previously been studied, is a little understood phenomenon, and requires an exploration (Camic, Rhodes, & Yardley, 2003; Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). For instance, researchers pursue qualitative methods because there is “a need to study a group or population, identify variables that can then be measured, or hear silenced voices” (Creswell, 2007, p. 40). Second, qualitative research is suitable when investigating “what” or “how” questions rather than “why” questions (Creswell, 1998, Marecek, 2003). Qualitative studies are generally descriptive rather than explanatory (Patton, 2002). Third, qualitative research is appropriate when studying individuals in natural or real-world settings as opposed to...
laboratories or controlled settings (Creswell, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Fourth, qualitative inquiry is useful when seeking to understand the contexts or settings in which participants experience a phenomenon because their experiences cannot be separated from the context in which they experience it (Camic et al., 2003; Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002). Fifth, qualitative research is suitable when it is important to obtain a complex, dynamic, in-depth, and detailed understanding of the research topic or problem (Camic et al., 2003; Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). Sixth, the focus of qualitative inquiry is on “[t]he experiential life of people” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 138) as well as “the meanings people make of their experiences” (Morrow, 2007, p. 21). The main purpose of qualitative research is “to describe and clarify experience as it is lived and constituted in awareness” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 138). Qualitative inquiry is capable of obtaining partial access to the subjective experiences of participants, which conveys to the audience an understanding of what it is like to be in the participants’ world (Camic et al., 2003; Patton, 2002). Finally, qualitative research is invaluable when aiming to empower study participants to share their experiences, allow participant voices to be heard, and minimize the power difference between the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2007). The qualitative researcher plays a role of an “active learner” who tries to see the world of the participants from their point of views rather than an “expert” who places judgment on them (Creswell, 1998, p. 18).

For the above reasons, a qualitative method was selected to address the research questions of this study. As revealed in the literature review, the research topic of this
study has not been fully examined and requires further investigation; the main purpose of this study was to describe in-depth training experiences of Asian international students in real-world settings; and the researcher hoped to provide opportunities in which voices of Asian international students are heard.

Phenomenological Research

Phenomenological research has its origin in and draws upon perspectives and insights of European philosophers such as Husserl and Heidegger (Creswell, 2007). “Far from achieving a unified approach” (LeVasseur, 2003, p. 409), phenomenology in psychology is an evolving qualitative research method. Although there are various forms of phenomenological approaches (e.g., transcendental, empirical, existential, and hermeneutic), two major schools of phenomenology, descriptive and interpretive phenomenology, have been identified (Giorgi, 1992; Lopez & Willis, 2004). The current study will primarily follow descriptive phenomenological approaches in order to provide detailed and in-depth descriptions of Asian international students’ training experiences.

Descriptive phenomenological research is useful when addressing “what” questions that relate to the human experience (Polkinghorne, 1989). This study intended to explore questions such as “What it is like for you to be an Asian international student in a U.S. counseling psychology program?” “What aspects of training have supported your learning and growth?” and “What suggestions and recommendations do you have for faculty and counseling psychology programs?” Phenomenological inquiry rests on a theoretical assumption that there are commonalities, essences, and essential structures in
shared human experiences (Eichelberger, 1989; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002). The goal of phenomenological research is, therefore, to find these common experiences, themes, and patterns as well as uncover and describe essential structures/features of the lived experience of several individuals who directly experience a phenomenon (Dukes, 1984; Creswell, 2007; Eichelberger, 1989; Paisley & Reeves, 2001; Patton, 2002). The current study sought to describe and understand common/shared experiences among Asian international doctoral students in counseling psychology programs and identify the essential structure of their lived training experiences.

Phenomenological researchers aim to identify and depict how people experience a phenomenon by focusing on how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, and make sense of it (Eichelberger, 1989; Patton, 2002). Unlike phenomenological philosophy, phenomenological research values capturing subjective human experiences and understanding the phenomenon from the point of view of the participants (Schwandt, 2001). According to Polkinghorne (1989), a sound phenomenological study should convey “a deeper and clearer understanding of what it is like for someone to experience something” (p. 58). In this study, the researcher conducted interviews and asked Asian international student participants about their perceptions, feelings, and understandings of their training experiences in U.S. counseling psychology programs. By doing so, the researcher aimed to understand these students’ training experiences from their point of view. In addition, the researcher described Asian international students’ experiences frequently using their own words through generous use of participant quotes.
Participants

Selection of Participants

The purpose of selecting participants in phenomenological research is to find a group of people who offer various but specific experiences with the phenomenon being investigated and consequently, to obtain “richly varied descriptions” (Polkinghore, 1989, p. 48). Participants in a phenomenological study must be individuals who have had the direct experience with the phenomenon being investigated, and have the ability to articulate full and rich descriptions of their lived experience (Colaizzi, 1978; Creswell, 2007; Polkinghore, 1989). As qualitative research aims for in-depth understanding, it is critical to employ purposeful selection strategies, which “will intentionally sample a group of people that can best inform the researcher about the research problem under examination” (Creswell, 2007, p. 118). Criterion sampling is a purposeful selection strategy which sets predetermined criteria for participant selection (all participants have experienced the same phenomenon being studied), aims for quality assurance, and has been recognized as an effective approach in phenomenological inquiry (Creswell, 2007). Although seeking varied and common experiences seems contradictory, homogeneous sampling, which “select[s] participants from a particular subgroup whose experience is expected to be somewhat alike,” was useful for the current study because it allowed the researcher to “describe the experience of a particular subgroup in depth” (Polkinghorne, 2005).
The current study set three criteria for selecting participants. First, potential participants needed to identify themselves as international students from Asian countries who study in the United States. Second, potential participants had to be enrolled in or have recently graduated from an APA-accredited counseling psychology doctoral program. Third, potential participants needed to have completed at least one year of their training, or have graduated from their program within two years. Having less than one year of training may make it challenging for potential participants to describe their experiences in depth. Having graduated from training programs more than two years may make it difficult for potential participants to share fresh and vivid perspectives. This study focused exclusively on doctoral level participants who are likely to have developed psychological and intellectual sophistication and maturity through their life/educational/career experiences, and therefore have the capacity to articulate their training experiences well.

Sample Size

Although there are no fast and easy rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002), qualitative researchers generally select small samples of people for the purpose of yielding thick descriptions and gaining in-depth understanding (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Morrow, 2007; Paisley & Reeves, 2001). There are a few recommendations that researchers have made about desirable sample size in phenomenological research, suggesting that 3 to 10 participants (Dukes, 1984), or approximately 6 participants (Morse, 1994) are appropriate. A minimum sample size of 8
participants has been recommended by qualitative researchers in order to discern whether results are common (applicable to several participants) or uncommon (applicable to only few participants) occurrences among participants (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). This is important since phenomenological research aims to identify commonalities in those who have experienced a phenomenon. Hence, the current study targeted 8-12 information-rich participants, who as a whole encompassed diversity in terms of gender, country of origin, age, sexual orientation, the length of stay in the U.S., and geographic location.

The sample of the current study consisted of 12 Asian international doctoral students in counseling psychology programs in the U.S. During the recruitment process, twenty seven individuals contacted the student researcher by e-mail to express interest in participating in this study. Of those 27, 10 individuals were master's level or undergraduate international students, and thus, did not meet the selection criteria. Of the remaining 17 potential participants, two did not follow through with providing their contact information and one individual failed to return the background questionnaire with informed consent form. Fourteen potential participants returned a completed background questionnaire with signed informed consent form to the student researcher. However, one was from South Asia and did not meet the selection criteria, and another individual did not respond to the student researcher's request to schedule the initial phone interview. This left 12 participants for the study and recruitment was discontinued at this point. Thus, there were 12 individuals who expressed interest in this study, met all the selection
criteria, returned the informed consent form and background questionnaire, and agreed to schedule an initial interview. The entire recruitment process took approximately 45 days.

**Participant Demographics**

This group of potential participants was homogeneous in regard to self-identification as Asian international students; however, there was within-group diversity in regard to demographic factors such as age, gender, country of origin, sexual orientation, language, the length of stay in the U.S., geographic location of training program, and previous educational and work experiences. The age of participants ranged from 26 to 34 years old, with an average age of 30 years. Eleven participants were female, and one was male. Their countries of origin included Taiwan (5), Japan (3), Korea (2), China (1), and Singapore (1). Information about sexual orientation is not reported to protect participants’ anonymity. Participants’ self-reported primary languages were Mandarin/Chinese (7), Japanese (3), Korean (2), English (2), and Taiwanese (1). The length of stay in the U.S. or North America ranged from 2 to 14 years, with an average of 6.5 years. Six participants attended doctoral programs in Midwest, two in the Northeast, two in the Southeast, and two in the South. Ten participants had previously obtained a master’s degree in the U.S. or North America. Of these ten, four received a bachelor’s degree (two obtained a second bachelor’s degree) in the U.S. Two participants had no prior educational experiences in the U.S. prior to beginning their doctoral programs. The number of years participants worked prior to their doctoral study ranged from zero to five years, with an average of 1.8 years. Nine participants reported having
work experiences relevant to the current field of study. The number of years in their doctoral program ranged from two to six years, with an average of three years.

Recruitment Strategies

After obtaining approval from the Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) (Appendix V), I began the recruitment process. In order to maximize the opportunity to select a small group of appropriate participants, I pursued multiple recruitment strategies. First, I contacted two professional organizations, the Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA) and Taiwan Psychology Network (TPN) to solicit participants. Both organizations agreed to post my research invitation on their listserv. The research invitation (Appendix A) requested that interested potential participants may contact me by e-mail. The invitation briefly described the research topic, the time commitment required for the study participants, the selection criteria for participation, and incentive for participation (each participant was promised a $20 dollar gift certificate to amazon.com upon completion of the interviews). The research invitation also encouraged readers to share/forward the invitation with/to other potential participants. The use of a monetary incentive is recommended by Fuller (2005) who experienced difficulty recruiting non-western international doctoral students in the APA-accredited counseling psychology programs for her dissertation project. Interestingly, at least for some participants in this study, receiving a gift certificate upon completion of initial and follow-up interviews was not a main incentive to participate in this study. One participant remarked at the end of her follow-up interview that she had forgotten about
the gift certificate. In addition, after completing both interviews, three participants declined the gift certificate. These participants explained that they personally benefited from participating in this study; they stated that they did not want an additional gift from the student researcher, and did not need an external incentive to participate. After consulting with the dissertation chair person and HSIRB, the student researcher decided to honor these three participants’ generous gestures with a verbal expression of thanks rather than providing them with the $20 gift certificates.

Second, via e-mail, I contacted individuals who attended the 2008 International Counseling Psychology Conference (ICPC). The homepage of ICPC provided an attendee roster which contained the attendees’ e-mail addresses. My priority was to contact Asian international students and Asian/non-Asian professionals with whom I became acquainted with during the conference. I also identified and contacted other individuals who gave presentations on issues pertaining to international students or international psychology during the conference (Appendix B). Third, through the psychINFO database and my professional network, I identified contact persons who could reach potential participants. Target persons were those who have been actively involved with international student/international psychology issues through research and scholarship (i.e., those who have published journal articles/book chapters on international student issues and those who have presented on international student issues in professional conferences). Identified professionals were contacted by e-mail and asked to forward the research invitation to potential participants and/or directly contact me with the referral information (Appendix C). Fourth, I contacted individuals who have
international backgrounds and/or interests in international student/international psychology issues, whom I personally know (Appendix D). I asked personal contacts to consider participating if they met the selection criteria, and to refer me to others who met the selection criteria. I initially planned two additional recruitment strategies: 1) to ask each selected participant in the study at the end of the initial phone interview whether he or she would like to recommend anyone who meets the study criteria, and 2) to send the research invitation to the listserv for training directors in APA-accredited counseling psychology programs as well as APA-approved internship sites requesting that training directors forward the research invitation to their doctoral students who qualified for the study (Appendix E). However, 12 participants were successfully recruited prior to these recruitment steps. Therefore, I did not utilize these strategies. All of the above research invitations were sent via e-mail with a subject title, “Seeking current international students and recent international graduates for research.” I also requested that those who were willing to forward my invitation use the subject title, “Seeking current international students and recent international graduates for research.”

When potential participants contacted me, I e-mailed them a cover letter (Appendix F) in order to provide more information regarding this study (e.g., the purpose of the study, the criteria and procedures for participation, what would be required of participants once selected, an incentive for participation, contact information for me and my chairperson) and an opportunity for them to raise any questions or concerns about this study. In case referrals were made, I planned to e-mail a letter of invitation to them with the information about this study in the prior description of the letter (see details in
Appendix F) as well as the referring person’s name (Appendix G). However, no referrals were made, and therefore, I did not use this step. These cover letters asked both self-initiated and referred potential participants to provide me with their contact information if they were still interested in participating in this study. Upon receiving their contact information, I mailed them a research packet containing a brief background questionnaire (Appendix H), an informed consent form (Appendix I), and a self-addressed stamped envelop. When potential participants did not responded to the cover letter within a few weeks, I followed up with them by sending an e-mail reminder (Appendix J).

The background questionnaire (Appendix H) provided information about potential participants, which was used for interview selection purposes and to give demographic information in the methods chapter. The informed consent form (Appendix I) identified the purpose of the study, the selection criteria, potential risks and benefits, methods for maintaining confidentiality, research procedures, and what is required of participants. The informed consent form also explained that the interviews would be audio-recorded, that participants would receive a $20 gift certificate upon completion of both interviews, that they could refuse to answer questions if they did not feel comfortable responding, and that they could discontinue with/withdraw from research participation at any time without negative consequences. Finally, in case potential participants had any concerns or questions regarding the study or researcher, the informed consent provided contact information for the student researcher, the dissertation chairperson, and the Western Michigan University HSIRB.
When background questionnaires and informed consent forms were not completed and returned to me after ten days of mailing the research packets, I followed up with potential participants by sending an e-mail remainder (Appendix K). Once background questionnaires and informed consent forms were received from each of the potential participants, I notified them by phone or e-mail whether they were selected for the study (Appendix L, M). I scheduled the first interviews with those who were selected and agreed to participate.

Data Collection

Qualitative researchers collect data typically in the spoken or written language form (Polkinghorne, 2005). The most commonly used approach to qualitative data gathering is in-depth interviewing with participants. In-depth interviews are like conversations, in which researchers explore general topics to help unearth participants’ perspectives but otherwise respect how participants unfold their responses (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). There is an important theoretical assumption of qualitative research that “[t]he participant’s perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it . . . , not as the researcher views it” (p. 101). The purposes of in-depth interviewing are to “gain a full and detailed account” from participants who experience the phenomenon under investigation (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 142) as well as to “enter into the other person’s perspective” (Patton, 2002, p. 341). According to Patton (2002), “qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (p. 341). It has been noted that
interviewing yields an important source of data for phenomenological studies (Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Arora, & Mattis, 2007). Phenomenological interviewing is one type of in-depth interviewing grounded in a philosophical tradition of phenomenology. The purpose of phenomenological interviewing is to describe the experience and meaning of a phenomenon that several people share (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

In the current study, I conducted two phone interviews with each participant. The first interview addressed the main research questions. The second interview provided an opportunity for the researcher to clarify participants’ responses during the first interviews, ask follow-up questions, conduct participant checks regarding emerging analysis across multiple participants (see the details in data analysis section), and elicit any further thoughts they might have on the research topic. Polkinghorne (2005) has emphasized the importance of conducting more than “a one-shot, 1-hr” interview in order to obtain the quality of interview data that would produce meaningful findings (p. 142). By engaging with each participant at two separate occasions, I hoped to establish good rapport so that participants would feel safe to share their full and rich personal experiences with me. Additionally, having time between the two interviews allows participants to reflect more deeply about their experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005; Seidman, 2006). The use of phone interviews was selected because it would allow me to access potential participants from various geographical regions in the U.S. Phone interviews have been recommended as “the best source of information when the researcher does not have direct access to individuals” (Creswell, 2007, pp. 132-133).
It has been noted that in an exploratory study such as this, it is more beneficial for researchers to utilize “more open, less structured interview protocols” (Suzuki et al., 2007, p. 311). Phenomenological interviewing is generally open-ended, less structured, requiring sufficient time to explore the research topic in depth (Polkinghorne, 1989), and may resemble a discourse or conversation (Mishler, 1986, as cited in Polkinghorne, 1989). According to Kavle (1983), the focus of the phenomenological interviewing is on the “life-world” or experience of participants and is theme-oriented (p. 174). Phenomenological interviewing seeks to describe and understand the essential themes of the participant shared experience. Interviewing also aims to obtain a variety of nuanced descriptions that are precise and stringent in meaning. The goal of phenomenological interviewing is to obtain descriptions of the experience without participants’ interpretations or theoretical explanations.

The current study followed a semi-structured interview style with open-ended questions. The semi-structured interview “is designed to cover a common set of themes but allows for changes in the sequencing of questions and the forms of questions, enabling the interviewer to follow up on the interviewees’ answers” (Suzuki et al., 2007, p. 311). This style of interviewing has the benefit of maintaining a natural conversation flow. Prior to initial interviews, participants received a pre-interview guide (Appendix K) by e-mail, so that they knew what to expect during the interviews and could prepare themselves by thinking about and reflecting upon their experiences. Interview guides (Appendix L, M) were utilized during the interviews in order to ensure that the same content would be covered across all participants (Patton, 2002). The interview guides
helped me effectively use the limited time available for interviewing and conduct interviews with multiple participants in a systematic and comprehensive manner. At the same time, I "remain[ed] free to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined" (Patton, 2002, p. 343).

The interview guides consisted of main, follow-up, and probe questions. The main questions were broad and open-ended to encourage participants to discuss their experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The follow-up questions were used to ask additional questions to explore and clarify themes, ideas, and concepts introduced by participants. Probes were intended to encourage participants to keep talking on the research topic, ask them for clarification, and help them expand/elaborate on their statements. During the first interviews, the main questions were explored. Examples were “What is it like for you to be an Asian international student?” “What aspects of training are helpful or hindering to your training?” and “What suggestions or recommendations do you have for faculty and counseling psychology programs?” All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. In the second interview, I shared my understanding of their training experiences based on participants’ initial interviews, asked how well I captured their experiences, and posed follow-up questions based upon the initial interviews for the purpose of clarification and elaboration. I also asked participants whether they had any additional important/relevant experiences and thoughts that emerged after the first interview and during the second interview. Finally, I
shared the preliminary themes/patterns that emerged across multiple participants and elicited participants’ reactions and feedback.

During the course of data collection, I kept field notes to record my personal thoughts, feelings, and reactions as they related to the participants and the interviews. In my field notes, I also noted my observations or impressions about interactions with participants and their responses to interview questions. The purpose of keeping the field notes was to help me be aware of my own subjectivities and process my own reactions upon hearing challenging episodes or experiences shared by participants (e.g., hearing emotionally painful experiences due to racism or racial microaggressions). When I felt strong emotions or feelings about participants’ experiences, I recorded this in my field notes and discussed my reactions with my dissertation chairperson and/or external auditors. Even though I heard appalling, disappointing, and surprising episodes at times, I did not experience any great distress that may have hindered the interview processes. The researcher’s feelings and observations can become important part of the research data (Patton, 2002).

Research Design Flexibility

Due to the emergent nature of the qualitative design, research questions and interviews expand and evolve as the researcher learns more about the research topic from participants. To test the interview questions and procedures (Creswell, 2007), I first conducted a mock interview with an external auditor (see details in the data analysis section) who was a former international student from Asia with a doctoral degree in
counseling psychology. Based on this mock interview and feedback from the auditor, I made necessary changes to refine the research design, interview questions, and procedures. Whenever changes in the research design were necessary, I consulted with my dissertation chairperson and the Western Michigan University HSIRB. Changes made are described in the data analysis steps.

**Data Security**

In order to protect the confidentiality of participants, I asked participants to create pseudonyms and utilized these pseudonyms for identifying each participant. The audio-tapes/files as well as transcripts from the first and second interviews were identified with pseudonyms. Typists were hired, and I secured their written agreement to protect the confidentiality of potential participants. Once I or the typists transcribed the first and second interviews, I removed participants’ names from all the transcripts and replaced them with pseudonyms. In addition, I removed or replaced any other identifiable information (i.e., names of individuals, names of schools/programs, demographic information, and geographic locations) by general descriptors. Moreover, when reporting results of this study, I decided to not use pseudonyms or provide contextual information (e.g., country of origin and sexual orientation) in order to avoid identification if data from a single participant were assembled. Furthermore, I intentionally avoided using “he,” “his,” or “him” which would have identified the only one male participant. Data were stored on thumb/flash drives and on the hard drive of my laptop computer. A password was required to access the data on my laptop. The thumb/flash drives, the audio-
tapes/files, the background questionnaires, and transcripts were stored in a secure and locked filing cabinet. The informed consent forms and a list of participants corresponding pseudonyms were stored in a separate secure location.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, there is no “hard-and-fast distinction” between data collection and analysis (Patton, 2002, p. 436). Data collection and the beginning of data analysis often occur simultaneously. For example, patterns, possible themes, and hypotheses that emerge during data gathering are recorded in field notes, and in turn, tracking these analytical insights constitutes the beginning of data analysis (Patton, 2002).

The purpose of phenomenological analysis is to “grasp and elucidate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or group of people” (Patton, 2002, p. 482). Although there is no single phenomenological approach to analysis (Patton, 2002), “specific, structured methods of analysis” for phenomenological studies have been proposed by several researchers (Creswell, 2007, p. 159). This study followed, integrated, and modified phenomenological analysis procedures recommended by Colaizzi (1978), Creswell (2007), Giorgi and Giorgi (2003a, 2003b), and Moustakas (1994). Since data collection and analysis in this study were intertwined, the following steps for data analysis included steps for data collection. Some steps occurred simultaneously.

Step 1: The researcher engaged in a process of “epoche” to fully describe her own experience with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). In this process, the
researcher reflected inwardly to become aware of and gain clarity about personal biases, prejudices, assumptions, and preconceptions regarding the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2002). The researcher’s personal description is presented in the last section of this chapter. The purpose of epoche is to allow the researcher to examine the phenomenon from a fresh and open perspective without prejudgment or prematurely imposing meaning (Katz, 1987; as cited in Patton, 2002). Although it is not possible to entirely set aside the researcher’s personal experiences, the aim of epoche is to suspend judgment in order to best understand the participants’ experiences (Creswell, 2007).

Step 2: A mock interview was conducted with an external auditor to verify the efficacy of interview procedures and questions. The external auditor was a former international student from Asia and has a doctoral degree in counseling psychology. After reviewing/studying the mock interview process/data as well as consulting with her auditor and dissertation chairperson, the student researcher refined the interview procedures and questions. For instance, the questions, “How many years did you work?” “What stage are you at in your program?” and “How diverse is the student population in your program?” were added to the first interview guide (Appendix P). Changes made in the interviews were submitted to HSIRB and received approval. The mock interviewee stated that the overall mock interview process was smooth, and he did not see any major problems.

Step 3: Two of the first interviews were conducted with participants. The student researcher reflected on these interview processes/data and consult with her auditor and dissertation chairperson. The student researcher did not revise the interview procedures
and questions at this time because the interview procedures and questions were satisfactory.

Step 4: The student researcher proceeded with the rest of the first interviews.

Step 5: After the first interviews were completed, the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim by the student researcher or by typists. The student researcher then carefully read and reread each participant’s verbatim interview transcript as well as the field notes, in order to “acquire a feeling for them” (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 59) and grasp a sense of the whole (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003a, 2003b). This is an important step because the phenomenological perspective is holistic, and therefore, the researcher cannot begin data analysis without having the global sense of the descriptions (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003a, 2003b).

Step 6: The student researcher extracted “significant statements” from each transcript, which entailed identifying phrases or sentences that were directly relevant to the phenomenon being investigated (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 59). Each significant statement was treated as having equal value (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). Upon analyzing the data, the student researcher decided to utilize software for qualitative data analysis, MAXQDA (Version 2007, R030609-ENG). MAXQDA helped the student researcher organize significant statements and made it easier to provide labels to these statements in the next step (Step 7). This change to the protocol was approved by HSIRB.

Step 7: The student researcher formulated meanings from the significant statements (Colaizzi, 1978) for each transcript. This process involved providing a label (a keyword or phrase) that captured the essence of each significant statement. In this
process, it was important for the student researcher to try moving beyond what the participant said to what he or she meant. Yet, the meanings formulated by the student researcher needed to maintain a connection with the original protocols.

Step 8: When all the first interview transcripts were available, the student researcher carefully reviewed formulated meanings across all the participants and clustered these meanings (identified with labels) into patterns, themes, or categories which were common to the majority of the participants’ transcripts (Colaizzi, 1978).

Step 9: The student researcher consulted with three external auditors who reviewed the original transcripts and the data analysis process to verify consistency and accuracy from the raw data to the data analysis process (Creswell, 2007). Each auditor was a former Asian international student who obtained a doctoral degree in counseling psychology. Each auditor was asked to review a few transcripts to check whether the labels and key words that the student researcher gave to significant statements made sense. All of the auditors reported that the student researcher’s meanings and labels were fitting with the raw data. The auditors did not find any major problems and had very little feedback. In addition, the student researcher consulted with her dissertation chairperson who functioned as an additional external auditor and provided feedback on the data analysis process. The student researcher incorporated appropriate feedback in data analysis from her auditors.

Step 10: The student researcher initially planned to prepare a written summary of each participant’s personal narrative from his or her first interview. However, after data from initial interviews were analyzed, the student researcher and dissertation chairperson
consulted and concluded that sharing verbal summaries with participants would be as adequate as written summaries. The student researcher created a written list of critical themes or experiences from each participant’s initial interview, and used these lists as a guide for the verbal summaries shared with participants during follow-up interviews.

Step 11: In order to gain clarification and in-depth understanding of each of the participants’ accounts, the student researcher prepared follow-up questions for second interviews (Morrow & Smith, 2000). Follow-up questions were necessary when terms or concepts used to describe participants’ experiences were unclear and when participants provided insufficient information on important ideas (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The student researcher contacted participants by e-mail to schedule the second interviews (Appendix R). Almost all of the participants promptly responded to the student researcher’s e-mail expressing their continued interest in participating in a follow-up interview. One participant did not respond within ten days, and thus, the student researcher made an additional e-mail contact (Appendix T). This participant immediately responded to the student researcher’s follow-up e-mail, apologized for the delayed response, and expressed desire to participate in the follow-up interview.

Step 12: The student researcher conducted second phone interviews with participants. The purpose of the second interviews was to provide participant checks and collect additional data. “[P]articipant-checking is a powerful tool for enhancing the rigor of a qualitative study” (Morrow & Smith, 2000, p. 220). In addition, the researcher “can learn a great deal about the accuracy, completeness, fairness, and perceived validity of
their data analysis” from participants’ reactions toward “what is described and concluded” (Patton, 2002, p. 560).

At the beginning of each of the second interviews, the student researcher verbally shared brief summaries of the narratives from the first interviews. Participants were asked how well the personal narrative orally presented by the student researcher captured their experience, and if any additional thoughts had emerged after their first interview. Participants responded that my understanding of their training experiences was accurate except for some minor details. For example, one participant clarified that not all faculty members would meet with international students one-on-one weekly like her advisor did, and that her advisor was extremely available to international students. None of the participants reported having additional thoughts to share after initial interviews, although all the participants discussed subsequent training experiences or changes that occurred between initial and second interviews. For instance, a few participants reported that their relationships with their cohort had improved over time. Next, participants were asked to clarify or elaborate on terms, concepts, and ideas shared in the first interviews. In addition, the student researcher shared observations she made about a few participants. For example, one participant appeared evasive during her first interview when talking about unpleasant experiences with faculty. Thus, the student researcher wondered if this participant felt uncomfortable sharing certain experiences. This participant agreed that she was being careful about how many details to share in regards to challenging aspects of her training experiences. Finally, the student researcher shared the evolving cross-case analysis, and each participant was asked to respond to emerging themes or patterns across
multiple participants. For instance, only a few participants initially talked about the experience of being a member of a majority cultural/ethnic group in their home country and later becoming a member of a minority group in the U.S. The student researcher shared this theme with the rest of participants, and almost all of the participants resonated with the theme and shared their own relevant experiences. After the second interviews, steps five to nine of the data analysis were repeated.

Step 13: The student researcher described the common experiences of all of the participants or almost all of the participants by integrating the meanings and essences of the experiences (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). This description represents the essence or themes of the phenomenon under study.

Step 14: The student researcher consulted with her external auditors and dissertation chairperson regarding consistency and accuracy from the raw data or data analysis to the written integration of findings (i.e., a draft of chapter 3, the result section). This feedback was incorporated into the research findings.

Researcher’s Experience, Background, and Assumptions

In phenomenological research, the researcher has a “personal interest” in what she seeks to understand, and therefore, she is “intimately connected with the phenomenon” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 59). As the researcher serves as an instrument in qualitative inquiry, it is important for the researcher to reflect and voice “the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins” of her own perspectives (Patton, 2002, p. 299). It is also imperative for the researcher to discuss “any personal and professional
information that may have affected data collection, analysis, and interpretation” such as her personal connection to/experience with the phenomenon being studied, training background, and prior knowledge of the research topic (Patton, 2002, p. 566). In this section, I will discuss my own training experience as an Asian international student, my educational background as it relates to the research topic, and my assumptions about the training experience of Asian international students.

The inspiration for this study derives from multiple experiences in my life: my own experiences as an international doctoral student from Japan in an APA-accredited counseling psychology program in the U.S.; my forming valuable friendships with other Asian international students who have undergone similar educational training and have shared their experiences with me; and hearing voices of other Asian international counseling psychology students in professional contexts (e.g., conferences, listservs, and the professional literature).

I was the first child and only daughter born to a middle-class family in Northern Japan in the 1970’s. My parents engaged in traditional gender roles, in which my father was a breadwinner and my mother a homemaker. My parents highly valued education, and my father in particular had a strong opinion about an ideal educational process and goal for my brother and I. I was an obedient daughter who tried to follow my parents’ guidance and meet their expectations. An important transition occurred in my junior year in university when I expressed my aspiration to study abroad in order to follow my budding interest/dream. My parents were concerned about me living abroad and
encouraged me to apply for a graduate program in Japan. Despite their reservations, I was determined to follow my desire and hoped to find my niche.

I was accepted into a master’s level counselor education program in the U.S. During a master’s level internship, I was fascinated by my work in a university counseling center, and subsequently I decided to obtain a doctoral degree in counseling psychology. Pursuing education in the U.S. has had a tremendous impact on me. Living and studying abroad have offered me opportunities to learn the complexity of racial, cultural, social, and religious diversity, witness the plight of various minorities, become aware of my racial/ethnic identity, and recognize my privileges and challenges as a woman of color. Although I am pleased with my decision to come to the U.S. for my graduate study (to obtain both master’s and doctoral degrees), training to become a counseling psychologist in this new cultural context has not been an easy path. Like many international students, I have encountered a variety of challenges in the course of my training.

First, using English as my second language, I spent the majority of my free time (especially in the earlier years of training) reading assigned materials with an aid of a dictionary, reviewing audio-taped lectures and filling incomplete notes (taking complete notes during classes was often not possible), writing papers, consulting with editors for grammar checks, revising papers, and preparing for exams. There were times when I sacrificed healthy eating, exercise, and sleep, which negatively impacted my physical health. I also missed opportunities to cultivate and deepen friendships outside of my program because I had little time to socialize. Moreover, even after 10 years in the U.S., I
still sometimes feel as though I am in a fog digesting information slowly and imperfectly; this feeling is particularly apparent when engaging in group conversations with native English speakers, listening to unfamiliar topics, and reading difficult writings.

Second, cultural differences between my home and host country brought me a set of new learning. I had to adjust to differences in educational environments, communication styles, and ways of relating in human relationships. For example, the expectations of active class participation, linear, logical, and explicit academic writings, the APA style, and collegial relationships between teachers and students were all new to me at first.

Third, encountering cross-culturally insensitive gestures and remarks by some faculty members, peers, undergraduate students, and clients was difficult and disheartening. I felt confused, frustrated, angry, and hurt especially when insensitivities came from those who were and trained to be counseling psychologists. Perceived prejudices, biases, and racism within and outside of the university community led me to feel culturally isolated as well as self-conscious about my racial/ethnic identity.

I believe that I would have encountered greater challenges had I been the only international student in my cohort in my program. I was extremely fortunate to begin my doctoral training with another international student from Hong Kong, China, whom I have developed a deep and lasting friendship. Despite the fact that our previous life experiences were quite different, our friendship became stronger as we took classes together, studied together, worked as graduate assistants together, had meals together, shared our experiences with one another, and supported each other at the times of
difficulties. Sharing international student status and similar cultural values also helped us feel connected.

During my internship year, I was also fortunate to train in a university counseling center with another international student from Japan, with whom I have become very good friends. We went to the counseling center during many weekends to finish paperwork, worked on our dissertations together, exercised in the gym, shared our experiences over many meals, and maintained a sense of connection to our culture through activities such as going to a Japanese supermarket and watching Japanese TV dramas. Her presence helped me better manage the challenges of the internship and made my experience more joyful and memorable. Having a colleague from the same country was a relief: I did not feel as if I were the “representative” of my culture, and I was glad that our colleagues, supervisors, and supervisees had opportunities to hear different perspectives.

Having been surrounded by supportive U.S.-born peers and faculty members has also helped me tremendously. I am grateful to my friends who have stayed open to and curious about my culture, put continuous effort into becoming sensitive to cross-cultural differences, assisted me in editing my written assignments, and been present during both enjoyable and difficult times of my life. It has been also helpful to have faculty who have been sensitive to challenges faced by international students, accommodated my unique needs, and still expected the best out of me.

My educational background in counseling psychology helped me conduct research interviews because “[t]here is considerable overlap between the skills involved in
research interviewing and those needed by counseling psychologists in their counseling and psychotherapeutic work” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 142). Active listening, rapport building, and empathy are fundamental to the counseling and psychotherapy process, and are also essential to research interviewing (Morrow & Smith, 2000; Patton, 2002).

Additionally, I had prior qualitative research experience with similar topics including (a) participating on a qualitative research team which explored the training experience of four international master’s level students in counseling psychology, (b) conducting a research project on the experiences of four therapists with international backgrounds as part of a graduate course in qualitative research, and (c) authorship in a professional journal article about international students. Although limited, I believe that these experiences prepared me for conducting the current study. Moreover, my own experience as an Asian international student and clinical experience with other Asian international students provides me with foundational knowledge of the research topic.

As the researcher of the present study, I must be mindful of being “both an insider and an outsider” of the community under study (Suzuki, et al., 2007, p.300). My international student status, race, and field of study make me an insider, and therefore, I may have some insights into the training experiences of other Asian international students in counseling psychology. However, given that the participants in my study and I each have “a multiplicity of identities” (e.g., ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, and religion) (Suzuki et al., 2007, p. 300), such differences may place me in the role of an outsider in some respects. In addition, factors such as prior study abroad experience, acculturation level, confidence in language skills, prior educational and work experience,
age, relationship status, characteristics and geographical location of one’s program, the presence/absence of other international students, and diversity of one’s university community may shape potential participants’ training experience differently from mine. Based upon my own experience as an Asian international student and prior knowledge of the research topic, I assume that Asian international students in counseling psychology would have a variety of experiences that delineate challenges, learning, growth, and their resilience. First, I expect that most international students encounter many different challenges while studying in the U.S. Challenges are likely to occur due to using English as a second or third language, adjusting to cross-cultural differences (in educational environment, communication style, and human relationships), needing to re-establish support systems, adjusting to different political and social contexts, experiencing financial pressures, facing prejudices, biases, and discrimination, and making career plans. Depending upon their future plans, international students may also encounter challenges in applying what they have learned in the U.S. to different cultural contexts (e.g., in their home countries). At the same time, I expect that Asian international students would find their training experience stimulating and rewarding as they recognize their growth and learning. Also, I believe that international students have great resilience which helps them discover creative ways to manage various challenges. In the course of their counseling psychology training, they are likely to deepen their self-understanding, cross-cultural competency, and clinical, research, and teaching skills.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Twelve Asian international students, who are predominately women from East Asia, within U.S. counseling psychology doctoral programs participated in initial and follow-up phone interviews. The purpose of the present study was to create an opportunity in which the voices of Asian international students in APA-accredited doctoral counseling psychology programs in the U.S. are expressed, and to convey the collective voices and messages of Asian international students to counseling psychology training programs. In order to achieve this goal, participants were asked to illustrate their overall training experiences, speak about helpful and unhelpful aspects of their training, and identify recommendations for faculty members and training programs. A phenomenological approach to data analysis was employed in order to identify the essence of Asian international students’ training experiences in U.S. counseling psychology doctoral programs. The essence of experiences is described through common themes that emerged among participants. The data analysis process is explained in the Method chapter. In this chapter, themes that emerged from interview data are illustrated with examples and selected quotes.

Some participants expressed heightened concerns about their faculty members and/or peers discovering their participation in this study, aware that there are a limited number of Asian international students enrolled in U.S. counseling psychology doctoral programs. Hence, no pseudonyms are attached to examples or quotes that would result in
identification of participants by assembling information from a single participant. Any
clearly identifiable information was altered or removed to further maintain anonymity.
Contextual information such as participants’ country of origin, native language, and
length of stay in the U.S. or North America is reported in aggregate in the Method Section
for descriptive purposes but is not included when describing participants’ experiences.
The intention of this study is to convey the authentic voices of Asian international
students by reporting their original and exact words. However, grammatical errors in
participant quotes are corrected when necessary to clarify participants' intended meanings
or messages.

Upon describing essences or themes, the number of participants that reported
relevant experiences is defined in the following way: all refers to twelve participants,
almost all refers ten to eleven participants, a majority refers to seven to nine participants,
some refers to four to six participants, and a few refers to one to three participants. In
addition to describing their training experiences in their doctoral programs, more than
half the participants also discussed prior experiences in undergraduate or master’s
programs in the U.S. When prior educational experiences were relevant to themes that
emerged from participants’ experiences in doctoral programs, examples and quotes from
previous experiences were also included in the descriptions of common themes.

This chapter consists of two major sections (refer to the Appendix U for a map of
this study’s findings). The first major section is titled, “Understanding Asian
International Student Training Experiences: Asian International Students’ Collective
Hope to Be Understood by Faculty and Supervisors.” This section contains six essences
or themes that emerged in the present study. These six themes are integral for faculty and supervisors to understand Asian international students’ training experiences in the U.S. The six themes include 1) recognize the significance of peer relationships, 2) be mindful of the impact that Asian cultural backgrounds have on international students’ training experiences, 3) understand the internal adjustment and acculturation processes of Asian international students, 4) recognize the impact of using English as a second language on Asian international students’ training experiences, 5) be aware of the impact of racism on Asian international students, and 6) be aware of Asian international students’ financial concerns. The second major section is titled, “Providing Helpful Training Experiences for Asian International Students: What Faculty and Supervisors Can Do to Offer Cross-Culturally Sensitive, Satisfying Training to Asian International Students.” This section contains seven essences or themes that emerged in this study, which are behaviors and actions faculty and supervisors could engage in (what faculty and supervisors could do) when training Asian international students. These additional six themes include 1) listen to the voices of Asian international students, 2) cultivate positive relationships and interactions with Asian international students, 3) search for cross-culturally sensitive ways to accommodate the needs of Asian international students, 4) address the applicability of counseling psychology training in the U.S. to Asian international students’ home countries, 5) address career development issues of Asian international students, 6) appreciate the strengths and resiliency of Asian international students, and 7) recognize the benefits of recruiting Asian international students.
Understanding Asian International Student Training Experiences: Asian International Students’ Collective Hope to Be Understood by Faculty and Supervisors

All the participants expressed a strong desire to be understood by faculty members and other psychologists involved with their graduate training. One participant emphasized that, “As international students, we want to be…understood.” Another participant believed that when training Asian international students, “the most important thing is understanding…[faculty members’] effort to understand us.” The majority of participants appreciated faculty members (e.g., advisors, clinical supervisors, and instructors) who exhibited sound knowledge of, solid understanding about, and sensitivities to the kinds of experiences that Asian international students were likely to encounter in the U.S. These participants also valued faculty members who had “rich” experiences with training international students, had direct international or cross-cultural experiences, and were well connected to international colleagues. In contrast, almost all the participants found it unhelpful when faculty members appeared to lack adequate knowledge of, sensitivities to, and understanding about Asian international students training experiences in the U.S. For instance, the majority of participants reported not feeling understood by faculty members who failed to exhibit sufficient knowledge of, sound understanding about, and cross-cultural sensitivities to working with international students.

All the participants hoped that faculty members would gain greater awareness, become increasingly knowledgeable, and deepen their understanding about various experiences that Asian international students were likely to encounter while pursuing their
doctoral degree in U.S. counseling psychology programs. For instance, participants hoped that faculty members would recognize the many ways in which cultural and language differences impact Asian international students’ training experiences and also appreciate the challenges faced and efforts made by students to adjust to their circumstances. One participant stressed, “[T]he faculty member should know more about international students, the challenge that [we] face and the process that [we] are going through, especially with adjustment problems. They should be more aware of that.” Similarly, another participant reported, “[F]or international students, I would like the program to have more understanding on our struggling, our issues.” This participant also hoped that faculty members would recognize and appreciate great “efforts” and “adjustment[s] that Asian international students made.

In this section, six themes essential for faculty and supervisors to increase their knowledge of and deepen their understanding about training experiences of Asian international students in counseling psychology doctoral programs in the U.S. are described.

**Recognize the Significance of Peer Relationships**

All the participants believed that the quality of peer relationships and interactions had significant impact on their training experiences. One participant stressed that “I think it’s such an important thing to develop healthy relationship[s] between…peers and international students.” Another participant expressed her belief that “positive” and “close” peer relationships could improve the quality of her training experiences. In
contrast, a few participants emphasized that a lack of cohesive and close peer relationships would make their training experiences challenging. Participants described various ways in which the presence or absence of meaningful, close relationships with peers influenced their experiences in doctoral programs. In this section, the first three subsections focus on the presence or absence of other international students: the importance and benefits of having other international students in the training program, the challenging impact of the absence of other international students, and Asian international students’ suggestions for faculty members in regards to greater recruitment of international students. In addition, the following five sections focus on relationships with U.S. peers: satisfying relationships with U.S. peers, unsatisfying relationships with U.S. peers, helpful behaviors of U.S. peers, unhelpful behaviors of U.S. peers, and Asian international students’ suggestions for training programs to encourage positive international and U.S. student relationships.

The Importance and Benefits of Having Other International Students

All the participants found it important to be able to develop supportive, close, or meaningful connections or relationships with fellow international students during their doctoral training. One participant stated that being able to connect with other Asian international students in her program “matters to me.” She believed that it was critical to “have strong relationships [with fellow Asian students] within the...program” in order to share joys and challenges unique to being an Asian international doctoral student in counseling psychology. Another participant claimed that having other international
students with whom she could connect with in her program was “very helpful” and even “empowering.”

The majority of participants reported having at least one or more international peer(s) in their doctoral program. Some participants found it relatively effortless to develop connections and friendships with other Asian and/or non-Asian international students in the program due to shared common experiences as international students. One participant stated that “I can make…friends [easily] with other international students.” Another participant reported feeling “comfortable” and “connected instantly” with other Asian international students in her program. She remarked, “We made immediate connection just because we are international students. And that’s…something that I appreciate a lot.”

All the participants recognized benefits of having other Asian and/or non-Asian international peers in the training program. Four benefits were identified by participants. First, almost all the participants believed that the presence of other international students provided an important source of social and emotional support. One participant stressed that having fellow Asian international students offered a “huge source of support” and therefore, “I don’t…feel isolated.” Another participant stated that she consistently found “support” and “comfort” in her relationships with fellow Asian international students.

Second, some participants believed that the presence of other international students created opportunities for helping each other through sharing information. For example, participants reported sharing information unique to international students (e.g., the international student visa status and its impact on their training) and information
about their training experiences in general (e.g., academic courses, deadlines, exams, practicum, and assistantships). One participant stated, “[W]e share information with each other. We check [in] with each other… we share information about the department. ‘What’s going on in the department?’ ‘What’s going on in this practicum site?’ ‘What’s going on in that assistantship site?’ We share lots of information.”

Third, some participants believed that the presence of other international students provided opportunities for supporting each other through spending time together. For instance, participants benefited by taking the same courses, working on the same assistantships, getting together for social activities (e.g., potlucks), cooking and eating together, carpooling, and going grocery shopping together. One participant stated, “a… group of Asian international students… is my companion during my classroom, my practicum work, my assistantship. We worked together in a lot of different avenues. And they are also my social group, so we hang out together, we potluck at each other’s places, we cook together and eat together, there’s a lot of things that we overlap in.”

Fourth, some participants believed that the presence of other international students offered opportunities for supporting each other through sharing their feelings and experiences associated with being an international student (e.g., frustrations and challenges). Having opportunities to share similar challenges and frustrations with other international students helped participants feel “I am not alone,” feel less stressed, and feel understood, validated, normalized, and empowered. The following quotes highlight the power of sharing their feelings and experiences:

I do feel like it’s really helpful when we got together and talk about things and it’s like, “Oh, wow, that happen to you, too. Oh, why, you don’t know that, too. Oh,
you felt frustrated, too.” It’s very empowering to feel like I am not the only person, I’m, it’s something normal.

We came together and we talk about our experience, so it makes me feel like, it makes me understand that my experience is pretty common among international students.

The Challenging Impact of the Absence of Other International Students

Some participants were the sole international student in their respective program. A few of these participants were in training programs with overall very little racial/ethnic diversity as well (i.e., predominantly European American faculty and peers). To illustrate, one participant in particular was the only person with an Asian background in her program, and another participant was the only person of color in her cohort.

These participants found being the only international student in their program challenging. Three main challenges associated with not having fellow international students were identified by participants. First, participants were often left with a feeling that no one really understood what it was like to be an Asian international student in a U.S. counseling psychology program, especially in regards to using English as a second language. One participant stated, “[N]o one really speak [or] use the second language to do therapy [because I am the only international student]. They don’t know how it feel…no one really understand.” Another participant reported that faculty members or peers “don’t know how difficult it was to learn English, and then, they don’t know how well or how poor my English is compared to other international students [since there is no other international students]. They only know that I am not as fluent as Americans speaking English.”
Second, these participants found it challenging to find adequate social support when they were the only Asian international student in the program. Without strong social support, they felt lonely, isolated, and vulnerable. These participants wished they had others with whom they could consult, discuss, and share their challenges, and wished for someone to understand their unique experiences of being an Asian international student in the training program. The absence of other international peers left participants feeling invalidated without anyone to normalize their feelings. One participant reported feeling “alone” during clinical training because of being the only counselor who spoke English as a second language. This participant wished to have “someone to discuss my concerns with.” Another participant found being the only international student in her program “very challenging” because she did not have anyone with whom she could discuss experiences unique to being an international student.

Third, participants pointed out that the absence of other international peers impacted their level of comfort verbally expressing themselves when discussing cross-cultural topics. One participant, who was the only international student as well as the only person of color, reported feeling “very frustrate[d]” in a multicultural counseling class “because I felt like I was representing all the minorities.” She further explained, “I found that it was really difficult for me to speak up because whenever I said anything...it felt like I was like trying to argue with other students.” Another participant reported feeling “pressure” to discuss certain cross-cultural topics and contribute in class. She explained that faculty members and peers “don’t know a lot of...international students’ issues or international issues in general [so] that I feel like I need to know more about it
and to teach them because they would kind of look at me and would just kind of depend on me.” In addition, the absence of other international peers impacted participants’ level of comfort verbally expressing themselves when seeking support in training programs. These participants reported feeling uncomfortable or embarrassed to express needs or ask for accommodations. One participant stated, “I feel...embarrassed to ask for accommodation because no one needs to have those accommodations besides me.” Another participant remarked, “I don’t feel so right to ask them to provide me with whatever that I need because I’m the only international student and so in a way that feels really selfish.”

Students’ Suggestions for Faculty Members to Recruit More International Students

All the participants recognized the importance of having fellow international students in training programs. The majority of participants hoped that faculty members would actively and mindfully recruit international students to counseling psychology doctoral programs in the U.S. A few participants hoped that their program would recruit “more Asian international students” or “more international students” so that they could experience more support and share common experiences. Similarly, another participant underscored the significance of recruiting multiple international students in order to ensure that social and emotional support would be available for international students:

[If the program[s] are really interested in recruiting international students, interested in increase the diversity, they have to recruit enough number of international students in their program. It cannot be one or two for decoration purpose. It has to be more than that because students need to get support from each other, and [if only] one or two [are recruited]...the students would be...very lonely...[There are] not enough people to support them. So I think...[if] the programs are serious about want[ing] to recruit international students, want[ing]
to create diversity...want[ing] to internationalize their program, they have to recruit more than two.

*Unsatisfying Relationships with U.S. Peers*

The majority of participants reported not having solid, close relationships with their U.S. peers in the program. One participant stated that, "I just don’t feel that close” to U.S. peers. Another participant shared that, “I don’t have very close relationship[s] with [U.S. peers] in my program.” The majority of participants expressed that it was challenging to develop deep, close friendships with U.S. peers. One participant perceived that, “it’s very hard to become friends with” U.S. students. Another participant reported feeling that “it’s harder to build...relationships with [European American students] fast, as fast as they build relationships among each other.” Participants were not satisfied with their level of closeness with U.S. peers, and expressed desire for increased connection. One participant stated, “I wish I have closer relationships with American friends.” However, some stated that they were not sure how to establish stronger connections. One participant remarked that she wanted to learn how U.S. students “connect to each other and become good friends” while another participant expressed wanting to know “how to socialize with Americans.”

The majority of participants wondered if the challenge in developing closer relationships with U.S. students stemmed from cultural differences in interpersonal dynamics and boundaries. Asian international students perceived friendships in the U.S. differently from their friendships in their home countries; they identified two perceived cultural differences which they believed to hinder relationships with U.S. students. First,
some participants perceived that there were cultural differences in interpersonal boundaries, which created distance between Asian international students and U.S. peers. One participant believed that “the boundaries between people are different” in the U.S. and her home country. Another participant observed that U.S. students set clear interpersonal boundaries and felt “the way American[s] make friends are different and they are not very bonded with each other...they are not attached to each other.” A third participant felt that “there is a distance between me and my American peers” and that U.S. students “need their own personal space.” A fourth participant attributed her challenges in establishing close friendships with U.S. peers to cultural differences:

I feel like the way we interact back home and the way we interact here with American are very different. I don’t know...I feel [Asian] people are willing to become close friends with each other, and here is not...I don’t feel like [U.S. peers] want [closer relationships with me] and in the beginning, I thought it’s because I am international student, they don’t want to be that close with me, but then, I feel like that’s probably how they interact with each other.

Second, some participants highlighted the importance of spending and sharing time together for people in their home countries to develop strong, meaningful friendships whereas they perceived that people in the U.S. did not place as much importance on this aspect of relating. One participant claimed that spending personal time together was “a very important way of relating to people.” Another participant concurred that spending time with each other was integral in establishing close relationships. Yet, these participants did not feel that U.S. students spent as much time with one another as Asian students would do in their home cultures. Similarly a third participant reported that U.S. peers “don’t really hang out a lot” with one another or with him outside of school.
Satisfying Relationships with U.S. Peers

Some participants reported having mostly positive, satisfying relationships with U.S. peers in the program. One participant described extensively an excitement about her strong, close connections with her cohort and other peers in her program. She stated that “support from my cohort [is] very helpful.” This participant further remarked, “I love my cohort. I know that I’m really lucky because I’ve heard in other program, sometimes they don’t get along. So, [having good relationships with her cohort] is very helpful.” Similarly, another participant reported having “very supportive” and “collegial” relationships with her peers. This participant felt “fortunate” that her peers “have been very supportive” especially when learning that other international students whom she met outside of her university encountered “very different” experiences with their peers in their program. A third participant was grateful that “my peers are overall...great.” She explained that her peers “are genuine and...they are...there...if and when I need them.”

Helpful Behaviors of U.S. Peers

Regardless of the presence or absence of strong friendships with U.S. peers in the program, all the participants talked about specific practices of U.S. peers which enhanced their training experiences. Five helpful behaviors of U.S. peers were identified by participants. First, the majority of participants found it helpful or important to have U.S. peers who actively express interest in them personally or professionally, and demonstrate curiosity toward their unique perspectives. One participant appreciated and felt “connected” to U.S. peers when they expressed “genuine interest in me as a person and as
a friend.” Another participant was grateful for her U.S. peers because “they really want to know how I’m doing.” A third participant believed that expressions of interest and curiosity demonstrated by U.S. peers would encourage her to openly talk about her unique experiences as an Asian international student. A fourth participant felt thankful that her U.S. peers were “open-minded” and “curious about what I have to say.” She further stated, “[W]hen I talk about what’s happening in [her country] and how mental health is handled in the country, they are really curious. They try to listen.”

Second, the majority of participants found that it was helpful to have U.S. peers who value and express appreciation toward Asian international students’ perspectives, contributions, and/or presence in training programs. One participant appreciated when her U.S. peers “value[d] my opinion” through expressing their desires to “want to hear more from me” and “more of my opinion.” This participant reported feeling “encouraged” by her U.S. peers who believed that “what I say would be important” and that they were “taking in what I was saying.” Another participant reported feeling “respected” by her U.S. peers. She explained that after she discussed her research interests in internationalization of counseling psychology, some of her peers “show[ed] their willingness to really share my passion” by “starting to develop their [own] interest” in similar research areas and becoming involved in such research studies. A different participant reported that her U.S. peers appreciated her contributions to their learning:

[T]he good thing is like, my...classmates, they at least as far as I know they try to be open-minded and they always value what I brought...since I’m really the only one with Asian background and also an international student. Most of the time they will say, “I appreciate that you’re bringing different perspective.” Or, like, if we’re taking assessment class most of my like participants were Asian....So they said they appreciate that because they didn’t even have opportunity to really know any Asians.
Third, some participants found that it was helpful to have U.S. peers share personal and professional experiences, be willing to talk about challenges, and show vulnerabilities. These participants learned that some of their U.S. peers faced similar challenges as doctoral students, persons of color, and/or lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals. One participant described a personal conversation among her cohort in which they revealed their “secret fear” or anxiety about their own competency as a doctoral student. This participant stated that her U.S. peers’ openness to show vulnerabilities helped her develop strong bonds with and feel close to them.

Another participant appreciated learning that her U.S. peers shared similar challenges in academic writing as doctoral students. She explained ways in which her U.S. peers’ sharing helped her “feel better” about her writing skills:

I feel like [I] really have no confidence in my writing....then later, I found that...American student[s] also get a lot of [corrections in academic writing], so...when I hear...American student[s]...also share their frustration in writing, and they also say that they have no confidence, no experience in writing. And then, I feel better. I feel like, “Oh, okay. So, it’s not because I’m international student, so I have bad writing. It’s not because faculty member[s]...are more hard on me.” So, actually American student[s]...also don’t have confidence in writing. So, we are the same. So, then, I feel better. Right now I’m still [struggling], but...I don’t feel like I am really, really bad compared to my American friends. I know that we share the similar struggle.

A different participant reported realizing that persons of color as well as LGBT individuals in the U.S. also experience challenges due to racism and heterosexism. As an Asian international student, this participant “felt like I have most difficult situation in the program.” However, after learning that “some other students have their own difficulties,” she stated that she felt “relieved” because “I am not the only one to have a barrier.”
Fourth, the majority of participants appreciated when their U.S. peers took initiative and actively reached out to them. For instance, U.S. peers encouraged these participants to share their thoughts in and outside of the classroom, invited them to social activities, and spent personal time together outside classes. One participant reported feeling grateful when her U.S. peers encouraged her to share her opinions in class. She explained that she hesitated to participate in a heated discussion about racism between European and African American students “because [being an Asian international student] I thought that was not my position to step in.” Upon the invitation from her U.S. peers, this participant was thankful to “have an opportunity to say something” and that her peers were eager “to hear what I needed to say.” She believed that “sometime...[Asian international students] need that kind of invitation” to feel comfortable expressing opinions. Another participant appreciated that her U.S. peers would “try to include me whenever we have social gatherings.” She also felt grateful when “I’m not doing well... [my U.S. peers] inquire and...they often initiate some kind of quality time with me...and they just kind of indicate that they really want to know how I’m doing.” A third participant highlighted the power of initiative taken by U.S. peers:

I remember...their willingness to invite me for lunch, or to hang out, and they take initiative to do that, or invite me to their home. I think that’s what breaks the barrier and makes me feel really welcome....I think being minority, being international, you’re already labeled, “I am international,” on your forehead....there are so much differences that when you come here, you want to fit in....And therefore at the initiative part where, from individuals from the dominant culture, Americans to get to know you, it’s them reaching out to know how different you are, and appreciating that. And I think it’s easier for them to say, “Why don’t you share with me these differences” than you repeating and continue to highlight these differences, and feel like you’re separating yourself further and further away...So I think it takes that pressure away a lot, and...it invites me to want to talk more.
Finally, some participants found that it was helpful to have U.S. peers make efforts to understand Asian international students’ training experiences. One participant appreciated that “my colleagues are all very supportive and try to understand my issue[s]” and challenges as an Asian international student. Another participant reported feeling grateful when her U.S. peers made efforts to try to understand her training experiences as well as cultural differences. She believed that U.S. peers’ efforts to understand international students’ training experiences were extremely important. Similarly, a different participant was thankful for her peers that “they try to understand where I’m coming from.”

*Unhelpful Behaviors of U.S. Peers*

Regardless of having or not having strong friendships with U.S. peers in the program, the majority of participants described certain practices of U.S. peers that did not enhance their training experiences. Four unhelpful behaviors of U.S. peers were identified by participants. First, the majority of participants found that it was unhelpful when U.S. peers did not actively engage in sharing experiences, time, and/or information. One participant reported that some of her U.S. peers were not willing to interact or socialize with her. She explained that she tried to “initiate conversation with” some U.S. peers; however, they did not “give me the response that I feel...appropriate or...nice...I just don’t feel they are trying to have me involved in their conversation.” This participant also reported feeling “excluded” because “my classmates...have their activity but they might not include you...one classmate invite the other three or...four students, but they
don’t really invite me.” Moreover, this participant reported that some U.S. peers appeared not willing to share information about academic topics such as their thoughts about class assignments and progress they made in academic papers. As a result, she reported feeling “frustrated,” “sad,” and “discriminated” and admitted giving up efforts to develop close relationships with these peers. Another participant reported that although her U.S. peers were “nice and friendly,” there were “not so many interactions [outside of] class” between them. She reported feeling that “there is a distance between me and my American peers.” A different participant revealed that she no longer had high “expectation[s]” about developing “close relationships with American students” due to their perceived unwillingness to share time, challenges, and joys with one another:

[T]he definition of close relationships between American students and me is...different...So, close relationship for me is a bit more than they think about close relationships....Close relationship from my side...can be a lot to American students. And close relationship from American students can be less...for me...I try to lower my expectation for the friendship....[To me, close friends would] share many things, share some difficulties and have time with each other more, and I think share things is a lot [important] to me. Share some good points, share some difficulties, and share...many things, but I felt like American student doesn’t want to share some negative things, their weakness, they don’t reveal weak points.

Second, some participants perceived that it was unhelpful when U.S. peers appeared to lack understanding about Asian international students’ training experiences. These participants reported not feeling well understood by their U.S. peers. One participant stated that her U.S. peers did not have a good understanding of how challenging it was for her “to do all the things in my second language.” For instance, her U.S. peers were not aware of how long it took her to write a short academic paper.
Another participant perceived that some of her U.S. peers did not understand the amount of stress she experienced daily due to living abroad.

Third, some participants found that it was unhelpful to have U.S. peers who did not express strong interest in getting to know Asian international students. One participant reported that some of her U.S. peers did not show any interest or make efforts to engage her in conversation with her. She stated that she felt “sad” and “frustrated.” A few other participants experienced that some of their U.S. peers did not express any interest in learning about their experiences or perspectives as Asian international students. A different participant believed that a “lack of interest” was a hindering factor in developing positive peer relationships between U.S. and Asian international students:

I think the lack of interest in my culture, and my international status, my background, I think the lack of interest and the lack of initiation to want to find out acts as a pretty big barrier. It’s very difficult to talk about myself, or share these things without them showing interests. I don’t want to force, so I would rather go along with the dominant culture, but that sometimes contradicts or is not as comfortable or at ease to fit into while I try. So then eventually, you just don’t try as much, and fall back either on the support that you have with Asian people, or by yourself.

Finally, some participants found that it was unhelpful when U.S. peers failed to exhibit cross-cultural sensitivities outside the classroom. One participant described an incident in which she felt invalidated by some of her U.S. peers who “forget that my culture also needs to be respected.” For example, upon receiving critical feedback from a staff psychologist regarding her quiet interpersonal style, one of her U.S. peers responded to her that “You just have to go with American ways.” This participant reported feeling very “frustrated” and “disappointed” because this remark was made by “somebody who has been trained on the importance of multicultural issues.” She stressed that
"multicultural teaching...in counseling psych program are mainly American cultural issues." Therefore, she felt that "as long as you are not part of American culture, you are sort of dismissed" and that there was an expectation that "You just have to follow...American ways." Another participant shared an experience in which her U.S. peer did not recognize cultural differences in relationships. She explained that the way she and other Asian friends connect to each other is "to have dinner together, to share things I cook. And it doesn't matter that much [to] me that I cook and provide free food for them and even let them keep leftover." This participant was surprised when her U.S. peer criticized her invited guest for wanting to keep the leftovers. The participant's peer expressed his belief that the guest "should not take advantage of her" and that the "correct" thing to do would be for this guest to pay for the food. In contrast, the Asian international student felt comfortable sharing the food as a gesture of friendship. Her U.S. peer perceived the situation as not fair, whereas she perceived her actions as friendly. A different participant described an experience in which her U.S. peers appeared to be less culturally sensitive outside of classroom than inside. These experiences left her to wonder "if what they say in a classroom really reflect how they feel inside":

When I hang out with [my U.S. peers]...outside of the class, they tend to be less sensitive about the cultural difference. In the classroom, they will understand, they will pay more attention to that, but...when hanging out with them outside, sometimes...I feel being discriminated against even by someone else...they don’t pick up that someone said not being respectful to me. And...I feel pretty disappointed when that happen because in a classroom they are aware of those things...but when they happen around them, they don’t see it.
Students’ Suggestions for Training Programs to Encourage Positive International and U.S. Student Relationships

A few participants hoped that training programs would encourage development of positive relationships between international and U.S. students. These participants hoped that training programs would create opportunities for U.S. students to interact with international students outside of the classrooms to increase their interest in learning about international students’ cultures, and to hear international students’ cross-cultural experiences. One participant stated that offering a “cultural theme party,” “cultural discussion group,” and “social hours” for international and U.S. students would be helpful. Another participant talked about creating “diversity panels” for “racial and ethnic week[s],” in which one week could be devoted to an Asian/Asian international week. A third participant hoped that training programs would offer a “multicultural activity” outside the classroom. This participant hoped that some U.S. peers who appeared cross-culturally insensitive outside the classroom or counseling sessions could learn to apply their knowledge to their daily lives especially when they interact with international students.

Be Mindful of the Impact That Asian Cultural Backgrounds Have on International Students’ Training Experiences

All the participants described ways in which cultural differences between Asia and the U.S. impacted their training experiences in counseling psychology doctoral programs. Participants believed that cultural differences influenced their behaviors in a variety of academic, clinical, and/or research training situations. In this section, the
importance of recognizing and addressing cultural differences when training Asian international students is explored. Second, cultural differences between Asian and U.S. classrooms are described. Third, the impact of Asian cultural values on students’ behaviors in U.S. training settings is presented. Previously, the impact of Asian cultural values on expressing students’ honest voices, and perceived cultural differences in friendships between Asia and the U.S. was reported. However, these themes are also relevant in this section, and thus, some of the earlier content is discussed in this new context. Fourth, students’ efforts and challenges in adjusting to U.S. classrooms are illustrated. Fifth, the impact of cultural differences on faculty’s and supervisors’ assessments of Asian international students is discussed. Sixth, the importance of recognizing within-group diversity is highlighted. Finally, students’ suggestions for faculty members to increase cross-cultural sensitivity are presented.

The Importance of Recognizing and Addressing Cultural Differences

Almost all the participants believed that it was important that faculty members demonstrate sensitivity to Asian cultural backgrounds and to recognize cultural differences that Asian students brought to their training in the U.S. For instance, one participant stressed that international students “need more culturally sensitive faculty.” Another participant stated that “I hope that [faculty members] can be more sensitive about cultural difference[s].” In contrast, the majority of participants reported encountering some faculty members who did not recognize or appreciate the differences that they brought into U.S. training environments. These experiences left participants feeling
discouraged or frustrated. One participant found that it was unhelpful when “some professor[s]…didn’t see the [cultural] difference.” Another participant reported feeling “frustrated” and “bad” when working with some staff psychologists in clinical sites who failed to “acknowledge the diversity” and who appeared to lack good understanding of and appreciation toward “my cultural barriers and [cultural] difference[s].” This participant perceived that these individuals did not know “how to train…students [who have] international…Asian background[s].”

Some participants asserted that it was important to have faculty members who not only recognized cultural differences but also addressed these differences openly. Specifically, participants appreciated faculty members who initiated or facilitated conversations about differences that they brought into their training. One participant found it extremely “helpful” when faculty members were eager to explore how cultural differences impacted her training experiences. She stated, “[faculty members] recognize there might be some [cultural] difference and they ask [about] it, they ask whether that’s true or not…That helped me to talk about a lot of things, to clarify some confusion and help me feel like I can communicate with them and they can understand me.” Another participant felt encouraged when “one of my professors in the program asked me…what the difference is between [my home country] and America…in [terms of] culture or in [terms of] classroom environment.” She appreciated that this faculty member “tries to understand me…tries to understand my culture.” A third participant was appreciative of her academic advisor who facilitated discussions about cultural differences during their one-on-one meetings. She stated, “We talk about cultural difference not for the research
or class, but just kind of in general, like kind of [as] regular conversation.” A fourth participant was grateful that her academic advisor initiated dialogues about cultural differences that affected interactions between them. She described ways in which her advisor facilitated such helpful conversations:

[M]y advisor...when I talk with him and discuss with him...he would say, “Okay...can you please tell me like in an American way?” So that means like direct communication, so “you don’t need to be polite or hide anything, but tell me what happened there” or “what’s going on here?” And so, we will process...awkward moments. So, I will tell him that “Oh, I do this because I assume [this] and because I, in [my country] we usually do this.” And so, he will process with me, and he say, “Oh, that’s very good. I appreciate you say that.” And he will also tell me like why he does so. So...we have this open discussion about the cultural differences here. So, I get more understanding of why he does so. And he has more understanding of why I did so.

In contrast, participants found that it was unhelpful when faculty members failed to address or discuss cultural differences. One participant reported feeling “invisible and alone” when some faculty members did not “know how to [respond] to the [cultural] difference that I have.” She perceived that some faculty members did not appreciate “my way of thinking” which was often different from that of U.S. students or faculty members. Another participant reported feeling discouraged when faculty members did not discuss cultural differences:

[W]hen the faculty member doesn’t address the difference between the international student and the American student or the Asian culture and the American culture, if they don’t point out differences, because I know sometimes they feel like they don’t understand a lot of that, so they don’t want us to talk more about that, and then, it’s not very encourage me to talk more about my culture because I can feel that they are not comfortable talking about this topic.... it’s like we all know there is differences, we know there is cultural factor there, but we don’t speak about it.
Cultural Differences Between Asian and U.S. Classrooms

All the participants reported recognizing cultural differences between Asian and U.S. educational environments. Almost all the participants stated that classroom norms in Asia are different than in the U.S. That is, participants pointed out that classroom structure as well as expected roles of teachers and students differ across cultures. In their home countries, participants stated that they were familiar with a one-way teaching style in which the role of students is to listen to lectures given by the instructor, take notes, and absorb information. One participant described what it was like for her to receive education in her home country. She reported, “[I]t was always pretty important to listen first to the instructor, and usually students have very little responses, very lecture style...there were very few interruptions during the whole lecture.” Therefore, she was “used to...receiving like a sponge, absorbing, [and] processing” the information provided by instructors. Another participant stated that the role of students in her home country was to listen to teachers give lectures while students take notes. A different participant stressed that “students [in my home country] are the recipient[s] of the information” and thus, “students...listen to the teachers and then learn as much as [possible] from them.” These participants also mentioned that in their home country, they were not encouraged or expected to actively engage in discussion, ask questions, or critically think about materials given by the instructor. One participant reported that “in [my home country], you are not supposed to ask too many questions. You don’t talk much in class.” Another participant stated that “I...sat quietly in classroom...and you don’t discuss many things...at least in the university I went” in her home country. She further shared that “I
didn’t really develop the skills to critically think or evaluate the information I receive...I feel like I wasn’t trained in that way. So a lot of times, I’m very uncritical. I just receive information, and I don’t really evaluate much.”

In contrast, these participants recognized that teachers in the U.S. utilize an interactive teaching style in which students’ active participation and contributions are encouraged, expected, and valued. They observed that expressing opinions, asking questions, and thinking critically were positively received in U.S. classrooms. One participant observed that speaking up or “participating” in discussion was highly valued in U.S. classrooms. Another participant reported needing to adjust to the U.S. classroom because U.S. students “talk a lot and ask...a lot of questions.” Similarly, a third participant recognized drastic differences between Asian and U.S. classrooms describing U.S. students as “very active in participation.” She further explained her challenges in and on-going adjustments to the U.S. classroom:

Still now today, sitting in the classroom sometimes is really challenging to follow the thoughts of different people and different hands being raised, the exchanges, the dialogues in the classroom as a whole, instead of just the teacher speaking to students. So, I think that aspect still today I find it very challenging...And so this style of communication is something that I continually try to adapt and try to learn in the American classroom.

A fourth participant observed that in U.S. classrooms “if [students] don’t agree with the instructor[s], they will confront [instructors] very frequently and very directly.” Based on her cultural background, she admitted feeling that U.S. students’ confrontations or disagreements appeared “offensive,” “aggressive,” and “not very polite.” A fifth participant believed that U.S. students “have many opinions to share” and “have lots to say” because they were trained to think critically.
The Impact of Asian Cultural Values on Students’ Behaviors in U.S. Training Settings

The majority of participants recognized that their current behaviors in U.S. educational environments were often impacted by Asian cultural values and practices. These participants discussed ways in which their traditional values impacted their interpersonal relationships and interactions with faculty members, clients, and U.S. peers. In terms of teacher-student interactions, some participants stated that because they were educated to respect teachers in their culture, this value was still ingrained in them today; therefore, questioning, challenging, or disagreeing with teachers did not come naturally in and outside of U.S. classrooms. One participant found that he rarely questioned or challenged faculty members in and outside of U.S. classrooms because he learned that it was important for students in an Asian culture to be “respectful” by “just listening to the instructor...[and] not trying to challenge the instructor.” Another participant echoed that it was difficult for her to confront or challenge faculty members or supervisors in the U.S. because in her culture, “you should respect [professors], you shouldn’t challenge them.” Although a different participant believed that she had become increasingly “westernized,” she recognized that “traditional Asian cultural values” were still ingrained in her behaviors in regards to teacher-student relationships in the U.S.:

I definitely think that my culture influence a lot in my training. I think that I still carry a lot of Asian...values in my learning process like training process...I still don’t used to...to challenge, to question my advisor because I think that I should respect them. I should accept whatever they say....I believe that’s still pretty like traditional [Asian] culture. So in terms of the student-teacher relationship, I still follow...a lot of the traditional...Asian cultural values.
A few participants described ways in which Asian cultural values impacted their interactions with clients in counseling situations in the U.S. Showing respect or being polite was an important value for these participants not only when interacting with faculty members but also when interacting with clients. For instance, participants talked about wanting to show respect toward their clients. One participant reported that she wanted to learn to intervene or interrupt interactions among multiple family therapy clients in a "respectful" manner. She explained that instead of interrupting conversations verbally, she felt more comfortable intervening with nonverbal gestures. Another participant described an incident in which a gesture used to express "respect" toward his European American client was not received as it was intended, due to cultural differences. This participant realized that "there is a cultural difference in terms of how you show the respect in interacting with each other":

[W]hen I work with...one of my student[s] at...practicum...I close my eye for a little bit just because I don’t want to be intimidating to my client. But she thought that was really odd or strange, and she asked me how come...I closed my eye....because she is White female client...she would assume that I would look at her eye to show the respect to her, but for me, I feel that in order to show respect, I might not want to look at her eye as often as she would expect it.

Some participants described ways in which Asian cultural values influenced interactions with U.S. peers in classroom settings. A few participants reported that they wanted to be polite during class interactions, which was consistent with their cultural values. Hence, they did not want to speak first or interrupt other speakers, which they perceived as being rude. In addition, they wanted to allow other students to speak before they did and/or listen to what other students needed to say. One participant remarked that "you want to be polite" during class discussions. As a result, she explained that it was
challenging to “jump in” and speak up. Similarly, another participant talked about her “cultural values” impacting her interactions with peers in classrooms. She stated, “Sometimes I just feel I want to be polite. I want to allow other people to speak first and then I’ll speak. I don’t want to be the first one to speak because I don’t want to be rude. I think that’s part of my cultural values.” A different participant believed that “being an Asian” international student influenced ways in which she interacted with other students in the classroom:

[B]eing an Asian, I think...I tend to be more reserved, compared to other students. And so in classroom, for instance, during the seminar, students are expected to speak up and exchange their opinions...I definitely participate. But the way I participate is very different from other students. I sort of wait for the right moment to speak up and don’t interrupt other people. And I would love listening to other people’s opinion. So I tend to keep myself kind of quiet...and think about my opinions or my reactions to my peers...in a couple of minutes in my head before I speak up...from other people’s perspective, I’m sure I appear as very quiet person.

In addition to the impact of Asian cultural values on their interpersonal relationships and interactions in the U.S., the majority of participants identified the impact of cultural differences on how they constructed and expressed their thoughts in U.S. training settings. Some participants pointed out the ways in which they originally learned to construct and convey thoughts in spoken or written forms were different from what was expected by faculty members in the U.S. Specifically, these participants recognized that the preferred structure and organization of academic writings and oral presentations were different across cultures. As a result, possibilities for misunderstanding or miscommunication existed. One participant observed that “the style of writing” varied between in U.S. and Asian learning environments. She claimed that
the structure of academic writing in the U.S. was “totally backwards” compared to that of her home country. Another participant believed that the manner in which ideas or thoughts were presented varied across cultures. She reported that her clinical supervisor misunderstood her in supervision because the way she presented her clinical plans was not what the supervisor expected. This participant stated that her supervisor probably expected “to hear [a] more important thing in the beginning” rather than waiting to hear “an important thing at the end.” A different participant described how cultural differences influenced the way that she presented her thoughts in writing:

I think Americans tend to be very straightforward and very direct...and...I don’t think my way of communicating is as direct as Americans. And I think my paper[s] tend to be like that, too and so I often get feedback of that direction. I find that very frustrating....I think there’s a different way of communication style, so I think...that affects how I write. I tend to write in very passive voice, so that I get always corrected for that.

*Students’ Efforts and Challenges in Adjusting to U.S. Classrooms*

Due to the cultural differences between Asian and U.S. classrooms, all the participants reported that they had to make adjustments to their behavior in order to successfully navigate training in the U.S. That is, the majority of participants stated that they consciously put forth efforts to speak up in class and engage in discussions because they recognized that active class participations is critical in U.S. classrooms. One participant reported, “I always need to make a lot of effort before I feel like I am involved in discussion. If I do not think or if I am kind of relax, I might not really participate at all. I need to kind of....force myself...and kind of put a lot of energy before I talk something in discussion or put some effort for that.” Another participant stated that, “I try to be less
introverted just for the sake of myself.” A third participant believed that she made efforts to “speak up in classroom more than I would have if I’m in my country.” A fourth participant recognized that class participation “is very important” in U.S. classrooms as “you get credit for that.” Thus, she stated that “I do push myself” to participate in discussion.

With a few exceptions, almost all of the participants reported experiencing challenges upon shifting their behaviors from the familiar to the unfamiliar (e.g., from not speaking up to speaking up in classrooms). For instance, challenges stemmed from being unclear about the appropriate timing to speak up; difficulties communicating in a second language; and feeling rushed to process one’s thoughts to be ready to speak up as quickly as U.S. students. One participant explained that “sometimes I feel very hard to jump in [and talk] because...you have to wait people to stop talking...and then you jump in...you need a little break...but if you do that, it would happen that other students would jump in before you. So, it’s actually...hard.” She further stated that when she first began using English as a second language in the early phase of her training she felt “so slow and other people are so fast” in class discussions. Similarly, another participant pointed out that “If I wait until everybody finish[es]...speak[ing], then I will never have a chance to speak” in class discussion. Thus, she reported needing to “find cues and where to interrupt and when to speak,” which required “a lot of time to learn.” A different participant wished that she had “more time” to reflect on discussion topics before expressing her thoughts in class. She observed that U.S. students would respond to faculty’s questions “immediately” and thus, she stated that she had to speak before she felt ready.
Some participants reported that they were perceived as “quiet,” “reserved,” or “introverted” by faculty members and supervisors. These participants observed that being quiet, not actively speaking up, or being seen as introverted were often unappreciated and received negatively in U.S. culture. One participant remarked that “I notice that in the United States, being an introvert...has a negative connotation” and that “being very quiet wasn’t really appreciated or respected.” Another participant was appalled that in the U.S., “extroverts are so valued and introverts are [perceived to be] negative” and that once she moved to the U.S., “introversion became some very negative trait.” Although this participant perceived that U.S. culture “values extroversion,” she underscored that in her home country, “introversion was totally fine.” Some participants reported that they received negative feedback about their participation level in classes or meetings due to their being “quiet” or “introverted.” Instructors, advisors, and supervisors often asked participants to express their opinions/ideas more actively. One participant felt “frustrated” when a faculty member expected her to become “more extroverted.” Another participant reported feeling “angry” when her clinical supervisor told her that “in seminar, I heard you were kind of quiet.” A different participant found that it was “stressful” when her clinical supervisor kept encouraging her “to be more involved in the discussions.” She admitted feeling embarrassed because “I didn’t feel like I changed that much” in regards to participation in discussion.
The Importance of Recognizing Within-Group Diversity

The majority of participants reported that insufficient attention was given to within-group diversity among Asians and/or Asian international students in their training programs. They found the lack of recognition of within-group diversity unhelpful, discouraging, or frustrating. These participants hoped that diversity among Asian international students and/or differences between Asian international and Asian American students would be acknowledged and appreciated. Failure to recognize within-group differences was sometimes experienced as a form of racism or oppression among participants. This perspective will be addressed in a different section, which focuses on various forms of oppression.

Some participants felt that their faculty members or peers overlooked or failed to appreciate diversity among Asian international students. A few participants reported receiving negative feedback from their clinical supervisors upon engaging in behaviors that were perceived as atypical of Asian women. One participant reported that her openness and expressiveness in supervision were not only unappreciated but also seen unfavorably. She believed that her clinical supervisor held stereotypes toward Asian women and failed to appreciate that her behaviors did not fit into the stereotypes. This participant explained, “[my clinical supervisor] didn’t expect me to be that open because he thought Asian women are supposed to be guarded and less verbal and less expressive. I am not like that, and so I think when he expressed his concern it was coming from the stereotype that he had.” Another participant stated that her expressiveness and assertiveness did not fit into “the cultural stereotype,” and that her behaviors were not...
appreciated by people in supervisory positions. She claimed that her being “expressive and assertive... didn’t work well with some... people... I’ve been told like in my clinical supervision [that]... I kind of surprise people, so that become... almost like intimidating, make many people uncomfortable.” A third participant felt she experienced “racial profiling” upon being assigned Asian international clients in practicum. She reported that there was an “expectation” or assumption from the clinical training site that she and her clients “should be a good match” and “be able to understand each other better because we are Asians.” A fourth participant believed that some faculty members or U.S. peers had an assumption that “all [the] international students are the same” without recognizing that “there are... individual difference[s] in international students.” A fifth participant reported receiving minimum recognition and support for her multiple identities. That is, while visible identities such as Asian and international were well recognized, she felt that invisible aspects of identities (i.e., a specific characteristic) were overlooked:

[T]here are lots of diversity within Asian international students.... Sometimes people would see me as Asian international student and forgot that... I have other identities.... So I think that in terms of doctoral program, that’s the one thing that I have to complain about, not being able to... address the multiple identities within the international community.

A few participants emphasized the importance of distinguishing Asian international students from Asian American students. These participants emphasized that there are important cultural differences between these populations. One participant wondered whether researchers made a distinction between Asian nationals and Asian Americans upon reading research studies. She believed that “people tend to include everybody in the same category” without recognizing within-group diversity. Another
participant hoped that faculty members would recognize and appreciate “my development is very different from Asian American[s].” This participant hoped that faculty members would be aware that “it takes a long time [for an Asian international student] to develop clinical competency, language competency, and maybe growth at the beginning would be very slow, but maybe continue to grow much faster...toward the end of training.” A different participant shared frustrating experiences in which her Asian American peer failed to recognize and appreciate differences between her home and Asian American cultures. This participant reported feeling “angry” and “annoyed” that her U.S. peer “can’t differentiate between being [Asian national] and [Asian] American.”

Students’ Suggestions for Faculty Members to Increase Cross-Cultural Sensitivity

The majority of participants urged that faculty members increase cross-cultural sensitivity when training Asian international students. In order to achieve this goal, these participants talked about three specific behaviors that they wished to see from faculty members. First, as mentioned in the beginning of this section, some participants underscored that initiating and having discussions or dialogues about cross-cultural topics with Asian international students was critical. Second, some participants hoped that faculty members would not make “assumptions” about Asian international students. One participant remarked that, “don’t make assumption[s] that...she's very different or she must be the same because they're all psych students.” Another participant hoped that faculty members would not “assume that all international students are the same” and would appreciate diversity among international students. A third participant urged faculty
members not to make negative assumptions about international students’ competency prematurely based on some aspect of their training performances. For instance, this participant stated that when international students’ make repeated grammatical errors in writing, it may not reflect their competence or level of effort. She hoped that faculty members would try to understand international students from a multicultural lens and engage in dialogue with students. Third, one participant hoped that faculty members would become aware of “the developmental stage[s] of...international student[s],” would take factors such as students’ “identity development,” “personality,” and “learning style” into consideration, and would “provide...[individualized] support...[based on students’] developmental stage.”

**Understand the Internal Adjustment and Acculturation Processes of Asian International Students**

All the participants talked about their internal process of adjusting and acculturating to counseling psychology doctoral training programs in the U.S. In the process of adjusting and acculturation, almost all the participants experienced a status transition from being a member of a “majority” group in Asia to being a member of a “minority” group in the U.S. These participants also encountered self-doubts about their own competency, and some recognized a gap between their previous and current self-perceptions. Yet, almost all the participants experienced growth and gained confidence as they advanced in their counseling psychology training. In this section, Asian international students’ heightened awareness of race, racism, and privileges are described. Second, discrepancies in self-perceptions experienced before and after arriving in the
U.S. are explored. Third, self-doubts about Asian international students' competency are reported. Self-doubts largely stemmed from language challenges; therefore, this subsection overlaps with the content of a later section about the impact of using English as a second language. Finally, descriptions of growth and confidence attained by these students are presented.

_Students' Heightened Awareness of Race, Racism, and Privileges_

Almost all of the participants reported experiencing changes in their awareness or perspectives in regards to their salient identities. Specifically, almost all of the participants described their experience of being a member of a mainstream racial, ethnic group or "majority" group in their home country and becoming a member of a "minority" group in the U.S. A few participants highlighted that this process of being a part of a "majority" culture and becoming a part of a "minority" culture happened abruptly. One participant stated that she was "a majority in [my home country] and all of the sudden, I became one of the minority." Another participant also shared, "the moment that I came to [the U.S.], I became a minority, and that was a huge change, cultural shock to me because I was sort of majority group before I came to the States."

Before coming to the U.S., race or racial identity was not in the foreground of participants' consciousness. One participant reported that she never thought about being "Asian" in her own country. Another participant stated, "I was part of the majority culture from my home country, and I never had really to think twice about who I was, or my racial identity." For this participant, "age differences or gender differences" were at
...the forefront in her awareness when thinking about diversity in her home country. After arriving in the U.S., race and racial identity became prominent to the majority of participants. One participant recognized that “the racial issue has more salience in the United States than my country of origin.” Another participant shared that “my racial identity and who I am as Asian” came to the foreground of her consciousness when she came to the U.S.

Some participants pointed out that becoming a part of a racial, ethnic “minority” group brought “unfavorable” or “unpleasant” experiences. One participant reported that a status shift creates “the unfavorable experience...[and] the psychological...discomfort” because Asian international students are unfamiliar with the new environment, are out of their “comfort zone,” and may not be “treated nicely.” Another participant stated that “negative” or discriminatory experiences led her to think more about her race or racial identity. This participant reported that a “heightened awareness” of racism and discrimination was “not very comfortable” and described “pain” associated with becoming increasingly aware of challenges she faced as an Asian international woman student in the U.S.:

I had to be reminded, “[W]hatever negative experience...I had..., was it because I’m Asian? Was it because I’m female? Or was it because I’m international?”...there’s some struggle in dealing with, “Okay, I can’t change these things, so how is it that the same characteristics that I have could now become a disadvantage to me within this culture?”...Making sense of that I think takes a lot of time and energy...and emotionally...there’s some cost...negative experiences...illuminate my...demographic characteristics, then there’s some pain in recognizing...or trying to understand or feel angry about how is it that I have to go through this...[discriminatory] experience or how is it that this insult was just subtly or not so subtly communicated to me. And...I didn’t have to think so much about these things before, and now it’s sort of forced into my mind that I have to consider them and be careful.
Some participants revealed that becoming an Asian international student in the U.S. brought “disadvantage[s]” to them especially in the early phase of their training. Being in the U.S. for only a few years, one participant felt disadvantaged due to her race and ethnicity when in the U.S., a feeling she never experienced prior in her home country. Another participant initially wished that, “I was not Asian” because she was concerned that “being Asian” or being different could create “distance” from her clients who were primarily European or African American. A third participant reported that she “used to feel being [an] international student or being different [was]...negative.” She believed that internalizing these feelings would lead Asian international students to have low “self-efficacy.” Similarly, a fourth participant stated that during the first few years of her stay in the U.S., she used to feel that “being an Asian international student...there’s a lot of deficits [or disadvantages] rather than advantages.” She elaborated that “being an Asian international student...means that you don’t speak good English, means that you have poor writing skills...And being an Asian may mean that...I carry a lot of stereotypical characteristics as Asian...for like being quiet, always smile, being polite.”

As some participants advanced their training, they also reported feeling more comfortable with themselves and appreciating their cultural differences. One participant reported that she began “to recognize that being an international student is actually a strength.” Another participant reported that in her doctoral program, she recognized that “being an Asian international student actually means that I have more advantages than deficits.” For instance, she explained that she was “a team [player]” and could offer cross-cultural perspectives. Despite her initial anxiety, a different participant realized that
she could successfully establish strong working alliances with her European or African American clients regardless of linguistic and cultural differences. Hence, she reported developing an appreciation toward herself for being “unique” and “different” from the mainstream culture.

Through the transition from “majority” group to “minority” group member, participants reported an increased awareness in regards to multicultural, diversity and oppression issues. Three themes were identified by participants. First, participants became keenly aware of privileges that they had in their home country. One participant stated that “growing up in [my country] as a majority...[I]...started to be aware that actually I have taken advantage...in my life. I haven’t been aware that in my country, but now, I become aware of that. I appreciate the advantages that I have. I understand that the majority privilege that I had in [my country].” Second, participants were able to recognize challenges that “minority” individuals encounter in their home country. One participant reported that “in [my country], there are some cultural and also ethnic minorities... and my cultural background in [my country] is a majority. I can also see the problem of how things work in [my country].” Third, participants expressed an empathy and understanding toward some individuals in the U.S., who are not aware of their privileges. One participant shared her insights about being a member of a majority group and being oblivious to one’s own privileges:

[The status shift] helped me to think about my...being a majority back in my country, a lot of power or privilege that I have when I was in my country which I didn’t notice back then. And because of that experience I feel more understanding of majority, people of majority groups here...if they’ve never been outside of this country, never been in a role of a minority group, they will never know how much privilege that they have just being here in this country.
Some participants experienced discrepancies in how they perceived their skills and abilities as students or clinicians in their home countries compared to perceptions of their skills and abilities once they became students in the U.S. In regards to academic performance, one participant shared that she did not have much “confidence in writing in English” or writing “grammatically correct” and “beautiful sentence[s]” in English even though she believed that her writing skills were strong in her native language. She explained that one reason for her lack of self-confidence in English writing stemmed from the fact that she could not produce the same quality writing in English as she could in her own language. Another participant revealed that it took her a few days to complete a short academic paper in English when it would only take her a couple hours in her native language. Similarly, a third participant reported that the speed of her academic performance changed after she came to the U.S:

I think the first 2 years was a struggle in the US... because of the language. So, everything took me... long time to be accomplished. Even it is just a quiz on Monday, I started studying on Friday. Reading was another thing. I compare how fast American students read to my reading speed, and I think I was reading like... 5 times longer than they did. So, maybe it could be 1 hour reading assignment... it became 5 hours reading assignment... everything really slow me down because of language... back home, everything went very fast, quickly, and... I was... one of people who can do it very quickly and precisely. And that was my strength, but seems like I lost my strength to get things done precisely in a fast pace. So, it could be an identity crisis because... I found myself very useful, very resourceful by being fast and precise in [my home country]... But here, I am one of the slowest one in the class.

In regards to clinical performance, one participant, who had prior work experience as a counselor in her home country, shared that she became concerned about how she was
perceived by her U.S. clients. This participant worried that U.S. clients might see her as unintelligent or incompetent in counseling sessions. She stated that she had never had such anxiety when she was in her own country. Similarly, another participant with a few years of professional experiences as a counselor at home shared feeling insecure about whether the participant was a “good counselor” in the U.S. due to cultural differences and language challenges.

_Students’ Self-Doubts About Their Own Competency_

Almost all the participants reported experiencing doubts about their own competency during their counseling psychology training. For example, one participant shared that she “doubted” her competency and that “there were plenty of times that I thought I might not be able to...go through the program.” Some participants believed that Asian international students experienced great self-doubts largely due to cultural and language differences. One participant remarked that many Asian international students would “have a lot of doubt[s]” about themselves especially in the early phase of their training. Another participant underscored that many beginning trainees are generally anxious about their own competency; however, Asian international students would have greater anxiety due to “added layer[s]” such as the use of their second language and cultural differences. For instance, due to language challenges and cultural differences, one participant reported that when she came to the U.S., she felt as if she became “dumber” or more “stupid” than others. This participant also stated that she felt as if she
lost “a fair amount of self-esteem.” Another participant described ways in which language challenges impacted her sense of competency:

[T]he language part plays a big role in my feeling of incompetent because even in a daily conversation...I used to have experience like, people say, “Oh, what did you say?” or “What are you trying to say?” So...I used to constantly make corrections in my speaking. So I felt like “Am I understood?” or “Am I able to communicate effectively enough like other Americans or other people?” So I think like every single moment I was kind of forced to doubt about myself because people don’t understand me. And I don’t have that kind of moment very much now because I got used to speaking, but I still have that. And I think once you have that kind of experience in the past, you always have that kind of mindset that when people don’t understand me, that must be my fault...although maybe that person was not really paying attention or maybe that person don’t understand a word I use...still when they ask me what I’ve said, and then I always feel like I made a mistake.

These participants wondered if they were good doctoral students, counselors, researchers, and/or instructors. First, a few participants felt academically inferior to U.S.-born doctoral students. One participant perceived that she had inadequate skills to “critically think” or “evaluate information” because critical thinking was not valued as much in her previous education in her home country. As a result, this participant felt that she had fewer opinions to share in the classroom than U.S. students. Another participant reported feeling “not good enough” as a doctoral student. She explained that her sense of incompetence originated from limited understanding of U.S. culture and limited language proficiency compared to her U.S. peers. Second, some participants were concerned about their competence as counselors in the U.S. One participant felt worried that she would be seen as “incompetent” by clients because she did not “speak English [with an] American accent.” Another participant admitted doubting her counseling skills in the U.S. because “counseling involves interacting with people in English” as a second language. A few
other participants were concerned about their clinical competency in the U.S. despite the fact that they successfully worked as professional counselors in their home countries (this was described in the previous subsection). Third, a couple of participants worried about how much they could contribute to research due to their perceived English proficiency. One participant stated that upon participating in research projects, she was initially “very hesitant about writing because I truly felt that...I would not be able to contribute [to research projects] by writing.” Fourth, a few participants reported feeling highly anxious about teaching. One participant stated, “[T]eaching was scary as hell to me at the beginning” especially because “speaking in second language to undergraduate students was pretty scary.” Another participant hesitated to take on a teaching assistantship because she was uncertain about her teaching ability due to her language skills.

**Growth and Confidence Attained Through Experiences**

Almost all the participants reported recognizing their own growth and developing increased confidence in their abilities and skills as they gained training experiences. The majority of participants felt increasingly comfortable engaging in various roles as doctoral students, clinicians, instructors, and/or researchers. As doctoral students in academic settings, participants reported that their speaking, reading, and/or writing skills improved. A few participants stated that they became much more comfortable in expressing their opinions in classroom discussions. A third participant said, “At this moment...I feel pretty comfortable doing...oral presentation in English...if this is within my research interest or topics I’ve been studying about.” A few other participants reported that the
speed of their reading skills improved over time. For instance, one participant said, “I can read now in a decent speed but not as fast as other American cohort.” A sixth participant felt “excited” and “happy” because even though she still found English writing challenging, faculty members had recognized solid improvement in her writing skills in the past few years.

As clinicians, participants reported that they developed confidence in providing counseling services over time. One participant stated, “I just feel that I grow a lot in...more counseling skills and like active listening and have more private therapy experience and also like about...family and couple therapy.” A few other participants recognized that they felt more grounded in counseling sessions in later phases of their training once they found ways to manage their anxiety. For instance, one participant initially experienced high apprehension seeing and retaining clients; however, this participant felt more comfortable when creating rituals such as rearranging physical spaces, communicating certain messages to clients, and writing a journal. Another participant also shared that in order to cope with her anxiety and compensate for linguistic challenges, she decided to ask clients permission to bring a dictionary into sessions.

As instructors and/or researchers, participants reported developing confidence and competency in teaching and/or research areas through increased experience. One participant shared that she initially felt “very nervous” about teaching undergraduate courses as a teaching assistant. However, she managed her anxiety through thorough preparation. As a result, this participant felt less nervous about teaching classes. She also
became more confident in her abilities to teach, interact with undergraduate students in
the classroom, and provide formal presentations through having multiple teaching
opportunities. This participant explained, “This [is] part of our assistantship, so we are
forced to teach and also I think through the teaching experience, I am more able to present
in a formal way like in my class... I feel I’m able to present and more comfortable in some
ways.” By the time she taught the class the second time, this participant stated that she
“felt less nervous...and I am better knowing about how to interact with students.”
Another participant expanded her future career options when she realized that she was
capable of teaching, even though she initially felt that “teaching was scary,” and clinical
work remained her main aspiration. She stated, “I've gained a lot of skills... I feel like I
am more well-rounded that I can teach, I can do research. I feel comfortable in this
domain”. A different participant described ways in which she developed solid skills in
research through experiences. She emphasized that it was extremely helpful to have
many opportunities in her doctoral program to join various faculty members’ research
projects:

[Through research projects], I would gain opportunity to write. And when I first
started, the first research project I was very hesitant about writing, because I truly
felt that... I would not be able to contribute by writing. But [faculty members] had
this attitude that no matter who writes, the first draft needs to be revised. Revision
is very important. So by engaging in different research projects I learned how to
write and how to revise, and how to go through the process. So I think everything,
no matter what you were doing, I think the practice is very important.
Recognize the Impact of Using English as a Second Language on Asian International Students’ Training Experiences

All the participants described what it was like for them to utilize English as a second language throughout counseling psychology training activities. Almost all of the participants expressed a certain degree of confidence in English proficiency and/or recognized that their language skills had improved during their educational experiences in the U.S. Yet, all the participants believed that using English as a second language often impacted their training experiences in significant ways. All the participants reported encountering some language challenges with varying degrees of difficulty. In this section, challenges participants experienced due to using English as a second language during training are described. Experiences of racism and prejudices related to language are explored here. Second, participants’ sense of confidence in English is illustrated. Finally, improvements in their language skills are reported.

Challenges in Using English as a Second Language

All the participants encountered varying degrees of challenges due to using English as a second language. Five main themes in regards to language challenges were identified. First, the majority of participants found that using a second language required much more time and energy than their first language. Participants reported that reading, writing, and thinking in English took a lot of time and that speaking and listening in English consumed a great deal of “mental energy.” One participant shared that it took her two days to complete a short paper in English whereas a few hours would have been
sufficient in her native language. Another participant felt frustrated because she realized that it took her much longer to complete reading and writing assignments than her U.S. peers. She reported asking her peers about how long it would take them to read one article from a professional journal. This participant found out that it took “only 20 minutes” for her peers to read an article while “an hour and a half” was necessary for her. She revealed that she spent “all day” reading multiple articles whereas “two hours” were sufficient for her peers to do the same task. In addition, this participant stated that writing a “five-page paper is going to take like one whole weekend for me” while her U.S. peers implied that it would take them only a couple of hours. Moreover, this participant reported feeling “tired” when observing live counseling sessions in order to provide her peers with feedback. She explained that paying attention to sessions in English required a lot of energy and focus. A third participant reported that there was “a huge difference” in her speed of completing written reports compared to the time it would take her U.S. peers to do the same work. She said, “I have to spend all day Sunday...most of the times to finish the report, which lots of the American cohort, they can finish within like three to four hours. But in my case, I have to spend ten to twelve hours.” Even though another participant considered her English proficiency to be very high, she reported that, “I can’t think as fast...I can’t read as fast as my American peers.” A fifth participant reported using a lot of “mental energy” and feeling exhausted when giving presentations in English.

Second, almost all of the participants identified certain areas of English to be more challenging than other areas. For the majority of participants, academic writing was
the most significant challenge. One participant asserted that academic writing at the doctoral level is demanding for anyone; however, “the added language barrier” or “not having English as your first language” makes academic writing especially challenging for Asian international students. Another participant reported feeling comfortable giving oral presentations and conducting therapy in English; however, she felt that “I don’t have much confidence about writing” especially writing formal academic papers. She stated that writing was “the area I still need to work on.” A different participant reported that while she could “speak fine” in English, “the writing is always struggle to me...the writing is very different, it takes different skill. It takes time to get used to.” A fourth participant perceived that her speaking and writing skills were not at the same proficiency level. While she found speaking in classroom easy, she claimed that “writing is the most frustrating part of my training.”

For some participants, speaking in English and listening in English was not particularly challenging, but reading in English was challenging because it took them much longer to complete reading assignments in a second language than in their native language. At the same time, these participants did not identify speaking or listening as challenging. Some other participants reported that speaking in English during clinical work and/or presentations posed challenges. One participant felt “difficult for me to communicate in English” with clients especially in the early phase of her training. She explained that although she understood what her clients said, she found that it was challenging to respond to clients and to express her thoughts in English. Another participant reported feeling “stress[ed]” because “conducting therapy [in English]
was...most difficult.” A third participant shared that she became “[self] conscious” when speaking English during clinical work due to having an accent.

Third, some participants reported encountering prejudice regarding using English as a second language, and some wondered if racism played a role in their unpleasant experiences. One participant shared that some clients did not want to see her because she was a “foreigner” who spoke English with an “accent.” In addition, this participant felt hesitant to take on a teaching assistant position because she heard from other international teaching assistants that some U.S. students responded negatively to international teaching assistants who spoke with an accent. Another participant wondered whether her language skills and accent played a role when her client decided to delay receiving counseling services. A different participant reported that while many undergraduate students appreciated her teaching, some others “pick[ed] on” her English and “blame[d]” their dissatisfaction with a course on her speaking skills. This participant also wondered whether racism played any role when some clients requested that they work with another counselor. When she was a teaching assistant, a fourth participant reported that some undergraduate students expressed discomfort or dissatisfaction with instructors who spoke English with an accent. She found their reactions rude:

I guess I definitely have an accent. And...when I was...tutoring students during my office hour, and I tried to explain some concept and they would be like “What? What?” It was like, rather in a kind of rude way. They wouldn’t necessarily say that, “I keep asking the same question because [you] have an accent.” They wouldn’t tell me [that] to my face. But when you [look at]...one of those websites that sort of rank faculty members....I’ve seen those faculty members from overseas with a very strong accent have a somewhat negative rating. Based on their accent, students would say that “I have no idea what they are saying”.

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A fifth participant explained that a faculty member suggested that she take an undergraduate English course in order to improve her writing skills. Although both a course instructor and this participant believed that she was overqualified for the class, the faculty member insisted that this participant complete the course. She revealed that she felt “oppressed” by this inflexible requirement.

Fourth, some participants reported that using English as a second language impacted a sense of their self-efficacy. One participant shared that using English as a second language resulted in her questioning her competency. For example, she tended to attribute misunderstandings or miscommunications to her language skills even though she was well aware of the possibility that the responsibility could lie in the listener. She described ways in which language challenges could have lasting effects on her self-efficacy:

[T]he language part plays a big role in my feeling of incompetent because even in a daily conversation...I...used to have experience like, people say, “Oh, what did you say?” or “What are you trying to say?” So...I used to constantly made corrections in my speaking. So I felt like “Am I understood?” or “Am I able to communicate effectively enough like other Americans or other people?” So I think like every single moment I was kind of forced to doubt about myself because people don’t understand me. And I don’t have that kind of moment very much now because I got used to speaking, but I still have that. And I think once you have that kind of experience in the past, you always have that kind of mindset that when people don’t understand me, that must be my fault...although maybe that person was not really paying attention or maybe that person don’t understand a word I use...still when they ask me what I’ve said, and then I always feel like I made a mistake.

Another participant acknowledged that she often used phrases such as “I’m not sure if I make sense” in the end of sentences. She reported that a faculty member wondered whether such phrases reflected a sense of her self-efficacy, and the participant admitted
that she did indeed feel a lack of confidence and low self-efficacy in her verbal communication skills in English as a second language. A few other participants reported having experiences in which they felt "slow," "stupid," or "dumb" mainly due to using English as a second language. One of these participants further shared that she lost "a fair amount of self-esteem" in the U.S. partly because of language challenges.

Finally, a few participants asserted that language proficiency is critical especially for counseling psychology students. These participants explained that students in counseling psychology programs are required to engage in not only academic training but also clinical practice which relies heavily on verbal skills. One participant believed that "English is really the barrier for me" especially because "language is really a big issue in...counseling." She revealed that she once wondered if counseling psychology, which requires such high language proficiency, was the right field for her. Another participant considered speaking English as a second language as "one of the biggest challenges that currently I'm having in the counseling psych training." She explained that verbal communication is critical in clinical work, and therefore, she felt self-conscious about her language skills and accent. A different participant stated, "[B]eing an Asian international student in the counseling psychology program, the most difficult issue that I face is the language." She pointed out that it was most challenging for her to speak fluently in English during clinical work.
Sense of Confidence Using English

The majority of participants expressed some degree of confidence in their current language skills due to having the advantage of prior experience with English before beginning their doctoral program. For these participants, confidence stemmed from previous educational experiences such as numerous opportunities in school to use English in the past, many years of studying and practicing English, and/or prior education received in the U.S. before their doctoral study. One participant reported that she had “the advantage of knowing the language pretty well” prior to arriving in the U.S. Therefore, “in terms of using the language, I didn’t find it that big a challenge.” A few other participants explained that they studied English for a long time in their country of origin and thus, their language skills were above average or strong when they initially came to the U.S. A fourth participant reported that “because I learn...English in an English environment...I am more advanced than the other international student” in terms of listening and speaking skills. Thus, this participant experienced fewer problems communicating than other Asian international students. Similarly, due to having spent several years in the U.S. before beginning doctoral training, a fifth participant stated that “I have less difficult time [with English] than other international students who just came” to the U.S.

Almost all of the participants recognized that their language skills had improved since they arrived in the U.S. and/or during their doctoral training. Participants felt that using a second language became “easier” than in the past and that their language skills were getting “better.” One participant recognized that completing academic papers
required her less time compared to when she started her doctoral study. Another participant stated that “it took a long time” for her to improve English. She remarked that “I have been in North America now for [several] years...every year I feel it get a little easier.” A few other participants recognized that they could read faster in English compared to when they came to the U.S. Hence, it became easier for them to complete reading assignments than the past. A fifth participant felt “happy” and “excited” because “not only me but some of my professor[s]...have found that my English writing has improved” in the past few years of her doctoral training.

Be Aware of the Impact of Racism on Asian International Students

All the participants had direct or indirect experiences with overt racism and racial microaggressions after they arrived in the U.S. Almost all of the participants reported encountering racism and/or racial microaggressions in training programs, training sites, universities, and/or communities. Many of these incidents involved faculty members and staff psychologists who train Asian international students. In this section, experiences of racism within counseling psychology training environments and ways in which these experiences impacted participants are illustrated. Second, racism that occurred outside of counseling psychology training environments and its impact on participants are described.

Racism Within Counseling Psychology Training Environments

Almost all of the participants reported experiencing covert or subtle forms of racism or racial microaggressions during their training experiences. The majority of
participants believed that racism was “not obvious,” “very subtle,” or unnoticeable within their counseling psychology doctoral programs. One participant claimed that racism “is not obvious thing in the program.” Another participant also stated that she “can feel” racism even though it was not obvious in her program. A different participant remarked that there was very little “direct discrimination” or overt racism in her doctoral program because “people [in a college town] are politically correct most of the time.” However, this participant underscored that racial microaggressions existed “everywhere even in [my]...department.”

The majority of participants described experiences of racial microaggressions with faculty members in training programs and staff psychologists at clinical training sites. Five main themes in regards to racial microaggressions were identified. First, some participants believed that some staff psychologists hold stereotypic assumptions or biased views toward Asians or Asian international students. One participant reported feeling “hurt” and discouraged that her behavior was negatively received by her clinical supervisor because her behavior departed from Asian stereotypes. She explained that her supervisor was struck and surprised by her candid sharing about her counter-transference toward clients. This participant stated, “[In a] supervision session, [my supervisor] jokingly said ‘You’re Asian. You’re not supposed to be that open.’” She believed that her supervisor was “clearly... seeing me with...many stereotypes how Asian women should be.” As a result, this participant remarked that certain interactions with her supervisor were “really damaging to my professional growth and professional identity.”
Similarly, another participant reported feeling misunderstood and judged by those in supervisory positions when her behavior did not fit into Asian stereotypes:

I am kind of different from the cultural stereotype...after spending several years in [North America], I become pretty expressive and assertive...it didn’t work well with some of the people....I’ve been told like in my clinical supervision, people told me I kind of surprise people, so that become a little, almost like intimidating, make many people uncomfortable....Basically they said as an Asian woman, people expect me to be more submissive, and not to challenge another...when I came [across] in that way...they did not like it.

A third participant reported feeling like she was “racially profiled and matched up with...any Asian clients comes to counseling center.” She explained that there was an assumption that she would work well with any Asian clients simply because of being Asian herself. A fourth participant shared feeling “invisible” and hurt when a staff psychologist in a clinical training site expressed prejudice and biased views toward “foreigner[s]” in the presence of this participant:

[I]n my practicum site....when we were having a meeting for our treatment team...one of the psychologists, she was just chatting with other people in the team. And she was talking about how one day she received the phone call, and the person was talking to her about buying insurance or something...and she just like give a look like very annoyed and saying that she can tell this is a fraud and this is a person untrustworthy. And when talking about why she perceived that person being fraud and untrustworthy, she said that...because that person has foreign...accent. And she said you can totally tell that he is a foreigner and...it’s kind of indicate [her belief] that foreigner[s] are not trustworthy, they are try to cheat, try to steal things.

Second, some participants perceived some faculty members or staff psychologists to engage in behaviors that were cross-culturally insensitive. One participant acknowledged feeling uncomfortable when a faculty member “mimicked a foreign accent” in order to illustrate an immigrant client as well as showed a movie clip in which “an Asian person was negatively described.” This participant gave the faculty member
feedback that it was not necessary to imitate a foreign accent and that it would be better to select a different movie. This participant stated that the faculty member “did not respond [to my feedback] very well.” Another participant reported feeling “oppressed” by a faculty member’s cross-culturally insensitive behavior. She explained that the faculty member insisted that this participant complete an undergraduate writing course even though both a course instructor and the participant believed that the course was inappropriate for a doctoral level international student. A third participant reported feeling discouraged when experiencing perceived “discrimination.” In the process of finding practicum sites, this participant believed that some interviewers attempted to investigate this participant’s language proficiency as opposed to clinical competency. This participant was asked questions such as whether this participant was able to “catch the word just by listening,” “catch the nuances” of words, or “repeat the word if...[this participant has never] heard” it before.

Third, a few participants described experiences in which faculty members invalidated or failed to address racial/cross-cultural topics and perspectives. One participant felt “implicit pressure” from faculty members to “confirm into [the mainstream] way of communicating...and thinking.” She elaborated that, “[W]hen I ask questions that were related to...multicultural considerations or perspectives...some of the professors...didn’t see the importance of [these issues].” This participant remarked that she felt “ignored” and “invisible” in classrooms. Another participant reported feeling “suppressed” when an instructor invalidated her cross-cultural perspectives. She explained that she attempted to address “how [depression] might be prevalent [among
some Asian Americans]...and how depression might be culturally related to [Asian Americans'] experiences here in the U.S.” This participant shared feeling discouraged when “the instructor...kind of disapprove” of her perspectives and “disagreed that there is cultural issue involved.” A third participant described a “very uncomfortable” interaction with a European American male client, in which she felt being stereotyped as a submissive “sexual object” as an Asian woman. When this participant brought up her feelings in supervision, she reported that her European American female supervisor did acknowledge the role of sexism in this incident (e.g., many women could encounter a similar incident). Yet, this participant did not feel fully understood by her supervisor as the supervisor failed to acknowledge how Asian women in particular are viewed and treated. She pointed out that there is a stereotype of Asian women being “submissive,” and her supervisor failed to attend to this aspect of the uncomfortable experience. A fourth participant reported feeling confused when an instructor made a joke regarding Asians and Asian martial arts. She did not fully understand the meaning of the joke, and when her classmates expressed concerns about the cultural sensitivity of the instructor’s remark, this participant wondered if there were even more culturally insensitive incidents that she had encountered and not noticed initially.

Fourth, some participants described cross-culturally insensitive interactions with their U.S. peers in counseling psychology programs. One participant reported on a striking belief that her Asian American peer expressed that was clearly a generalization. This student believed, “Asian international students can’t tolerate Asian American students,” and this participant was appalled by this stereotype. Another participant
reported feeling excluded by her mostly European American cohort. She explained that they did not actively engage in conversations with her or did not invite her to social activities. This participant wondered if her status as an Asian international student played any role in her cohort's behaviors. She stated that she felt as if she were "discriminated" against. A different participant reported that some U.S. peers became "very hostile toward me." Based on "passive insult[s]" or condescending remarks made by a mother of one of these peers, this participant hypothesized that her U.S. peers' unfriendly attitudes were due to "my status as international [and] as Asian."

Fifth, some participants wondered whether some clients or undergraduate students held biased attitudes toward Asian international therapists or teaching assistants especially due to their language skills and accents. One participant reported incidents in which some clients did not want to work with her because she was a "foreigner" who spoke English with an "accent." In addition, this participant felt hesitant to take on a teaching assistant position because she heard from other international teaching assistants that some U.S. students responded negatively to international teaching assistants with accents. Another participant wondered whether her language skills and accent influenced her client's decision to delay receiving counseling services. A different participant reported that although many undergraduate students responded positively to her teaching, some others "pick[ed] on" her English and "blame[d]" their dissatisfactions with a class on her speaking skills. This participant also wondered whether racism played any role when some clients requested that they work with another counselor. A fourth participant reported that some undergraduate students expressed "discomfort or dissatisfaction" with
an international teaching assistant with an accent. She experienced interactions with some students in which they responded “in a...rude way” when she tried to explain concepts.

Racism Outside of Counseling Psychology Training Environments

The majority of participants reported experiencing overt racism and racial microaggressions outside of counseling psychology training settings. One participant shared feeling “very threaten[ed], angry, and discourage[ed]” when repeatedly encountering perceived racism on campus. When she walked on campus, this participant explained that some students who were passengers in cars would “stick their head out and start screaming and yelling something at me.” This participant also reported feeling disrespected when “some people...mimic Asian language.” Moreover, the same participant reported being treated differently than her U.S. friends when she went shopping. She stated that some store clerks did not greet her even though her U.S. friends were greeted. Another participant acknowledged that she experienced racial microaggressions “almost everyday” in life outside of her doctoral program. She found that it was “very annoying” when strangers made remarks such as “Hey, Ni hao” or asked questions such as “Are you Chinese?” rather than directly inquiring where she was from. A third participant reported feeling uncomfortable to venture out to surrounding communities after receiving unfriendly “stares” from community people. A fourth participant observed and experienced that Asians did not receive the same type of customer service as European American customers in a restaurant. This participant
shared feeling very “upset” and stated that, “I was pretty convinced that that was racism... because I could compare [how the waitress treated] the White guy and my Asian friend.”

*Be Aware of Asian International Students’ Financial Concerns*

All the participants discussed the financial aspects of their training experiences. The majority of participants perceived that their doctoral programs provided strong financial support. A few participants noted some of the financial challenges international students face because they must always pay out-of-state tuition, they have limited work opportunities due to student visa status, and international students do not qualify for U.S. student loans. One participant remarked that strong funding from training programs is “very important for international students” because it would be too expensive for these students to pay out-of-state tuition for all the courses. Another participant hoped that training programs would be transparent about their funding situations especially for international students, so that they “can make the [informed] decision of whether or not they will come to your program.” Only one participant reported having inadequate funding from her program. Almost all of the participants financially supported themselves primarily through department funding (e.g., assistantships and fellowships); yet, some participants emphasized that department funding was not enough to cover the costs of daily living expenses. Hence, some participants stated that they needed to find loans (e.g., a loan from their country of origin and a loan program for international students), use personal savings, and/or reluctantly ask their family for money. While
some participants felt very little financial strain, the majority of participants reported experiencing some degree of stress due to tight financial situations. In this section, financial challenges that the majority of participants encountered during their doctoral training are described first. Second, experiences of some participants who found minimal financial stress are reported.

Financial Challenges

Regardless of their satisfaction with department funding, the majority of participants reported experiencing financial stress to some degree. A few participants identified finance as a serious stressor. One participant remarked that finances are “a big source of stressor.” Another participant concurred that finances are “a big issue.” A couple of participants reported that needing to secure an assistantship position every year was stressful. One participant stated that renewing an assistantship yearly was “nerve striking.” Another participant shared that it was “a big hassle” to apply for assistantship positions every year and felt uncomfortable competing with her peers over limited positions. Some participants reported feeling that their budgets were tight and needed to be mindful of spending money. One participant stated, “my budget is still tight…even [though] I was spending frugally, it is still tight.” Another participant explained that although she was “always precise on…what I spend money on,” “I was always short [of]…a few hundred dollars a month.” A different participant reported that while she perceived funding from her department to be strong, and was careful about her spending, “the money I get is really minimum for living” expenses, and hence, her budget was “very
tight.” This participant also believed that she experienced greater financial challenges compared to her U.S. peers due to limited funding opportunities based on her student visa status.

A few participants reported ways in which financial stress impacted or would impact their training experiences. One participant shared that although “it is hard to do research” on her old and slow laptop, she hesitated to purchase a new computer because “that is...a big part of money for me.” This participant also revealed that she was unable to attend some professional conferences in which she was interested because “I don’t have...money.” Another participant stated that she was uncertain whether she could continue pursuing her doctoral degree due to financial difficulty. This participant reported feeling “unhappy,” “depressed,” and “frustrated” because of insufficient funding from her program and unsuccessful attempts to secure adequate funding outside of her department. A third participant explained that to save money, she gave up visiting her family in her home country and chose to not purchase a car. However, she remarked that without a car, she was limiting her choices of future practicum training sites to only sites where public transportation would be available.

Minimum Financial Stress

Some participants reported that they did not encounter any serious financial challenges or did not need to worry about funding from training programs. Among these participants, only a few stated that their family provided some financial support. One participant felt “very fortunate [that]...I have not had any...major difficulties in terms of
paying.” This participant explained that her doctoral program provided strong and satisfying funding to students, and thus, she did not need to worry about finances.

Another participant stated that, “my program provide a good financial support, so I don’t have to worry about my funding.” This participant reported receiving good funding until starting an internship. A few other participants stated that they were able to support themselves financially mainly through their assistantships. One participant remarked that she could support herself financially through her assistantship and due to a low cost of living in the area. She stated that finances were “manageable” even though she did not feel “rich.” Another participant reported that she could support herself financially mainly through her assistantship. She explained that living costs were low in her geographic area, and that her family provided some financial support. Therefore, as long as this participant did not overspend, she felt “fine” about her financial situation. A different participant shared that her assistantship generally provided good financial means for her; however, when she was short of money, her family offered financial support. Hence, this participant admitted that she did not feel financial stress.

Providing Helpful Training Experiences for Asian International Students: What Faculty and Supervisors Can Do to Provide Cross-Culturally Sensitive, Satisfying Training to Asian International Students

In the previous section, six major essences or themes that emerged in the present study were described in detail. These six themes are important especially when faculty members and supervisors attempt to deepen their understanding of Asian international students’ training experiences. In this section, seven additional main essences or themes
that emerged in this study are described. The following seven themes involve what faculty members and supervisors could do to provide cross-culturally sensitive, positive, satisfying training experiences to Asian international students. These seven themes include: listen to the voices of Asian international students, cultivate positive relationships and interactions with Asian international students, search for cross-culturally sensitive ways to accommodate the needs of Asian international students, address the applicability of counseling psychology training in the U.S. to Asian international students' home cultures, address career development issues of Asian international students, appreciate the strengths and resiliency of Asian international students, and recognize the benefits of recruiting Asian international students.

*Listen to the Voices of Asian International Students*

All the participants believed that it was invaluable for faculty members and supervisors to listen to the voices of Asian international students in counseling psychology doctoral programs. One participant emphasized that in order to effectively train Asian international students, it would be critical for faculty members to have "willingness to listen" to what these students have to say. Similarly, another participant believed that it would be helpful for Asian international students "if some [faculty members] are willing to hear what students are saying."

In this section, participants' strong desire to be heard by faculty members and training programs is described first. Next, participants' hesitations and anxieties about expressing honest or candid voices in their training programs as well as during this
Students’ Desires to Be Heard

Almost all the participants reported that they wanted their voices to be heard by their faculty members and supervisors. One participant stated, “international students... want to be heard” by faculty members. She further elaborated, “I just hope [faculty members] can really... listen to what we are trying to say to them... because I think that’s important.” Another participant hoped that collective voices of Asian international students would be represented in and expressed by this study’s findings. She said, “I hope this paper will come across [to faculty and training programs] as a voice from international students.” The majority of participants expressed their hope that this research would reach counseling psychology faculty members, counseling psychology training programs, and any professionals who partake in training of Asian international students. Specifically, they hoped that their messages would be heard through this study’s future publication in a professional journal and/or presentation at a professional conference. One participant stated, “I would really like to see the end results of it. I really hope that you publish after you finish your dissertation.” Similarly, other participants also expressed their strong desires for their voices to be recognized beyond participating in this study:

I would encourage you to try to publish, not only publish your paper but also going to meeting to share with people about your research results and also write a brief article and send it to the programs who recruit international students, send
your results to...maybe it’s too active, but sharing the results with someone who you network and then, so I mean that the goal is to try to make the voices being heard, so that’s something you could think about in the future.

I hope you publish it in the peer-reviewed research journal. So that everyone can know about that. This kind of trial is very necessary for international students. There have been many research about minority people, not much research about...Asian international students, so I hope...everyone recognize, appreciate your research.

_Students’ Hesitations in Providing Honest, Candid Voices in Training Programs_

Regardless of their strong desire to be heard, almost all the participants reported having some hesitation in communicating their honest, true voices to faculty members or supervisors, especially in the early phase of their training. One participant reported that although “I try to make [my voice] heard...I have to say it’s been very challenging, especially in a very new environment.” Similarly, a few other participants reported greater difficulties in “challeng[ing] authorities” and “confronting” or disagreeing with faculty members in the beginning of their doctoral training. Expressing candid voices to faculty members or supervisors was described as challenging, difficult, uncomfortable, or risky. Two primary reasons for their hesitations stemmed from perceived power differences between the faculty and students, and students’ cultural values to avoid expressions of disagreement as a sign of respect toward authority figures. Perceived power differences and Asian cultural values were often intertwined in participants’ experiences involving issues of their voices being spoken or heard.

First, the majority of participants pointed out that they were conscious of the power, authority, or control faculty members held over students. Therefore, they were
concerned about or afraid of negative consequences they might receive upon providing constructive feedback to, expressing disagreements with, or “offending” their faculty members. One participant reported not wanting to confront a faculty member when conflicts arose between them. She felt “afraid” because “the professor has a lot of power.” This participant believed that faculty members “have control over my grades” and whether she can graduate from the program. Another participant believed she received an “unfair” and inaccurate evaluation from her clinical supervisor in regards to her clinical competency. She felt “minimize[d],” undervalued, and misunderstood by her supervisor. However, she did not reveal her honest thoughts or feelings to her supervisor. This participant reported, “I am afraid of confronting her and say ‘Oh, you are wrong. That’s not me’....So I pretty much agreed about everything what she said about me even though there were some part I strongly disagreed.” This participant further explained that “the professors are authority figures, so students usually feel [it is] hard to confront them.” A few other participants were worried that expressing their opinions honestly may negatively impact their evaluations or recommendation letters, may prevent them from graduating, and/or may hinder their professional development (e.g., sabotage other professional connections).

Second, the majority of participants acknowledged the influence of their Asian cultural values and practices in relation to providing honest feedback to the faculty. One participant believed that a challenge of expressing her voice stemmed partly from her Asian cultural background. She reported that in her home culture, “you’re told to accept what you’re given and try to make the best [out] of it than trying to raise certain issues
and try to change things.” Participants reported that in their culture, it was important for students to show respect to faculty members. Therefore, these participants perceived that it was disrespectful to challenge, question, or confront faculty members or their ideas, point out their mistakes, or disagree with them.

Power differences between faculty and students may be exacerbated by Asian cultural values, which emphasize respect for authorities. In addition, some participants stated that they were not encouraged to be outspoken or assertive in their home culture. Hence, giving constructive feedback was particularly difficult for many participants. One participant stated, “coming from Asian culture, I’m not really able to speak up for myself....I don’t want to completely offend my advisor or my supervisor, so I have to be careful....I am afraid that [my advisor] would try to prevent me from pursuing graduation, prevent me from making connections with some of the professional colleagues.” Another participant reported feeling dissatisfied in a clinical setting, but felt it was difficult “to confront” her clinical supervisor who was in a position of power. She stated, “I think it’s the cultural thing that I cannot just go to him and say, ‘you are not doing what you are supposed to do’...and also when you’re approaching to the end, you know they hold the evaluation. You don’t want to offend him in any way.”

Students’ Concerns About Expressing Candid Voices for the Present Study

The majority of participants hoped that this research could be a vehicle for disseminating their voices. However, some participants expressed concerns about the possibility that faculty members or peers might recognize their identifies in this study.
based on particular training episodes that they shared during interviews. Although participants considered their experiences important to be acknowledged beyond participating in this study, they hesitated to provide certain information or requested specific details be altered and/or removed upon reporting results of this study. When participants believed that certain experiences reported could be easily identifiable by faculty, they feared possible negative consequences of reporting such unhelpful or discouraging experiences. In order to protect participants’ anonymity and confidentiality, no pseudonyms or contextual information of participants were attached to examples and quotes. By doing so, any potential risk which could result in identification of participants by assembling information from a single participant was reduced. Moreover, any clearly identifiable information of participants was altered or removed.

One participant admitted feeling “uncomfortable” and being cautious when disclosing “a very challenging experience” that happened between her and a staff psychologist. She explained that the counseling psychology field is “pretty small” and that only a limited number of Asian international students are enrolled in doctoral programs in counseling psychology. Hence, upon participating in this research and describing a discouraging experience inflicted by a person who held power, this student worried about being identified and wondered, “Is this going to bite me in the future?”

Another participant, who revealed conflicting relationships with a faculty member, believed that parts of “my information could be identified very easily. It’s a small [world], and there are some opinions that...I don’t feel comfortable being recognized.” This participant further stated, “I think I need to take back some of things
that I tell you” in order to protect “myself” and “my career.” A third participant stated that her faculty members could probably “guess” who she was based on the information she shared in an interview if they found out which doctoral program she was from. Although a fourth participant stated that “I won’t regret what I have said [during an interview because] it was pretty much the truth,” she expressed anxieties that “my experience being [a specific characteristic and an] Asian international student” could result in identification.

Students’ Experiences of Voices Being Heard

The majority of participants reported having had experiences in which they felt their voices were heard by faculty members. These experiences had positive impacts on participants such as feeling encouraged, empowered, cared for, and hopeful. Participants described three specific behaviors of faculty members that contributed to feeling acknowledged and heard. First, participants appreciated when faculty members took initiative in reaching out to international students (i.e., invited students to express their voices) and showed willingness to listen to their voices. One participant reported that a faculty member actively invited international students to provide feedback on ways in which a training program could best support them. As a result, this participant felt encouraged, hopeful, and cared for. She stated, “there is hope that program might change… and [the fact] that the program was inviting us to give feedback... was encouraging, and make me feel like they care about us. They want to do something different for us.” A few other participants reported that those who held administrative
power in the programs took initiative to solicit feedback from their students. These participants explained that faculty members actively arranged one-on-one meetings with individual students over coffee or arranged a luncheon meeting with a group of students. Although these meetings were not designed to focus solely on international students, these participants reported “being heard” and having a “voice” in the programs due to faculty members’ perceived openness and willingness to listen to students’ feedback.

Second, participants were thankful when faculty members provided safety to openly share their voices. One participant stated that a training director organized a meeting which was facilitated by a person outside of the department. This participant explained that the facilitator communicated anonymous students’ feedback to the program in order to protect students’ anonymity. Another participant shared that her clinical supervisor “created [a] very safe place” for her to express “frustrations” and “struggles [that] I have as an international student in the U.S.” As a result, she “found it really empowering because…that space and time really validated my struggles and problems that I were having at that time.”

Third, participants were grateful when faculty members and/or training programs incorporated students’ feedback and introduced changes in a timely manner. That is, these participants were able to witness empowering changes not only from individual faculty members but also from the systemic level. One participant reported feeling that she had a “voice” in the training program because a department chair incorporated students’ feedback on how to improve their training experiences. Similarly, another participant appreciated that a training director asked students how to improve the training
program and implemented the suggested changes to the training program based on students' feedback.

Students' Experiences of Voices Not Being Heard

In contrast, the majority of participants also reported having experiences in which they felt their voices were not acknowledged or appreciated by their faculty members. These participants described two specific behaviors of faculty members that contributed to feeling unheard. First, participants found it unhelpful when faculty members did not take initiative to invite students to express their voices or did not show interest in listening to them. One participant reported that faculty members did not actively invite students to express their opinions or provide feedback to the training program. She also stated that “most of the time, I feel like a large part of my experiences are unheard” due to faculty members’ perceived lack of interest. Similarly, another participant reported that she had “never [been] asked” to express her voice or provide feedback to the training program. She also shared that most faculty members did not show a lot of interest in international students’ training experiences.

Second, participants found it unhelpful when faculty members appeared to lack adequate cross-cultural sensitivities. Specifically, participants reported that faculty members invalidated, ignored, or criticized their opinions or viewpoints and failed to hear their perspectives about cultural issues. One participant described a “discouraging” experience in which an instructor was insensitive to cross-cultural issues and failed to
appreciate her cross-cultural perspectives. As a result, she reported feeling “suppressed” and unable to openly or freely express her voice:

I tried to address that the issue with the second generation of [Asian] American in the United States, the issues that they are facing, how it might be...prevalent for them to experience depression and how depression might be culturally related to their experience here in the U.S. When I tried to address that, the instructor, he just kind of disapprove[d] that. He disagreed that there is cultural issue involved.

Another participant illustrated a painful experience in which a faculty member did not actively incorporate multicultural perspectives in class, failed to appreciate this student for raising questions about how to apply western counseling theories to Asian cultures, and even criticized this student's for bringing up such concerns. Consequently, this participant reported feeling unheard, “undervalued,” “invisible and alone.”

Students’ Suggestions for Faculty and Supervisors on Facilitating Voices of Trainees

The majority of participants hoped that faculty members would become aware of the significant impact they could have on facilitating Asian international students to express their voices. These participants emphasized that it would be important for faculty members to engage more actively in encouraging roles. Specifically, participants urged faculty members to take initiative in creating opportunities for students to share their voices, show willingness to listen, and invite as well as encourage students to express their true voices. The following quotes of a few participants represent Asian international students’ strong beliefs that faculty members’ active engagement plays an integral role in inviting and listening to students’ voices:

Asian students [are] sometimes a little bit shy. I think advisor...or instructor sometimes need to be...a little bit active to ask us to express ourselves more.... I

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think that we need some encouragement [to express ourselves]...And...check our voices because sometimes we are not really good at expressing ourselves.

I feel like the faculty could have done something to invite more, to show more interest...if they invite us, we definitely can express us more.

[Counseling psychology programs should] create a space for international students to voice their opinion...and be able to listen to those students. I think it's really important, and I think the program needs to be a little bit more active.

Cultivate Positive Relationships and Interactions With Asian International Students

All the participants recognized the impact that faculty members had on their training experiences. One participant asserted that her relationships with her advisors were “highlights” of her graduate education in the U.S. and “significant part[s]” of her training experiences. For another participant, a few psychologists at her clinical setting “made a big difference” to her overall training experience. A different participant underscored that faculty members are a “major source of support” to international students: she felt that her advisor served as her “second family” in the U.S.

All the participants believed that the quality of faculty-student interactions and relationships significantly influenced how Asian international students felt about their overall training experiences. That is, those who reported having good relationships with their advisor, supervisor, and/or other faculty members felt supported and cared for, felt secure and confident that they could overcome challenges during their training, and felt hopeful and optimistic about achieving their professional goals (e.g., obtaining their doctoral degree). In contrast, those who reported having less satisfying relationships with their advisor, supervisor, and/or other faculty members felt disappointed, discouraged,
uncared for, disconnected, unimportant, or dissatisfied with their overall training experience. In this section, satisfying faculty-student interactions and relationships are explored first. Second, unsatisfying faculty-student interactions and relationships are illustrated. Third, participants’ suggestions for faculty members to effectively interact with Asian international students are presented.

Satisfying Interactions and Relationships With Faculty Members

All the participants were able to identify incidents or behaviors with faculty that were described as helpful. The majority of participants reported experiencing relationships with faculty members that felt satisfying and close. Four major helpful behaviors of faculty members which facilitated the development of supportive interactions and strong relationships between faculty and students were identified.

First, all the participants believed that it was important for faculty members to express personal interest in Asian international students. Specifically, participants felt grateful when faculty members inquired about students’ personal and professional experiences, students’ cultural backgrounds and cultural differences, and students’ thoughts and perspectives. One participant highlighted that her advisors’ “genuine interest in me as a person [and] my growth professionally and personally” contributed to the development of strong student-advisor relationships. She reported feeling encouraged by her advisors whose strong interest “made me thrive” and “made me believe more in what I can do.” Another participant asserted that “my advisor’s interest in me as a person” contributed to developing a strong, satisfying advisor-advisee relationship. This
participant felt cared for by her advisor when her advisor attended to her personal "well-being" by encouraging her to take breaks from studying, or by asking her personal questions about what she does to relax, have fun, and socialize. This participant remarked that, although completing a doctoral program is a long, challenging process, "I started developing this confidence that at least my advisor is supportive and...I think I can get through it." A different participant emphasized that interest and curiosity exhibited by faculty members helped her feel supported to openly discuss her experiences, which helped to establish strong mentoring relationships. A fourth participant was grateful to have friendly and supportive faculty members in her program who "are very interested in knowing about my cultural background...and where I come from." As a result, this participant reported feeling "understood," "cared [for]," and felt that, "I can...be me in the program." A fifth participant appreciated that her clinical supervisor expressed strong interest in learning more about her culture, art, and food. She stated that her supervisor’s interest led her to feel that she could embrace her cultural heritage. A couple of participants reported feeling "encouraged" when faculty members showed interest in hearing more of their thoughts and perspectives in the classroom.

Second, all the participants believed that it was critical for faculty members to value Asian international students and trust their competency. One participant felt “encouraged” that faculty members valued her contribution in class discussion and believed that she had something interesting to say. Similarly, another participant felt “encouraged” that “my advisor is really listening” to her research interests and ideas. This participant explained that her advisor perceived her as an “expert” in and
knowledgeable about international student research, valued what she had to say, and trusted her to conduct valuable research. A third participant appreciated when faculty members demonstrated trust in her competency by encouraging her to fully engage in all the class activities. When a faculty member did not make her exempt from any of the typical requirements (even though this student did have some language challenges), the participant felt that the faculty member had “confidence in me.” A fourth participant felt “honored” that her advisor invited her to co-write an “important [book] chapter” and felt “empowered” that her advisor “took a lot of my opinions into consideration.” This participant also appreciated that her advisor recognized the significant contributions Asian international students in his research team made to his inventory and let these students know that “without us, [the advisor] could not come up with the product.”

Third, almost all of the participants appreciated when faculty members took initiative to reach out to Asian international students. Specifically, participants were grateful when faculty members took the initiative to set up individual meetings with students, to get to know students better, to have dialogues about students’ cultural backgrounds and cultural differences, and to invite students to get involved in scholarly activities. A few participants reported that their advisors played active roles in arranging meetings with Asian international students. One of these participants recalled how her advisor took initiative to approach her. She stated that, “[W]hen I was here the first semester, [my advisor]...initiate meeting with me. So, he ask me to make appointment with him and talk to him.” Another participant felt “very fortunate” when advisors asked “very personable question[s]” and “tried to find out more about me, about my family,
about my partner, about my relationships, and I felt that that has enhanced my training experience.” A third participant was thankful when her clinical supervisor took initiative to “invite me to talk more about my culture.” This participant felt that “I don’t have to hide my culture. I don’t have to be American.” Similarly, one of these participants appreciated that her advisor initiated dialogues about cultural differences in one-on-one meetings:

[When I talk with...[my advisor], he would say...“can you please tell me in an American way?” So that means...direct communication. So, [my advisor would say,] “you don’t need to be polite or hide anything, but tell me what happened there” or “what’s going on here?” And so, we will process...awkward moments. So, I will tell him that “Oh, I do this because I assume [this] and because...in [my country] we usually do this.” And so, he will process with me, and he say, “Oh, that’s very good. I appreciate you say that.” And he will also tell me like why he does so. So...we have this open discussion about...cultural differences here. So, I get more understanding of why he does so. And he has more understanding of why I did so.

A fourth participant found that it was helpful to have faculty members approach her and ask her if she would be interested in participating in research projects, especially in the early phase of her doctoral training.

Fourth, the majority of participants believed that it was essential for faculty members to express their availability and be available to Asian international students. Participants felt fortunate and grateful to have generously available faculty members, and felt supported by their willingness to help trainees. One participant remembered how her advisor expressed his availability when she started her doctoral program. She reported that after her advisor initiated meeting with her, “he also said that he will be available if I ever need.” This participant elaborated ways in which her advisor was available to students:
The one-on-one supervision I have with my advisor really help me a lot. My advisor generally meet with his advisees on one-on-one, weekly, one hour. So he would talk with us, he would answer any question his advisee have, even process the feelings, concerns, anything, use that hour. So that actually helps a lot for international students first came here. My advisor has that time and care to meet with us one on one for an hour. He is very available to his student.

Another participant appreciated that her advisor would “adjust [his] schedule” for her and “set up [a] weekly meeting” with her to discuss how she was doing with her dissertation proposal, classes, and practicum. She stated that her advisor would “keep me on the right track” by suggesting what “we need to do” weekly for her dissertation. This participant felt working on her dissertation was “not really hard for me because [my advisor] help me from the beginning to the end” and “go through every process” with her. A third participant felt appreciative of the support of a few psychologists in a clinical setting who, even though they were not her clinical supervisors and under no obligation to help her, “they invited me to have some conversations [and] they open…up spaces, set up a time, extra time to meet with me and talk.” A fourth participant “truly appreciate[d]” her advisor who provided her with opportunities to practice oral presentations in order to improve her presentation performance.

Unsatisfying Interactions and Relationships With Faculty Members

All the participants described specific practices of faculty members which hindered the quality of faculty-student interactions or relationships. The majority of participants also reported that some of their relationships with faculty members were unsatisfying. Three unhelpful behaviors of faculty members which did not facilitate
supportive interactions or the development of strong relationships between faculty and students were identified.

First, almost all of the participants found it unhelpful when faculty members did not value Asian international students or did not trust their competency. Specifically, participants perceived it as unhelpful when they felt that faculty members did not see Asian international students as competent counselors, teaching assistants, or students, or when faculty did not value their cross-cultural perspectives or communication styles. One participant felt “very frustrated” that her clinical supervisor did not understand her counseling approach and “minimize[d] my ability.” Another participant felt discouraged and “frustrated” based on her belief that some faculty members did not “trust my ability to be a teaching assistant or [do] other counseling job...maybe because of my language or my accent.” This participant stated that, “I didn’t even have an opportunity to be a teaching assistant in my program.” A different participant expressed her worries to her advisor that some people might not “believe that I’m fluent in English [and] that I can teach” because she is an international student. When her advisor suggested that she find a teaching assistant in an Asian language department, this participant felt “very uncomfortable,” and “frustrated,” and perceived that her advisor was “saying that probably I’m not competent.” A fourth participant shared that some faculty members “did not see the importance” of multicultural perspectives which she raised in classrooms. She remarked that her thoughts or opinions did not “get the same...respect as other people’s opinions or thoughts.” This participant reported feeling frustrated and discouraged that she was “undervalued.” Similarly, a fifth participant felt discouraged
and “suppressed” when an instructor failed to take her cross-cultural perspectives into consideration when discussing Asian Americans’ experiences of depression. A few other participants felt it was unhelpful that some faculty members did not “respect” or “value” their “quiet” or “introverted” style of communication in classrooms or meetings.

Second, some participants reported that faculty members were not available to provide students with adequate support. As one participant noted, faculty members are particularly important for Asian international students, who are not as likely as U.S. students to have a strong support system in the U.S. However, these participants perceived that faculty members were “too busy” and “overworked” with their own work or research. One participant commented that some faculty members appear to be “not invested in” training students; she perceived some faculty to consider supervising students as “an extra obligation” rather than as a priority. Another participant expressed her opinion that faculty members are “very busy [with] their own business” and do not have “enough time to mentor...students.” A different participant who described a faculty member as “too busy” to talk about the students’ concerns felt “not important” to this participant’s advisor. One participant reported having had “a supervisor who...usually wouldn’t have time for me at all although he promised me to do supervision for me like one hour per week, but he really didn’t do it.” This participant also shared that when she was a teaching assistant, faculty members, whose role was to supervise teaching assistants, were not available to provide adequate support. For example, she explained that one of her “teaching supervisors” was “supposed to come to my class, observe my teaching, [and] give me feedback, but he never showed up.”
Third, some participants found it unhelpful when faculty members did not express interest in getting to know them or learning more about their experiences. One participant felt discouraged when faculty members did “not show interest” in comments she shared in class discussions. Another participant also felt discouraged when some faculty members ignored “what I said about...my opinion about international student issues” in classrooms. This participant concluded that “Some...professors don’t have any interest [in] me or my adjustment to the U.S.” A different participant reported that others fail to show interest in her perspective as an international student. For instance, she stated that her advisor did not actively express interest in learning more about her experience as an Asian international student:

I just feel like...it’s a pity that like when I came to this program, no one never, I talk about something unique to my experience, my supervisor would listen, but if I don’t, he would not ask....what my experience is like.

This participant further reported that she did “not feel very connected” with her advisor because he was not interested in “what is going on in [my] personal life.” A fourth participant felt “frustrated” that a faculty member did not show any interest in this participant’s attempts to express “my emotions or feeling[s].” This participant explained that the faculty member was task-focused and “ignore[d]” this participant’s personal sharing. Subsequently, this participant remarked that the faculty member’s lack of interest “[made] me learn how to detach myself from [my advisor, and I did] not try to engage with [my advisor] that much.”
Almost all of the participants provided suggestions for faculty members to be more helpful in interactions and relationships with Asian international students. Recommendations given by participants include expressing more interest in Asian international students, taking initiative in interacting with these students, offering greater availability, and valuing and trusting students’ competency.

First, the majority of participants encouraged faculty members to “show more interest” in international students including their personal and professional lives, their perspectives, and their cultural background. One participant asserted that “international student will feel more support[ed]” if faculty members would “show...more personal interest” in international students and ask personable questions regarding students and their family. Another participant urged that faculty members would be more interested in her “personal life.” She also urged faculty members to “show more interest” in international students’ cross-cultural perspectives. A different participant stated that, “[I]t would be nice to see more faculty [who]...have the interest, and like investigate international students’ issues.” A fourth participant hoped that faculty members would be interested in learning more about Asian international students. Specifically, she suggested that faculty members “find out more about [Asian international students] as people, as people from their country, as people from their culture, their experiences here, their challenges, [and] their strengths.”
Second, some participants encouraged faculty members to “take more initiative” in starting conversations with Asian international students. As one participant noted, Asian international students might feel “intimidated” to approach faculty members who are in higher positions. Thus, it would be helpful if faculty demonstrate that they are interested in learning about international students by asking how students are doing, and by initiating dialogues with students about cross-cultural issues. Another participant echoed that international students might not feel comfortable approaching faculty members, especially in their early phase of training. Therefore, she recommended that faculty members initiate conversations, invite students to ask questions, and inquire about their experiences. A third participant emphasized that Asian international students might be less vocal about their needs or challenges, so she hoped that faculty members would reach out to Asian international students and check in how they are doing.

Third, some participants encouraged faculty members to become more available to international students. One participant hoped that faculty members would be available to “spend extra time” to talk with and support international students. Another participant believed that expressing faculty’s availability would “make a lot of difference[s]” in international students’ training experiences. A different participant hoped that faculty members would create “more opportunities to interact with Asian international students” and “spend some time” together to get to know these students.

Fourth, a few participants encouraged faculty members to value international students and have confidence in their competency. One participant believed that it would be helpful if faculty members express “trust” in international students’ competency.
Another participant remarked that, “I want faculty to believe international students’ ability, and trust the person. And trust them and give some opportunity...for them to advance [their]...ability.”

Search for Cross-Culturally Sensitive Ways to Accommodate the Needs of Asian International Students

Almost all of the participants reported experiencing hesitation in expressing their needs during their training. For instance, participants hesitated when seeking accommodations, soliciting help, and asking for support. Accommodations, adjustments, and help were sometimes used interchangeably by some participants. The majority of participants asserted that providing flexibility or accommodations as well as making some adjustments and changes were critical when training Asian international students with culturally different backgrounds. However, the majority of participants perceived that faculty members often treated Asian international and U.S. students in similar manners and did not offer tailored, “individualized,” or “customized” training experiences for Asian international students. One participant remarked that, “I got exactly same treatment as domestic students” in her training program despite the fact that “there are a lot of things I need to figure out by myself while domestic students...know all those things.” She reported that faculty members would not “offer [any] flexibility or adapt to [my] needs.” Another participant asserted that “racial colorblindness” might exist in her doctoral program because faculty members treated all the students equally and therefore, “there is not very much distinction [between international students and] American peers.” She further stated that, “I honestly don’t think that my current Ph.D.
In this section, Asian international participants’ hesitation in expressing their own needs is first described. Second, mixed feelings that participants had about seeking and receiving help or accommodations are explored. Third, unsatisfying accommodations that participants received are presented. Fourth, satisfying accommodations that participants received are reported. Finally, Asian international participants’ suggestions in regards to how to effectively accommodate their training needs are discussed.

*Hesitation in Expressing One’s Needs*

Almost all of the participants reported that it was challenging for them to express their needs to faculty members and/or U.S. peers. Specifically, they were “hesitant” about asking for help or seeking accommodations. Three main reasons for participants’ hesitation in expressing their needs were identified. First, the majority of participants reported that they hesitated to seek help because they did not want to “bother” faculty members or U.S. peers. One participant believed that Asian international students were less likely to “express their needs [even] when they need...some help and support.” She emphasized that Asian international students would “not really want to bother other people from our cultural point of view.” Another participant stated, “I still hesitate to...ask for help...I don’t want to bother my advisor too much, although he encourage me to do so.” For instance, this participant felt hesitant when she needed to ask her advisor to write recommendation letters for her. A different participant explained, “When I
feel...hesitant for asking for help, it’s...because I don’t want to bother people.” A fourth participant felt “guilty” perceiving that faculty members needed to do “extra work” and spend “extra energy” and “extra time” to accommodate her needs as an Asian international student. A few participants reported that they were unsure when to “bother” or “ask for help” from U.S. peers.

Second, some participants reported that they did not want to ask for help for fear of being perceived as “incompetent.” One participant explained that asking for help made her “feel incompetent.” Another participant hesitated to express her needs to faculty members partly because she did not want others to think “I can’t take care of myself” or “I can’t do things [by] myself.” A different participant remarked that for her, seeking accommodations meant “admitting that I’m incompetent,” and therefore, “I need special accommodations.” A fourth participant felt “embarrassed” to request accommodations because she was the only international student in her program and therefore, “no one” else needed such accommodations. She shared that asking for accommodations made her feel like “I’m not [as] good as...American students, that’s why I need extra time.” A fifth participant explained that she would feel “vulnerable” and “incompetent” if she were the only international student who needed help with her academic writing from her U.S. peers. This participant also disclosed that she hesitated to seek accommodations or “adjustment[s]” from her clinical supervisor because she did not want to be seen as a student with special needs:

I thought about asking my supervisor to make adjustment on the requirement of writing a report, but I decided not to because I don’t want to be treated as a special trainee...So I decided not to make such a request.
Third, a few participants talked about wanting to “save face” or “save pride,” and thus, hesitated to seek accommodations. Reflecting on her own experience, one participant believed that Asian international students may not seek help or accommodation because “we are trying to...save our face and try to pretend that we are okay or we are doing fine.” Another participant shared her dilemma whether or not she should ask for an accommodation upon taking her comprehensive exams. She stated, “the way they do comps here, it’s not really like fair to international students in terms of...my language need...but I don’t know if I should ask for accommodations just for me...I probably need extra time to finish it...I don’t know if I can ask that kind of help.” This participant further explained that she wanted to “save my pride,” and therefore, “I would not want to ask for accommodation.”

Mixed Feelings About Seeking and Receiving Help or Accommodations

Some participants reported having mixed feelings toward seeking and receiving help or accommodations. At times, participants expressed that it felt “unfair” that international and U.S. students were bound by the exact same expectations, requirements, or standards regardless of cultural and language differences. Therefore, participants believed that it would be important for faculty members to offer flexibility and accommodations rather than to adhere to rigid or “uniform” expectations, requirements, or standards. A few participants stated that it felt “unfair” that they were required to complete assignments and exams within the same time frame as U.S. students despite the fact that English was their second language. A third participant remarked that “having
the flexibility and accommodation...are needed for some international students’ training... because we are different.” She reported that, “[T]o some extent, I feel like I am treated differently than other Americans. But I think it’s a necessary adjustment...to make, so I’m okay with that.”

Other times, participants expressed ambivalence or uncomfortable feelings about seeking and receiving help or accommodations. A few participants reported that they did not want to be treated differently from U.S. students. For instance, one of these participants felt as if she was “inferior” to U.S. students when a faculty member exempted her from participating in a classroom activity because she experienced language challenges. This participant stated that she wanted to be treated in the same way U.S. students were treated in classrooms. Similarly, another participant reported that she wanted to be treated like a “regular trainee” instead of a “special trainee” who needed accommodations. A third participant felt “selfish” asking for what she needed since she was the only international student in her program. A fourth participant felt “guilty” when faculty members made extra efforts in accommodating her needs. A fifth participant felt “ambivalent” and “bad” about the amount of an accommodation she received from a faculty member for an exam and wondered whether it was “fair” to U.S. students:

[I]n my stat exam, I asked professor to give me extra time to complete the exam. So he give all the international students extra time. And I expected he would give me something like 20...or 30 minutes, but I think he gave us like an hour. And that was actually very helpful. So...many international students took advantage of that...And I came back from the exam to my office where I share my office with...other...students. And they were talking about the exam, how difficult it was and they felt they were in a hurry because there were many questions and lots of calculation. So I felt a little bad, and I wasn’t sure if...getting an hour was actually fair to other students. I felt almost I was cheating.
Unsatisfying Accommodations

Some participants reported receiving unsatisfying accommodations from faculty members. These participants felt that they received either “too much,” too little, or rigid accommodation. One participant felt uncomfortable when she realized that the amount of the accommodation given was more than she expected. She thought that it was too generous or “too much” to obtain an additional one hour for the two-hour exam. Another participant reported feeling discouraged when she received an “exception” during role-plays in class. She explained that a faculty member excused her from participating in the role-plays because she was “an international student.” This treatment left her feel, “I’m inferior” or “I don’t have that kind of ability” to participate in required class activities which other students were expected to do. This participant hoped that she would be regarded as equally capable or competent as U.S. students.

A few participants also reported receiving no accommodation or accommodation that was unhelpful. When she was physically ill, one participant asked a course instructor whether she had to write a make-up paper in order for her to go home. She was surprised and frustrated that the instructor still required her to do so. This participant decided to attend the class because “as an international student, I felt I couldn’t take [that option to write the make-up paper] because…I was already overwhelmed by other assignments”. She wished that the instructor would have engaged in a further dialogue to understand her situation:

[The instructor] could have asked me things like, “Writing, is it difficult for you to write a make up paper?” And then I could have had an opportunity to say, “Yes, I’m a very slow writer and this five page paper is going to take like one whole weekend for me. And I’m very sick…and I will be behind in everything because
of my illness. And on top of that, if I get this, I will suffer for another two or three weeks just to catch up.” Just ask me like why it is so difficult. Then I had a chance to say that, why it’s difficult. And then [the instructor] could maybe say, “Oh, okay…you still have to write the make up paper, but when do you think you can write this paper?” Then, maybe I could say, “Can you wait until spring break?”….I feel if [the instructor] tried to understand me…or come up with something that is beneficial for both of us, [it would have been helpful].

Another participant reported feeling frustrated that while some faculty members did not, others penalized her academic papers for grammatical errors. She stated that a faculty member explained that “we cannot …let our standard[s] be lower” for international students. In addition, this participant reported that a faculty member suggested that she take a writing course which was designed for international undergraduate students. This participant explained that both she and the course instructor felt that the class was not appropriate for an international student at the doctoral level. Thus, this participant informed the faculty member that “the instructor said that it may not be the right class for [me].” To her surprise, she stated that the faculty member still insisted on her completing the class by saying, “I wrote it on your evaluation letter. So you need to take it.” This participant disclosed feeling “oppressed” by the faculty members’ rigid attitudes. Also, this participant felt that some faculty members believed that providing accommodations to Asian international students meant compromising the academic standards of their doctoral education. A different participant expressed a firm disagreement against this notion that providing accommodations equals to “lowering standards.” She claimed, “I think that [penalizing without appropriate accommodations] is discriminating and I think that’s penalizing wrongly.”
Satisfying Accommodations

Some participants expressed appreciations of faculty members’ accommodations. One participant appreciated that her advisor would “adjust his schedule” in order to meet with her regularly. Another participant was grateful that some faculty members did not take points off from her academic papers because of grammatical errors. A third participant shared that a faculty member’s supportive feedback helped her not only reduce her anxiety but also successfully complete an assignment within a required timeframe. She explained the situation:

[In class, a professor initially]...said [that an assignment] is going to be around five pages. I thought, “Okay, five pages for two days, I think I can handle [that].” So when [the professor] distributed the question, she said, “Eight to ten pages.” And that made me really nervous, and I thought...I can’t make it. And I felt that’s very unfair. And that was very frustrating. I actually emailed the professor and said that I don’t think I can make it.

Although this participant reported that her request for a deadline extension was declined by the faculty member, she stated that she was satisfied with interactions that she had with the instructor. This participant felt heard and appreciated that the faculty member was flexible in relaxing the page requirement of a particular assignment:

[I]f [faculty members] are open to listen to...my request...I’ll be fine even if they say, “No”....if I feel heard, then I think I’ll be fine....[F]or that [assignment], the professor said, “No, I can’t give you extension.” I was fine. I wasn’t angry, upset or anything. I’m like okay...I understand what she said...And she said...”Page numbers are not important....It’s not fixed eight to ten page...I’ll look for the quality. So, try [your best]...don’t worry about the page numbers”. And that really helped.

A fourth participant appreciated that a faculty member demonstrated flexible attitudes toward deadlines for turning in assignments. In addition, this participant was grateful
when her clinical supervisor demonstrated understanding toward the language challenges that she encountered. Initially, the participant stated that she was perceived as careless and told she was not putting enough effort into her work:

So, in [the clinical supervisor’s] view, she thought I was just writing a very poor quality report and not putting much effort in it. And she said, “Other interns are putting like three to four hours. Some interns are putting six hours to finish report. So I want you to do the same.”

Although it felt “uncomfortable” and painful for the participant, she informed her supervisor about the challenges that she experienced as a non-native English speaker in the area of writing. After their discussion, this participant reported feeling grateful that her supervisor exhibited openness to understanding her challenges and shifted ways to interact with and respond to her:

I told her I’m putting twelve hours….She was stunned. She was surprised, like she was speechless for like two, three seconds. And she said, “Really?” So then I explained like what is difficult. I explained to her like previously, but I re-explained again what is difficult, and writing such a report, professional, technical writing, six-seven pages long report is….challenging….I think after that, she was able to understand my situation. And I think she changed her attitude towards this. Like before, she was like, “You should know this, and I told you this before....” [M]y supervisor repeatedly told me that “At this level of training, your draft should be this way or that way....” But this time, she was like, “I guess this is difficult for you to know. But this is how I did, and I wish I can explain further, but articles, it’s difficult to explain even for Americans, too”...she was very kind.

**Students’ Suggestions for Accommodating Their Needs**

The majority of participants made suggestions for faculty members in regards to how to effectively accommodate their training needs. Three main recommendations were identified. First, some participants asserted that it is important for faculty members to become aware of Asian international students’ needs. One participant claimed that
faculty members “need to be more sensitive and need to be more attentive to international students’ needs.” Another participant underscored that it would be critical for faculty members to identify “needs” of international students based upon each international student’s “developmental stage.” She explained that faculty members must consider each international student’s salient identities or “identity development,” experiences, “personality,” and “learning style” in order to offer cross-culturally sensitive support. A few other participants encouraged faculty members to take initiative and directly ask Asian international students what they need, or ask how they are doing since many Asian international students may not be vocal about their needs or hesitate to express their needs.

Second, some participants emphasized the importance of not treating all the students in the same manner and providing “individualized” or “customized” support for Asian international students. One participant remarked that it would be helpful if faculty members would provide “individualized” or “specific” help for international students instead of “treating...international student[s] as same as American student[s].” Another participant also claimed that faculty members need to “take initiative to provide...customized support” for international students in order to accommodate their needs. A different participant encouraged faculty members not to impose “uniformed” expectations or requirements for Asian international students. A fourth participant asserted that “having a rigid training program [or] treating all students in the same way no matter what is [not] the smart way to approach.” Similarly, a fifth participant stated that treating “everybody the same...does not work.” She hoped that faculty members would
go beyond offering “equal” treatment to all the students regardless of their cultural backgrounds and consider what is fair.

Third, some participants asserted that providing flexibility and accommodations and making changes and adjustments are important or necessary when training Asian international students. One participant claimed that many challenges that international students would encounter in their training are “not because we are not [as] good as...American students” but “because the education system is not designed to help...international student[s]...[or] to meet our needs.” Therefore, this participant hoped that “faculty members or...education systems [would]...make some changes to help” international students. Another participant believed that it is critical for faculty members to have “flexibility” and offer “accommodation” when training Asian international students who are culturally different. She hoped that faculty members and Asian international students would mutually make adjustments in order to find a common ground. This participant remarked that through this research “[I hope faculty members would realize] how much adjustment [international students] are making, and we are also hoping to have some kind of flexibility or space in the program” and that “we need to make some kind of adjustments on both sides.” A different participant also emphasized the shared responsibilities by Asian international students and faculty members to find a middle ground:

It’s almost like [international students] are the ones who do work...we are the ones who need to adjust here. And I understand we are kind of guests who came here, we should appreciate that [faculty members and training programs] are willing to receive us, host us. But also they are benefiting from having us...We have responsibilities to adjust. But they also have responsibilities to work together to make our life less stressful. And...It’s not only us who has to do work. They should do that, too.
Address the Applicability of Counseling Psychology Training in the U.S. to Asian International Students' Home Cultures

All the participants discussed the applicability or transferability of their counseling psychology training in the U.S. to their home country. The majority of participants indicated that they did not have opportunities to directly apply their U.S. training in their home cultures during their doctoral training. Only a few participants stated that they experienced working with international students from their home country in the U.S. or had opportunities to see clients back home.

In this section, Asian international participants’ perceptions toward the applicability of U.S. training to their home cultures are described. Second, participants’ awareness of the limitations in regards to applying U.S. training to other cultures is reported. Third, lack of systemic or conscious effort to explore the applicability of training within doctoral programs is illustrated. Fourth, participants’ uncertainty about the applicability of U.S. training is explored. Finally, participants’ suggestions regarding the applicability of U.S. training are presented.

Students’ Perceptions of the Applicability of U.S. Training

Almost all of the participants believed that their counseling psychology training in the U.S. would be generally applicable, relevant, or transferable if they were to return to their home country. Specifically, participants reported feeling that training received in the U.S. would lay a good foundation for them to become counseling psychologists in their country of origin. One participant asserted that “the basis of the training here...I
think it’s applicable in my home country.” Another participant stated, “I feel that our program gives me a pretty good foundation.” A different participant claimed that the “basics are covered” because she perceived that “a lot of counseling theories...can apply to many people in the world.” A fourth participant reported that although many concepts in counseling psychology are “western,” “a lot of theories make sense to me, make sense to my experiences” and therefore, she expected that her training in the U.S. would be relevant when she worked with clients in her culture.

Some participants believed that the multicultural and diversity training they received would be particularly helpful in their home countries. One participant reported that U.S. training’s “focus [on] multiculturalism, diversity, [and] even how to start difficult dialogues” is relevant to her home country. Another participant stated that multicultural training in the U.S. made “me more aware of...different cultures back home” and that multicultural awareness and skills would be helpful when conducting research on diverse people in her home country. A third participant claimed that she felt prepared to teach multicultural and diversity issues to students in her country of origin.

Students’ Awareness of the Limitations of Applying U.S. Training to Other Cultures

While almost all of the participants believed in the transferability of or relevance of their U.S. training to their home country, the majority of participants asserted that “modifications” or adjustments would be necessary and important. Some participants emphasized that it would be critical to consider a “cultural context,” keep a “multicultural mindset,” recognize “cultural differences,” and be aware of western cultural values and
biases when applying their training in the U.S. to their home country. One participant explained the importance of understanding the cultural context of her country of origin if she were to return home:

The only thing that would have to shift for anybody who's working outside the U.S. is to understand the context of whatever country, so, for me, I have to understand the context of my home country, and its focus right now is more in school counseling, in career, in couples, in family...and certain key topics that are core concern to the country itself...I think whatever that I'm trained in is still applicable, it's just that I have to be more familiar with the context if I do work back home.

Another participant stated that “it is important for us to have a multicultural mindset when we apply [counseling theories] to non-White population....if we are taking those theories or techniques back to our country or different countries, it's important for us to get connected to our culture again.” A different participant believed that due to “cultural difference[s],” some “modifications” would be necessary when applying her U.S. training to her home culture. She stated that it would be necessary for her to become familiar with the specific issues and concerns that people in her country of origin have, which may differ from those in the U.S. A forth participant expressed concern that Asian international students who were trained in the U.S. might have adapted many western values, and therefore, might have western cultural biases when providing counseling in their home cultural context. Through having opportunities to do clinical work in her home country, she reported that her counseling approach was very “different” from that of her Asian supervisor back home. This participant recognized “a lot of American values within me, within my counseling work” as well as “American cultural bias[es].” She
admitted learning from her U.S. supervisor that it would be critical to “be patient and...culturally-minded” when working in her country of origin.

A few participants asserted that they would need to “adjust” their speech and wording when conducting therapy in their native tongue. These participants felt that it was not smooth to directly translate what they would usually say in English into their native language in counseling. One participant reported feeling “different” when she had opportunities to conduct therapy sessions in her native language. She explained that “the question that seems normal and appropriate [if asked] in English didn’t seem quite appropriate when I was trying to ask same question...in [my language].” This participant “had to alter or change...how I was in the room with my clients.” Another participant also stressed that “I do need to adjust...even my vocabulary” when providing counseling in her native language. She shared that it did not “sound right” and was “strange” to translate what she would say in English to her own language. Similarly, a third participant felt that counseling in her native language was not “natural.” She remarked that it sounded “weird” to translate “how do you feel?” into her own language since this was not the way “we speak to each other in [my language].”

Training Programs’ Lack of Systemic or Conscious Efforts in Exploring the Applicability of Training

Almost all of the participants indicated that their training program did not consciously or systematically facilitate discussions about the applicability of U.S. training across cultures. Some participants were aware that faculty members did not consciously help nor “intentionally” help them explore how to apply their U.S. training to their home
country, leaving them on their own to explore applicability issues. One participant reported that despite the fact that she brought up her concerns to a faculty member, the faculty member failed to address her concerns and expected that “I should be able to take all [the information] in and...learn how to apply that” on her own.

A few participants reported that faculty members or training programs did “indirectly” help them transfer learning to be relevant to their home countries. One participant described ways in which her advisor facilitated her learning about the transferability of knowledge and skills:

[M]y chair [helps] because we talk about my dissertation topic...[that] might be relevant to the cross-cultural studies so...that make me...do some research [on my country]...the attachment stuff...it should be relevant to my dissertation topic so in this case, I have...found some studies written in [my country], so [I] kind of know what...psychologists [in my country] think about this issue and also compare those paper with the paper I read in the United States. So [I] kind of know the difference from the paper [I] read and starting from there, I [would]...know maybe how can I prepare if I need to counsel the people in [her country] or how to apply this in [my country]. So [my advisor] not directly tell me but kind of indirectly tell me to think about this issues.

Another participant reported that her training program indirectly helped her learn about the field of counseling psychology beyond the U.S. when she took initiative to explore the agenda. She stated that, “our program...allows me to investigate what’s happening in other country as long as you show your interest. So...students have to be active agents to do that.”

Only one participant reported that on-going discussions about the applicability of training happened consistently in the classroom. This participant stated that she felt “pretty confident and pretty comfortable about my training I’ve received here applying back home.” She reported that faculty members “always make sure that they address the
global...or international issues” as well as “international students’ issue[s], concerns or what [we] are interested” in classroom settings. This participant further explained ways in which her program incorporated discussions about the applicability of training across cultures:

[W]e really talked about a lot of cross-cultural things [in my program]. And when we talk about counseling...there is...always some international students ask questions...“so how does this apply to Asian cultures?” So in the training program, we already talk a lot about...how this apply to the culture back home and be critical about, be cautious about, okay, this is a White model, or this is the American model...and it may not apply to other people.

Students' Uncertainty About the Applicability of U.S. Training

A few participants expressed uncertainty about the applicability of their U.S. training to their country of origin. One participant reported that she often wondered whether her training in the U.S. would be relevant to her home country especially because some of her friends from her home country did not believe in the effectiveness of talk therapy. Another participant shared her concerns about the applicability of her training in the U.S. to her culture. She stated, “I...don’t have a good idea about [the applicability]. And it’s kind of up in the air. I don’t know how applicable it will be, and I heard that counseling situation in [my country] is changing. And I don’t know how it’s going to be after, in next five, six years. I have worries about that.” A different participant reported feeling discouraged because her instructor criticized her for expressing concerns about the applicability of knowledge across cultures:

[A]ll the theories that [a faculty member] covered in class were all focused on western...families. They were all about individuation and separation and how children need to separate themselves from their parents. And I thought that was very individualistic view...I don’t think [individuals from collectivistic cultures]
would really agree that individuation and separation is the...only healthy way of development....So...I asked her if she knows anything about how other culture’s view to this individuation and separation theory and...she said she is not aware of them....I feel really frustrated and I kept wondering like what I can learn from this class because...when I was taking the class, I was hoping to go back...to my country after I receive a degree and so I was really struggling, grappling with what the materials that I was learning in that class...so one time...I went to her office hours and we talked about how much I was struggling...I told her that it was extremely hard for me to take the information in and make them my own because I couldn’t really combine that with my own culture and how [people in my country] would think. That’s when she told me that I was being ethnocentric and arrogant.

Students’ Suggestions Regarding the Applicability of U.S. Training

A few participants expressed strong hope that faculty members and training programs would pay more attention to the transferability of U.S. counseling psychology training to other cultures. One participant hoped that faculty members would start conversations with Asian international students regarding the applicability of training by asking questions such as, “How can we make your training experience in the U.S. molded to, so that it could fit with what you want to do beyond your degree?” Another participant hoped that her program could provide opportunities for her to learn about how the counseling psychology field functions in her home country; at the same time, she felt some responsibility to find out information on her own. A third participant believed that it would be important for faculty members and training programs to go beyond multiculturalism within the U.S. and include cultures that Asian international students represent. She stated that “the multiculturalism isn’t just about American culture,” and hoped that when discussing multiculturalism, “people [would] recognize international students’ culture as one of the important cultures that needs to be discussed.” This
participant also hoped that “once they accept international students, I really wish that those program increase their willingness to explore what’s like to practice as a psychologist in those students’ country. So that those students can make more informed decision...when they get their PhD degree.”

Address Career Development Issues of Asian International Students

All the participants discussed their future career plans after graduation. Specifically, participants addressed whether they wanted to stay in the U.S., to return to their home country, or to move to another country. Almost all of the participants reported experiencing varying degrees of uncertainty, fluidity, openness, or ambivalence about choosing geographical locations in the future. After obtaining their doctoral degree, the majority of participants hoped to remain in the U.S. or North America at least for a short period of time. Only a few planned to go back to their home country immediately after graduation. A couple of other participants were still undecided about their future plans in regards to geographical locations. The majority of participants identified uncertainty about and foreseeable challenges in regards to counseling psychology professions or career opportunities in their home country as main reasons why they were inclined to remain in the U.S. or North America. Some participants identified interpersonal factors (e.g., families and partners), perceived challenges in the U.S. (e.g., racism), or desire to make contributions to their own society as incentives for wanting to return to their home country.
Additionally, all the participants discussed types of future careers in which they were interested. Specifically, they talked about their varying interests in research, teaching, and/or counseling. All the participants reported having some preferences for the types of career that they wanted to pursue after graduation. While some participants were strongly interested in pursuing academic positions, others expressed strong desire for clinical positions. A few participants felt uncertain about their future career and remained open to both academic and clinical positions.

In this section, Asian international students’ experiences with uncertainty and fluidity in career decision making is explored first. Second, factors which motivate Asian international students to stay in the U.S. or North America after graduation are described. Third, factors which facilitate these students to consider returning home are presented. Fourth, Asian international students’ preferences for types of career are reported. Finally, Asian international students’ suggestions for faculty members in regards to how to support their career development are provided.

Uncertainty and Fluidity in Students' Career Decision Making

All the participants reported having contemplated whether to stay in the U.S., return to their home country, and/or move to another country upon graduation. Almost all of the participants experienced uncertainty or fluidity when making future career plans. One participant reported that her future plan in regards to a geographical location “is always coming back and forth...not knowing if I want to stay or want to go back.” Another participant also reported that “I am kind of confused about my career goals
[whether] I want to stay here or I want to go back to [my country].” A third participant shared that she had not made a long-term decision about whether “I [should] stay here or I [should go] back to [my country] or go... somewhere [else].” A fourth participant stated that she had not figured out her future plans and did not have a good picture of her future after graduation.

Although the majority of participants had preferences in regards to geographical locations, almost all of the participants indicated that they were open to change of plans at some point in their lives. One participant reported that while she planned to stay in the U.S. after graduation, she remained open to the possibility of returning home in the long term. Another participant remarked that “once I establish myself a little more” as a counseling psychologist in North America, “I want to go back” to her home country in order to utilize her expertise. A different participant reported planning to return to her country of origin after graduation. Yet, she shared that she was open to other possibilities when it came to geographical locations:

[R]ight now, I plan to go back to [my country] after graduation. But I will also leave my options open. If there is other job in the United States or even in Canada or any other place, I’m open to... those options, too.

Factors That Motivate Students to Stay in the U.S. or North America

The majority of participants reported that they hoped to stay in the U.S. or North America after graduation at least for the short-term. Three main reasons why participants preferred to stay in the U.S. or North America were identified. First, participants’ career plans were impacted by uncertainty about counseling psychology professions and career
opportunities back home. Some participants pointed out that they were unfamiliar with what was going on in the field of counseling and how to become a professional psychologist in their home country. One participant explained a primary reason that she would be inclined to remain in the U.S. after graduation:

[In] my program, we don’t talk about... how mental health professionals practice in other parts of the world. I am pretty much not informed about how to become a psychologist in my home country. I have to do the research on my own. And I still feel like I’m pretty much blind in terms of how to... successfully become a psychologist in [my] own country. When it comes to decision making about what to do in the future, at this point I am more inclined to live in United States and become a licensed psychologist here in United States. [It is] not because I’m 100 percent loving living in United States, mainly because... I don’t know [whether] I am competent enough to be a psychologist in my own country.

Another participant stated that her training program did not provide an opportunity for her to “get in touch with the counseling [field] back home,” and thus, she was “not familiar...[with] how to get license back home.” She expressed a concern that a lack of knowledge of and connections with the field of counseling in her home country “might prohibit me to go back” home. A different participant remarked that she did not have very good understanding of the job market in the counseling field in her home country, and was unsure whether she could secure a job back home. This participant admitted that this uncertainty led her to want to stay in the U.S. after graduation.

Second, participants’ career plans were impacted by foreseeable or predicted challenges regarding counseling psychology professions and career opportunities in their home country. Participants claimed that the field of counseling psychology in their home country was underdeveloped or different from that in the U.S. One participant expected that it would be “very hard for me to find a job and have a stable life financially” as a
counseling psychologist in her home country. She explained that, because the counseling psychology profession had not been well-established, there was “no licensure” system or “organized...association” like APA in her country of origin. Although this participant initially hoped to become one of the pioneers to help advance the counseling psychology field in her home country, she admitted that “I changed my mind...I think I am going to stay here instead of going home.” Another participant hoped to “stay in the U.S. to pursue a first job” after graduation, which was her short-term goal. She explained that “the field of counseling psychology is not very established at all in my home country” and therefore, she would need to “start from scratch” and have “less professional support” or “no colleagues in the field.” This participant revealed that she would not want to “lose” professional connections she had established in the U.S. by returning to her home country immediately after graduation. A third participant remarked that “The reason [why] I don’t decide to go back [home] right now [is] because...they don’t have the license system” and she did not feel “very comfortable” that “all different kinds of people can be psychologists [without proper training].” A fourth participant expressed a concern about returning to her home country after graduation. She shared that “I am foreseeing a lot of adjustment problems and struggles.” This participant further disclosed that she had not had “very pleasant” interactions with psychologists from her home country whom she met in professional conferences in the U.S. She perceived that psychologists who are established in her country of origin “operate according to [the East Asian] education system and their own network” and that they were “very exclusive” of newcomers.
Third, some participants reported that they wanted to obtain professional experiences in the U.S. or North America after graduation. One participant stated that she planned to “stay in the U.S. for a few years...and practice in the U.S. to...get more experience.” Similarly another participant remarked that “I...want to stay here and get more experience in the field.” A different participant explained that she would like to stay in North America until she could “establish myself a little more” because “in Asia, [people] like you to have some authority.”

Factors That Facilitate Students to Consider Returning Home

Some participants reported that they planned to return to their home country immediately after graduation or as a long-term plan. Three main factors that motivated participants to consider returning home were identified. First, some participants reported that interpersonal factors such as the presence of family or romantic partner impacted their short- or long-term career plans. One participant remarked that “most likely I will end up going back just because my parents are back [home].” Another participant reported planning to return to her home country immediately after graduation. She explained that her decision would be largely determined by her romantic partner’s preference. This participant stated that, “[R]ight now, I plan to go back to [my country] after graduation...I would say it will depend on my partner....If my partner...wants to stay...[at home]...I’ll stay...[at home].” In the long run, a different participant felt inclined to return home especially when thinking about her “personal life.” She explained, “I have my family in my home country. And I have some personal concerns...
about my aging parents....So I feel that although I’d like to decide my career plan based on what I want to do...I do not want to...abandon my parents for getting older. And it’ll be very difficult for them to...come and visit me in the United States, so when I think about my personal life, [it] makes me want to go back.” A fourth participant explained that she was open to returning home as a long-term plan:

[F]ive, ten years beyond...I’m very aware that family is really important to me, and so at that point in time if it so happens that I would be in a better place, in terms of family choices/development, I think I would be respectful and consult and discuss with my partner what we can do together, where is it better for us to be. I am not pushing away the option of going back to Asia to serve, and actually that is what I want to do in the long run.

Second, a few participants reported that they were inclined to return home due to challenges living in the U.S. as Asian international individuals. One participant revealed that being aware of racism toward Asian Americans made her hesitant to remain in the U.S. after graduation. She remarked, “I refuse the idea to be an American because that’s too challenging. I feel like being international is challenging enough, and...I think being Asian American is more challenging....I have learned all the bad in the multicultural class like being so-called the minority in the U.S. and being forever minority in the U.S.” Similarly, another participant stated that she felt exhausted dealing with racism:

[S]ometimes I just want to go back cause I think the experience here makes me very tired....There is a lot of stress, so I feel like I am constantly fighting in this country [due to racism]. So, going back home is more relaxing, more comforting.

Third, a few participants mentioned their desire for contributing to their own society back home. One participant planned to return home because “I feel...that [my] society really needs people...in this profession. So when I think of my culture and my own people, I would like go back.” Another participant thought about returning to her
country of origin as a pioneer because she realized that there was a large “discrepancy” in the development of the counseling psychology field between her home country and the U.S. She pointed out that there was no overarching professional organization like APA and no formal licensure system in her home country. This participant hoped that she could help advance the field of counseling psychology if she moved back home.

Students’ Preferences of Future Careers

All the participants expressed preferences for type of career that they would like to pursue upon graduation. The majority of participants reported that they were interested in multiple roles as counseling psychologists. That is, participants reported that they ideally would like to engage in both clinical and teaching, or research and clinical careers simultaneously. Specifically, almost all of the participants stated that they hoped to engage in clinical work either full-time or part-time. Almost all of the participants also stated that they were interesting in teaching careers either full-time or part-time. The majority of participants reported that they would enjoy research or academic careers.

Some participants expressed uncertainty about how to select a main career focus. One participant remarked that, “I like doing research...and I really like doing clinical work...So...my ideal work would be like spending half of my week doing research, half of my time doing clinical work but, I don’t know how.” Another participant stated that she enjoyed both research and clinical work. She reported that “if I’m good at doing research, ...I want to do some research and keep some practice, if possible, but I heard it’s extremely difficult [to do] research and practice at the same time.”
Students’ Suggestions Regarding How to Support Their Career Making Decisions

Some participants underscored that it would be critical for faculty members to explore and address the career development needs (i.e., career plans and goals) of Asian international students. Specifically, these participants first encouraged faculty members not to make assumptions that international students would return to their home country immediately after graduation. Second, these participants encouraged faculty members to initiate or engage in conversations about international students’ career concerns, plans, and goals. One participant reported feeling discouraged because faculty members did not show any interest in her future career or assumed that she would return home after graduation. She believed that it would be helpful if faculty members would not make certain assumptions, “encourage” international students to explore their career options in the U.S., and provide guidance regarding how to become more marketable in the U.S. Another participant described feeling uncared for because faculty did not discuss or inquire about this participant’s future career plans or directions. This participant wished that faculty would provide support by exploring and discussing career development. A few other participants echoed that it was critical for training programs to actively address Asian international students’ career development. A third participant strongly hoped that counseling psychology programs would be more aware of Asian “international students’ career goals” without making assumptions that “they want to go home” or “they want to stay in the U.S.” She also hoped that faculty members would pay “more attention” to Asian students’ career plans and “initiate…conversation[s]” about their future career
because these students might not feel comfortable bringing up their career concerns. This participant explained:

>[I]nternational students [may not] talk about [their career concerns] because they feel, “It’s my issue, it’s not really my advisor’s, it’s not my American classmates’ issue, it’s my issue so I have to struggle with it myself.” This is the sense that I get from peers, who are internationals...they could really [benefit from] the minimal support from, or affirmation, from faculty to check in with them, “What is it that you want to do? How can we make your training experience in the U.S., molded to, so that it could fit with what you want to do beyond your degree?” I feel that, even starting a conversation like that, having students to think about these things, to explore with professionals, will extend what their options are and also make them feel more confident in what they can do in the future.

A fourth participant emphasized that lack of career development discussion with faculty members creates challenges for Asian international students. She explained that in her training program, there was no discussion about “how mental health professionals practice in other parts of the world.” As a result, this participant felt uninformed about “how to become a psychologist in my home country.” She revealed that she was inclined to remain in the U.S. after graduation because “I really don’t have a choice. I have to stay in the U.S. for at least [a few] years to really decide what to do.” This participant urged faculty members to start exploring and discussing how to “support international students who want to go back to their home country and practice.” She expressed hopes for faculty members:

>Once [counseling psychology programs] accept international students, I really wish that those program increase their willingness to explore what’s like to practice as a psychologist in those students’ country so that those students can make more informed decision when they have...to leave their program, when they get their PhD degree.
Appreciate the Strength and Resiliency of Asian International Students

All the participants showed tremendous strengths and resiliency during their counseling psychology training in the U.S. Participants exhibited resiliency in various forms. In this section, Asian international students’ willingness to make sacrifices, determination and persistence, optimism, and hard work are described.

Students' Willingness to Make Sacrifices

Participants were determined to obtain a doctoral degree in counseling psychology even though it often required them to make significant “sacrifices” for their education. One participant emphasized the “phenomenal” determination that Asian and other international students must have in order to achieve their educational goals. She explained that Asian and other international students leave their family members in their home country, travel long distances, and invest much time and money into their education in the U.S. This participant stated that international students “do not have any back-up plan” except to successfully obtain a doctoral degree. Another participant reported that she was determined to pursue her education despite the fact that she needed to pay “a high price” for it. She claimed, “I pay a high price to get into this place today...by leaving [my] family, giving up a lot of stuff, and in my case, I end up giving up relationships. I basically [put] the relationship part of my life aside, in terms of family or personal, romantic relationships. So it’s a lot of a high price [to pay] being away from your family all the time.” Although this participant found making many sacrifices difficult, she felt “professionally, I’m in a good place,” and “what I gained is worthwhile.”
In addition to willingness to make significant life sacrifices, participants demonstrated persistence and tenacity. A few participants admitted to thoughts of “giving up” or “quitting” during their training; yet, they all exhibited perseverance. When faced with challenges in clinical work, one participant felt that “I am not really a good counselor” and therefore, the participant thought that “I should give up.” However, this participant “convince[d] myself that I have overcome difficult situations like this in the past, so maybe I could continue to find a way to work with client[s].” Another participant felt that she was “not a good fit” for the counseling psychology program due to challenges in using English as a second language. She wondered whether she made the right decision to pursue education in counseling psychology, and contemplated changing her field of study. Yet, this participant stated that she kept going because “counseling work is my interest. I want to do this. I don’t want to be stopped due to my language proficiency.” She believed that “once I overcome this, maybe I will have a better future or better job in my life.” Upon encountering an extremely difficult situation in her program, a different participant reported that “I was thinking about quitting.” However, she persisted because she thought that giving up “is not worthwhile…since I have put so much in [my education],” gone through challenges due to language and cultural differences, and moved “2000 miles away from home.” This participant felt that it would be more difficult for her to stop pursuing her doctoral degree than to continue her education.
Students' Optimistic Attitudes

Participants also exhibited optimistic attitudes toward various training experiences. A few participants remained optimistic even when facing unpleasant or challenging experiences, and demonstrated the ability to transform challenges into opportunities for learning and growth. One participant reported interpreting/perceiving unpleasant training experiences as “learning experience[s].” For instance, she stated that she received critical feedback from a supervisor regarding her quiet or introverted interpersonal demeanor. This participant explained that although her “first reaction was definitely not fun” and that “it’s not really...[a] positive experience,” she considered this incident as “a learning experience.” She further explained that it gave her an “advantage” because she was able to recognize multiple ways to interact with people. This participant remarked that “I’m going to learn...I’m going to get the best out of the situation.” Another participant reported trying to find something positive out of difficult training experiences. For example, she described an incident in which a faculty member insisted she complete an undergraduate English course. She described ways in which she was able to find helpful aspects of the writing course:

I try to find some positive point of [the class] like I never...attended any class with so many international students. In that writing class...it’s all international students...so I just think it help me, it interestingly help me in some way because in our field, there are not so many international students....because challenges are similar even [though] I [have] a little bit less since I have been in the States a little bit longer, I feel it’s still a sense of belonging. I feel like I belong to them more, and I can help them a little bit more, so some of my English competency kind of help.
Students' Efforts and Hard Work

Participants were hard workers who demonstrated great effort in completing their various training activities. One participant reported spending the majority of her time studying. She stated that she studied at least “five hours” weekdays and studied almost entire days over the weekends. This participant described how much time and energy she devoted to her study:

I feel like I’m sacrificing so many things...I don’t go out. I don’t meet friends. And...I just feel like I confine myself in my apartment, for example, all weekend. And the only time I go out is very necessary things like going grocery to get food. And...a little bit of TV watching, which is usually during I’m eating dinner or something. And I want to watch more movies, but I don’t. I want to call my parents, but I don’t have time. Oh, I want to call this person. No, I should just keep studying. And it’s just like a lot of reading, studying, and research things takes forever. And not having my own time. I want to take this class, I can’t. I want to go to yoga, no I can’t; things like that.

Another participant asserted that “I definitely put more effort than most of the students.” She reported practicing “hundreds and hundreds of times” before each presentation, and believed that “I definitely practice more than anybody else.” This participant explained that as an Asian international student, she felt “pressure...to try harder” than other students in order to become “good enough.” A different participant remarked that, “If [Asian international students] don’t do a perfect job in our mind...the result will not be as decent as other Americans. If we work like other Americans, my job will be very poor in the quality.” Therefore, this participant believed that it was necessary for Asian international students to work harder than U.S. students in order to produce “as decent” results as U.S. students. In addition, this participant asserted that “it is important for faculty to recognize and appreciate efforts that [Asian international] students make.” She
felt grateful and empowered when one counseling psychology professor in a professional
conference recognized and appreciated the amount of efforts that international students
make in academic writings:

[O]ne of the professor said, “I really see [international students’] effort”...the
professor said, “we have to understand the process that the paper that they turn in,
international students put a lot of effort and time on the paper, although the paper
may not look right or perfect, but...international students spend a lot of time on
the paper.” So, I think it was very empowering that “oh, there is a professor that
knows...how much effort we put on writing”....I felt like, “wow, there is
somebody who understands our effort”...I [would] feel much better to turn in a
paper to such a professor who understands our struggle.

Recognize the Benefits of Recruiting Asian International Students

All the participants identified benefits of recruiting Asian international students to
U.S. counseling psychology doctoral programs. Some participants underscored that it is
important for faculty members to recognize the value of Asian international students’
presence in training programs. One participant believed that it would be critical for
faculty members to “acknowledge [international students’] presence” and “publicly
acknowledge...the contributions of Asian international students” within training
programs. Similarly, another participant emphasized that it would be essential for faculty
members to “acknowledge [international students’] presence and...acknowledge that the
international students are important in this field.” A different participant hoped that
faculty members would “see international students as...asset [and]...treasure” in U.S.
counseling psychology programs. She asserted that international students “bring so
much” to training programs and faculty members must learn how to elicit the “wisdom”
of these students. A fourth participant felt grateful when a faculty member expressed
appreciation toward international students for bringing diverse cultures into the U.S. This participant explained that this faculty member perceived recruiting international students as bringing foreign countries into the U.S. without making international trips to these countries. A fifth participant emphasized the importance of recognizing benefits of recruiting international students:

[Faculty members and U.S. peers] are benefiting from having [international students]... but... I think a lot of people don’t know how much benefit they get from international students. So they are just like, “Oh yeah, she’s an international student,” and that’s all. But like what do you mean? What does that mean to this university, having these 300 international students? They should know that.

In this section, four main benefits of having or recruiting Asian international students in counseling psychology programs are described. The benefits that participants identified include Asian international students providing “real” or “direct” cross-cultural experiences, offering diverse, cross-cultural, and international perspectives, contributing to U.S. students’ learning, and contributing to the internationalization of counseling psychology.

“Real” or “Direct” Cross-Cultural Experiences

Almost all of the participants emphasized that Asian international students could provide faculty members and U.S. peers with opportunities to have “real” or “direct” cross-cultural experiences. One participant asserted that just the presence of Asian international students can change learning environment. Another participant remarked that “everyone [in my program] was... forced to experience... me being there.” She stated that it would be important for counseling psychologists and counseling psychology
students to gain “personal experience[s]” and “spend time with different people” instead of merely “learning knowledge [from]...book[s].” A different participant pointed out that Asian international students could offer “plenty of opportunities for peer American students and...faculty members to really experience cross-cultural relationships.” A fourth participant claimed that “it is really important to have international students” in training programs so that U.S. students could have “daily exposure[s]” to and “real interaction[s]” with culturally different individuals in order to increase U.S. students’ cross-cultural competency. A fifth participant emphasized that the strong presence of international students would help “American students...get used to [having] international students around.”

Diverse, Cross-Cultural, and International Perspectives

The majority of participants underscored that Asian international students bring “different,” “cross-cultural,” and “international” perspectives to U.S. counseling psychology programs. One participant remarked that international students’ voices about cross-cultural issues are “great contribution[s]” to training programs as “the whole program [would] be more exposed to different cultures.” She explained that the presence of international students could provide training programs with valuable cross-cultural insights and perspectives from real people instead of solely depending on “textbook knowledge of multicultural [issues].” Another participant claimed that as an Asian international student, “I can provide unique...international perspective to the class...I can offer a lot of multicultural, cross-cultural...perspective to the class.” In addition, she
stated that Asian international students could provide insights into research about immigrant or multicultural issues. Another participant emphasized that Asian international students could offer plenty of “interesting” and “useful” learning opportunities for faculty members and U.S. peers by bringing different perspectives, unique knowledge, and alternative ways to address emotions. This participant asserted that exposure to culturally different perspectives is beneficial for faculty members and U.S. peers in their future careers. She also stated that the presence of Asian international students could “open [faculty’s and U.S peers’ eyes] to a bigger world” and help faculty and U.S. peers recognize that “it is important to understand other cultures [and] to develop [cross-cultural] competency.” A different participant emphasized that “one of the benefits of having international student[s] in a program is that they can bring in a lot of different cultures and different point of view[s].” She also underscored that it would be essential for faculty members “to create an environment for [international students] to talk about [their perspectives].” Similarly, a fourth participant stated that benefits of having Asian international students would be to “increase diverse perspective[s]” and “help...[members of a] majority group to...broaden [their] horizon.” This participant cautioned that in order to benefit from Asian international students, training programs must be ready or be “prepared to have international students.”

Contributions to U.S. Peers’ Learning

This subsection focuses on how the first two subsections, offering “real” or “direct” cross-cultural experiences, and providing diverse, cross-cultural, and
international perspectives, specifically impact U.S. peers in positive ways. Some participants highlighted that Asian international students could contribute to U.S. peers’ learning through offering different cultural perspectives and direct cross-cultural interactions. One participant believed that Asian international students could help U.S. peers gain more understanding of Asian clients. In one example, this participant observed a U.S. student counselor’s difficulties with an Asian international client in a counseling session. Later in group supervision, this participant shared her understanding of the conflict in the therapeutic relationship from her cultural perspectives, which helped increase awareness and understanding of the U.S. student counselor. Another participant described an incident in which her European American peers benefited from her cultural knowledge and experiences. She explained that “my White classmates were...extremely surprised and [felt]...sad” when Asian clients revealed that their parents had never said “I love you.” This participant reported informing her U.S. peers that expressions of parental love differ across cultures and that it would not be uncommon for many Asians not to hear a direct expression of parental love. This participant cautioned her U.S. peers about making assumptions based on Western cultural perspectives. Her European American peers expressed appreciation that she brought a “different perspective” to classroom learning. Additionally, her classmates who “didn’t...have [an] opportunity to really know any Asians” benefited when she shared assessment reports on Asian clients she had worked with. A third participant claimed that through “interacting” with Asian international students, “American students [would become] more comfortable” working with clients who are from other countries or who are immigrants. Similarly, a fourth
participant stated that U.S. students who gained “knowledge about different cultural perspectives” directly from Asian international students might be better prepared when working with clients from similar cultural backgrounds. A fifth participant pointed out that U.S. peers would benefit from observing “how I approach clients” and “what kind of things that I notice” in counseling sessions, which might differ from Western counseling approaches. A few participants believed that U.S. students might become more aware of “what they are taking for granted” from language skills to “White privileges” by witnessing challenges that Asian international students might encounter.

Internationalization of Counseling Psychology

Some participants asserted that Asian international students could contribute to the internationalization of counseling psychology. One participant stated that being an Asian international student helped her see the “multicultural movement from different perspective.” That is, she recognized that “multiculturalism movement that we talk about within...counseling psychology program[s] is heavily focused on American culture...American multiculturalism.” This participant believed that multiculturalism should address cultures beyond U.S cultures, and that Asian international students could contribute to “broaden” current multicultural perspectives. Another participant asserted that “international students...are the one who will help the field [of counseling psychology] to be more globalize.” A different participant underscored that Asian international students could become “the best ambassador[s]” when any counseling psychology program is interested in “going international,” “building connections with
Asian scholar[s],” and “building collaboration[s] with…university programs in Asian countries.” A fourth participant claimed that if anyone in training programs is “interested in looking [at] international literature,” Asian international students who are bilingual would be “helpful” in translating articles written in Asian languages into English.
The purpose of the present study was to create an opportunity in which the voices of Asian international students in APA-accredited doctoral counseling psychology programs in the U.S. could be expressed, and to convey the collective voices and messages of Asian international students to counseling psychology training programs. Specifically, this study’s results illustrate Asian international students’ experiences, as well as their hopes and recommendations for faculty members and supervisors regarding how to provide cross-culturally sensitive, effective, and helpful training to current and prospective Asian international students.

As discussed in the literature review chapter, there is growing interest among scholars and researchers to understand the training experiences of international students in counseling psychology and/or applied psychology in general (Chung, 1993; Fuller, 2005; Giorgis & Helms, 1978; Hasan, Fouad, & Fowler, 2008; He and Heppner, 2008; Helms & Giorgis, 1982; Heppner, Leong, & Chiao, 2008; Inman, Jeong, & Mori, 2008; Mori, Inman, & Caskie, 2009; Nilsson & Anderson, 2004; Nilsson & Dodds, 2006; Nilsson 2007; Nilsson & Wang, 2008). However, very few empirical studies have specifically investigated international students in doctoral counseling psychology programs. An exception found is a qualitative dissertation study by Fuller (2005). The main focus of Fuller’s study was to examine how non-western international students successfully persevere through various challenges of doctoral counseling psychology.
programs in the U.S. Although Fuller's study and the current study share some
commonalities, Fuller did not empirically investigate suggestions and recommendations
that non-western participants had for faculty, supervisors, and training programs. Unlike
Fuller's study, the present study narrowed its focus by specifically targeting East and
Southeast Asian international students who, despite the rich diversity among Asians
overall, do share some commonalities in cultural values and previous educational
experiences (Scollon et al., 1990; as cited in Liberman, 1994). In addition, this study
aimed not only to describe and understand the training experiences of Asian international
students, but also to present recommendations for what faculty members and supervisors
(and/or i.e., anyone who is involved in Asian international students' training) could do to
improve the training experiences of Asian international students. Although scholars have
made suggestions and recommendations for faculty members and supervisors in
counseling or applied psychology in general, only one known empirical study (Killian,
2001) has directly elicited feedback from Asian international students about their hopes
for faculty members and supervisors. Killian's research explored feedback among six
international students from various countries in marriage and family therapy programs
about how they would approach supervision and training of their own supervisees. Thus,
the current study is among the first attempts to empirically investigate the training
experiences of Asian international students in counseling psychology programs including
their personal recommendations to faculty members, supervisors, and counseling
psychology training programs.
The present study provides a valuable opportunity for faculty members and supervisors to listen to Asian international students’ honest and frank voices and messages about their overall training experiences. Nilsson and Wang (2008) pointed out that due to norms of their native cultures, Asian international students may not voluntarily or eagerly express their thoughts or concerns to faculty members and supervisors. Indeed, in this study, almost all of the participants described feeling reluctant to communicate their honest voices to faculty members and supervisors. Moreover, the majority of participants revealed that they had never given personal feedback or recommendations about their training experiences to faculty members or supervisors. Therefore, findings from this study may hold new and intriguing information for faculty members and supervisors.

In this chapter, contributions of the present study’s findings to the existing body of literature are described first. Second, a brief summary of this study’s findings is presented. Third, an integration of this study’s findings with scholars’ suggestions is discussed. Fourth, strengths of the study are described. Fifth, limitations of the study are examined. Finally, future directions for research are presented.

Contributions of Findings of the Present Study

Currently, very little has been investigated through empirical research in regards to ways in which faculty members and supervisors can provide high quality, satisfying doctoral counseling psychology training to Asian and all other international students. In the Handbook of Counseling Psychology, Heppner, Leong, and Chiao (2008) asserted that
there are a number of unaddressed questions about the type of training that is best for international students” in counseling psychology programs. There are some conceptual articles in which scholars (including counseling psychologists and counseling psychology doctoral students with international backgrounds, knowledge, and/or research experience) have proposed suggestions and recommendations for faculty members and supervisors in applied psychology in general (Hasan, Fouad, & Fowler, 2008; He & Heppner, 2008; Inman, Jeong, & Mori, 2008; Nilsson & Wang, 2008). These authors’ suggestions and recommendations are mainly based on previous non-empirical literature, personal experiences, or anecdotal evidence. In contrast, the current study’s suggestions and recommendations for faculty and supervisors emerged from qualitative investigation. Hence, the present study contributes to the current literature by offering empirically-based resources for faculty and supervisors who train Asian international doctoral students in counseling psychology programs. In addition, this study presents suggestions and recommendations drawing upon the voices and lived experiences of participants. Thus, findings of the current study can help faculty and supervisors emotionally connect with the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of Asian international students.

A Brief Summary of the Present Study’s Findings

Findings of the current study can be organized into two major components. These two major components can be understood as necessary factors to providing cross-culturally sensitive and effective training to Asian international students in U.S. counseling psychology programs. The first component of the data identifies specific
areas that are critical in understanding Asian international students' training experiences in U.S. counseling psychology programs. Participants in the present study reported that it is important for faculty and supervisors to understand the impact of various critical factors on Asian international students' training experiences. Specifically, Asian international students hope that faculty and supervisors will: recognize the significance of peer relationships (relationships with other international students as well as U.S. students), be mindful of the impact of Asian cultural backgrounds, understand the internal adjustment and acculturation processes of Asian international students, recognize the impact of using English as a second language, be aware of the impact of racism, and be aware of Asian international students' financial concerns.

The second component of data encompasses what faculty and supervisors can do to provide helpful and satisfying training experiences for Asian international students. Findings of the current study suggest that faculty and supervisors can take seven actions. The seven actions include: listen to voices of Asian international students, cultivate positive relationships and interactions with Asian international students, search for culturally sensitive ways to accommodate Asian international students' needs, address the applicability of U.S. training to other cultures, address career development issues of Asian international students, appreciate the strengths and resiliency of Asian international students, and recognize the benefits of recruiting Asian international students.
An Integration of This Study’s Findings With Scholars’ Suggestions

_Suggestion #1: Understand Asian International Students’ Training Experiences_

Findings of the current study suggest that it is essential for faculty and supervisors to understand the training experiences of Asian international students in U.S. counseling psychology programs. All of the participants in this study expressed a strong desire to be understood by faculty and supervisors. All the participants hoped that faculty and supervisors would gain a greater awareness, become increasingly knowledgeable, and deepen their understanding about various experiences that Asian international students may encounter during their doctoral training. One participant stressed that, “[T]he faculty member should know more about international students, the challenge that [we] face and the process that [we] are going through, especially with adjustment problems.” This participant believed that, “if…faculty members don’t recognize that there are a lot of challenges facing international students, it will add a lot of stress on international students to deal [with] everything [on] their own.” Another participant asserted that “helpful” faculty members are those who have been in “different [cultural] environments,” who have “some knowledge about other culture[s],” and who have “some direct personal experience” with international students.

Participants in this study shared personal accounts about aspects of their lives that they wanted faculty and supervisors to acknowledge and understand. Specifically, participants hoped that faculty and supervisors would be aware of: the significance of peer relationships, the impact of Asian cultural backgrounds, the internal adjustment and
acculturation processes of Asian international students, the impact of using English as a second language, the impact of racism, and Asian international students’ financial concerns. These critical factors are consistent with areas identified as pertinent in previous literature (e.g., Anderson & Powell, 1991; Deressa & Beavers, 1988; Leong & Sedlacek, 1986; Lewthwaite, 1996; Lin & Yi, 1997.)

Participant voices in this study resonate with previous scholars’ suggestions that it is important for faculty and supervisors to become familiar with and understand international students’ stressors and/or cultural backgrounds (Fuller, 2005; Hasan, et al., 2008; He & Heppner, 2008; Nilsson & Wang, 2008). He and Heppner asserted that it is critical for faculty members to gain cultural “empathy” for international students and therefore, to obtain “a certain amount of knowledge” about international students’ cultures (p. 89). They encouraged faculty members to read about students’ cultures, discuss culture with students, and make international trips to gain direct experiences. Nilsson and Wang (2008) also suggested that supervisors make efforts to deepen their knowledge of and sensitivity to international supervisees’ home cultures by consulting reading materials, using media resources, or participating in workshops or cultural events.

An additional and unique contribution of the present study is the shared experience among Asian international students of transitioning from being a member of a majority cultural group in their home country to becoming a member of an ethnic minority group in the U.S. Due to this transition, participants reported becoming highly aware of race, racism, and privileges that they had in their country of origin. It is helpful for faculty and supervisors to be aware of such internal adjustments and acculturation processes of Asian
international students. At the same time, this unique experience often provides insight for Asian international students as to what it is like to be a member of a majority cultural group who is oblivious to one’s privileges. Such insights are strengths of these students and can be acknowledged and appreciated.

Although language proficiency is a well-researched area, findings of this study offer some new insights. Regardless of their perceived English proficiency, almost all of the participants in this study reported that certain areas of English are more challenging. For instance, the majority of participants identified academic writing as the most challenging aspect of using English as a second language in their doctoral training. It may be helpful if faculty and supervisors become aware of both strengths and challenges in Asian international students’ language skills. Participants highlighted how important it is to have their language competency acknowledged. They appreciated when faculty noted student improvement or strengths. Asian international students desired encouragement from faculty and also hoped that faculty would recognize the tremendous effort and energy students put into navigating their doctoral training in English as a second language.

Suggestion #2: Listen to the Voices of Asian International Students

Findings of the present study suggest that it is critical for faculty and supervisors to listen to the voices of Asian international students. One participant appreciated that faculty members in her program were “willing to listen to what we need to say” as students. Another participant felt grateful for a faculty member who respected students’
vmces. This participant reported feeling “heard” by the faculty member when she shared her perspectives on how to better create a welcoming environment for incoming international students. This suggestion appears to provide an additional, specific recommendation for faculty and supervisors beyond the existing research. Previous scholars have noted that because Asian cultures tend to stress “relational hierarchy,” Asian international students may identify faculty and supervisors as authority figures, and “out of respect,” these students may not readily express their thoughts or opinions to faculty or supervisors voluntarily (Nilsson & Wang, 2008, p. 74). Indeed, participants of this study acknowledged that, due to Asian cultural values, it is challenging for Asian international students to express their honest, candid voices. This study’s findings reveal students’ wishes that faculty and supervisors take initiative to invite Asian international students to express their thoughts or opinions and create safety for these students.

_Suggestion #3: Cultivate Positive Relationships and Interactions With Asian International Students_

Findings of the present study suggest that it is important for faculty and supervisors to develop positive relationships and interactions with Asian international students. All the participants in this research believed that it was critical for faculty and supervisors to express personal interest in Asian international trainees in order to develop helpful faculty-student or supervisor-supervisee relationships and interactions. These participants appreciated when faculty and supervisors inquired about students’ cultural backgrounds and students’ personal and professional experiences. Asian international students repeatedly remarked that it was helpful to have faculty members and supervisors
who demonstrated “genuine interest” in and “curiosity” about international students’ personal lives, professional interests, and their cultural backgrounds. For instance, one participant highlighted that her advisors’ “genuine interest in me as a person [and] my growth professionally and personally” contributed to the development of strong student-advisor relationships. She reported feeling encouraged by her advisors whose strong interest “made me thrive” and “made me believe more in what I can do.” This participant hoped that faculty would be interested in getting to know more about Asian international students. Specifically, this participant suggested that faculty “find out more about [Asian international students] as people, as people from their country, as people from their culture, their experiences here, their challenges, [and] their strengths.”

Participant voices in this study clearly coincide with previous scholars’ suggestions that it is important for faculty and supervisors to get to know international students (Hasan et al., 2008; He & Heppner, 2008; Inman et al., 2008; Nilsson & Wang, 2008). He and Heppner urged faculty members to learn about whom international students are as individuals, find out about their personal and professional interests, and identify their strengths and areas for growth and improvement. Scholars emphasized that faculty’s attempts to get to know international students on a personal level as well as supervisors’ genuine interest and curiosity in learning more about students’ cultural backgrounds are integral in developing positive faculty-student or supervisor-supervisee relationships (He & Heppner, 2008; Nilsson & Wang, 2008). According to the majority of participants in this study, faculty and supervisor availability (e.g., providing time to meet and talk) is a crucial factor in promoting positive faculty-student and supervisor-
supervisee relationships. These participants expressed gratitude when faculty and supervisors were generous in providing one-on-one time with students. For example, one participant hoped that faculty members would be available to “spend extra time” to talk with and support international students. Another participant believed that expressing faculty’s availability would “make a lot of difference[s]” in international students’ training experiences. A few participants reported feeling grateful that their advisors took the initiative to meet with them one-on-one on a regular basis. One participant reported that her advisor initiated one-on-one meetings with her and expressed that “he will be available if I ever need.” This participant elaborated ways in which her advisor was available to students:

[T]he one-on-one supervision I have with my advisor...really help me a lot....My advisor generally meet with his advisees on one-on-one, weekly, one hour....So he would talk with us, he would answer any question his advisee have, even process the feelings, concerns, anything, use that hour....He is very available to his student.

Participant voices in the present study are consistent with scholars’ suggestions to “provide emotional and instrumental support” for international students (He & Heppner, 2008, p. 90). In order to develop strong, positive, and supportive faculty-student relationships, authors encouraged faculty members to meet with international students frequently (p. 88). For instance, He and Heppner stated that it would be helpful if faculty members would initially meet with students on “a regular basis” such as once a week (p. 88). Authors indicated that faculty’s availability is essential not only to learn more about international students but also to provide support for students to cope with various challenges associated with their training.
In addition to the importance of demonstrating personal interest and expressing availability to students, results of the current study identified additional helpful behaviors of faculty and supervisors which may facilitate positive relationships with Asian international students. Findings of this study indicate that valuing, trusting, and taking initiative are specific helpful behaviors of faculty and supervisors. All the participants underscored the importance of faculty and supervisors to value Asian international students and trust their competency. For example, one participant reported feeling “encouraged” that her advisor was “really listening” to this participant’ research interests and ideas. This participant appreciated that her advisor perceived her as an “expert” in and knowledgeable about international student research, valued what she had to say, and trusted her to conduct valuable research. Another highlight of the current research is that almost all of the participants stressed that it is helpful to have faculty and supervisors who take the initiative to reach out to Asian international students. For instance, one participant felt “very fortunate” when advisors took initiative to ask “very personable question[s]” in regards to her family, her partner, and herself. This participant strongly believed that such initiative enhanced her relationships with advisors.

*Suggestion #4: Search for Cross-Culturally Sensitive Ways to Accommodate Asian International Students’ Needs*

Almost all of the participants experienced hesitation in expressing their needs during their training. The majority of participants in this study asserted that providing flexibility or accommodations as well as making some adjustments and changes were critical when training Asian international students with culturally different backgrounds.
The majority of participants pointed out that faculty and supervisors often treated Asian international and U.S. students in a similar manner, and some participants underscored the importance of *not* treating all the students the same. For instance, one participant asserted that “having a rigid training program [or] treating all students in the same way no matter what is [not] the smart way” when training Asian international students. Similarly, another participant stated that treating “everybody the same...does not work.” She hoped that faculty members would go beyond offering “equal” treatment to all the students regardless of their cultural backgrounds. These participants urged faculty members to take Asian international students’ cultural backgrounds and developmental needs into consideration and provide “individualized” or “customized” support for Asian international students.

Participant voices in the present study are congruent with He and Heppner’s (2008) suggestion that it is essential for faculty to become aware that rules in graduate programs may disadvantage some international students due to cultural differences. While these authors recognize that rules can be important for training programs, rules can often result in treating all the students in the same manner. As a result, He and Heppner pointed out that faculty members may risk negating “important cultural differences or the cultural context of international students, which subsequently puts them at a distinct disadvantage” (p. 91). For example, expecting “equal” levels of class participation or self-disclosure during clinical supervision from all the students, “may end in unequal consequences in terms of grades” or evaluations for some international students (p. 91). He and Heppner stressed the importance of understanding international students’ cultural
contexts and recognizing that “some course requirements or program expectations and rules result in unequal circumstances and unintended negative consequences” (p. 91).

The process of finding cross-culturally sensitive ways to accommodate student needs appears complex. At times, participants felt it was “unfair” that international and U.S. students were bound by the exact same expectations, requirements, or standards regardless of cultural and language differences. Hence, participants believed that, at times, it would be important for faculty members to offer flexibility and accommodations rather than to adhere to rigid or “uniform” expectations, requirements, or standards. Other times, participants expressed ambivalence or uncomfortable feelings about seeking and receiving help or accommodations. For example, some participants perceived that seeking accommodations meant that they were not as capable or competent as U.S. students. He and Heppner (2008) encourage faculty to solicit feedback on such issues from international students. Similarly, participants in this study encouraged faculty members to engage in dialogues that address each student’s needs individually, exploring what would be helpful and sensitive given the individual and circumstance.

Suggestion #5: Address Career Development Issues and the Applicability of U.S. Training to Asian International Students’ Home Cultures

Findings of this study suggest that more attention must be given to the applicability of U.S. counseling psychology training to Asian international students’ home cultures and career development issues of these students. These two suggestions are intertwined in this chapter. Almost all of the participants in this study indicated that their training program did not systematically address or facilitate discussions about the
applicability of U.S. training to other cultures. The majority of participants felt that they were left on their own to explore the relevance of U.S. training to their home countries. A few participants strongly encouraged faculty members to pay more attention to and address the applicability of U.S. training to other cultures. For instance, one participant hoped that faculty would start conversations with Asian international students regarding the applicability of training by asking questions such as, “How can we make your training experience in the U.S. [relevant] to...what you want to do [after obtaining] your degree?” Another participant urged faculty and supervisors to explore “what is like to practice as a psychologist” in international students’ home countries once training programs “accept” international students. Moreover, some participants underscored that it is critical for faculty members and supervisors to explore career development issues of Asian international students and initiate conversations about these students’ career concerns, plans, and goals. For instance, one participant perceived that “international students [may not] talk about [their career concerns] because they feel, ‘It’s my issue, it’s not...my advisor’s, it’s not my American classmates’ issue...so I have to struggle with it myself.’” This participant believed that Asian international students would greatly benefit from engaging in conversations with faculty members in regards to both the applicability of the U.S. training as well as career concerns and plans.

Participant voices in this study illustrate He and Heppner’s (2008) suggestion that it is essential for faculty members to recognize the training implications of international students’ career goals. These authors recommended that faculty members become aware of training implications for students who intend to return to their home countries after
graduation, and that faculty members address questions such as whether training in the U.S. "needs to be altered in either small or significant ways" and what types of "training adjustments need to happen" for those students who plan to return to their home countries to work (p. 90). Moreover, He and Heppner urged faculty members to openly engage in discussions about these training issues with all international students.

Findings of the present study indicate that regardless of Asian international students’ current career plans, it is essential to explore and discuss the applicability of U.S. training and career development issues with all Asian international students. Notably, all of the participants experienced some degree of uncertainty or fluidity in regards to their future career plans over time. Specifically, these students often vacillated between options of returning home, staying in the U.S., or moving to another country. Some participants indicated that their current plans were short-term goals only due to uncertainty about long-term plans. It was common for the majority of Asian international participants to plan to stay in the U.S. after graduation for the short-term, yet consider returning home or moving to another country in a few years. Therefore, it would be helpful and important for faculty members to discuss applicability issues and training implications within career development discussions with each Asian international student. Faculty need to recognize both the complexity of students’ decisions, and realize that international students may change their minds over time. Furthermore, the presence or absence of addressing applicability of training may impact Asian international students’ career plans and goals. One participant remarked that she planned to remain in the U.S. after graduation not because she loved living in the U.S., but because she felt
uninformed about how psychologists in other cultures practice, and she did not know how
to successfully become a psychologist in her own country.

Suggestion #6: Appreciate the Strengths and Resiliency of Asian International Students

While it is critical to understand the stressors and challenging aspects of Asian
international students' training experiences, findings of this research also indicate that
merely understanding international students' stressors or challenges does not provide a
whole picture of Asian international students’ overall training experiences. While some
participants emphasized that it is necessary for faculty and supervisors to recognize
various challenges that Asian international students may encounter, others asserted that
resiliency and strengths demonstrated by these students should not be overlooked. To
illustrate, one participant noticed that the current literature focuses on “barriers,
challenges, and difficulties” of international students yet she strongly hoped that
“strengths” and “resiliency” of international students would also be highlighted.
Participant voices in this study underscore He and Heppner’s (2008) assertion that it is
critical for faculty to recognize and acknowledge not only international students’ stressors
but also these students’ resiliency and strengths. He and Heppner emphasized that
international students often exhibit “tremendous courage and fortitude” by leaving the
familiar and diving into the unfamiliar as well as “a tremendous amount of adaptability
and resilience” (p. 90). All the participants in this study demonstrated tremendous
strengths and resiliency. Asian international participants exhibited courage and fortitude
to make sacrifices, persistence and determination, optimistic attitudes, and efforts and hard work.

*Suggestion #7: Recognize the Benefits of Having and Recruiting Asian International Students*

Findings of the current study suggest that it is essential for faculty and supervisors to acknowledge the benefits of having Asian international students in U.S. counseling psychology programs. The benefits (to U.S. students and U.S. counseling psychology programs) of the presence of Asian international students in counseling psychology programs have been unaddressed in the literature. Participants in this study emphasized their hopes that faculty and supervisors would recognize that Asian international students provide real and direct cross-cultural experiences for U.S. peers, faculty, and supervisors, offer diverse, cross-cultural, and international perspectives in training programs, and contribute to the internationalization of counseling psychology.

*Suggestion #8: Provide Cross-Culturally Sensitive Training for Asian International Students*

The importance of cross-cultural sensitivity has been discussed in the previous literature (Fuller, 2005; Hasan et al., 2008; He & Heppner, 2008; Nilsson & Wang, 2008). However, cross-cultural sensitivity is a broad concept, and research has not fully explored what such sensitivity looks like for Asian international students in counseling psychology programs. Findings of the present study contribute to the existing literature by providing specific examples of what faculty and supervisors can do to provide cross-culturally
sensitive training for Asian international students. This study’s findings illustrate specific 
real life examples of cross-culturally sensitive training experiences for Asian international 
students.

Scholars have discussed the need for faculty and supervisors to demonstrate cross-
cultural sensitivity when interacting with international students (Fuller, 2005; Hasan et 
al., 2008; He & Heppner, 2008; Nilsson & Wang, 2008), and participants in this study 
spoke personally about this issue. For example, one participant in this study asserted that 
Asian international students need “culturally sensitive faculty”:

[S]ome people would say...you can have like additional class for international 
student, additional language class, additional writing class...but I think that’s not 
the key point. I don’t think international student need extra language class to help 
them speak better English. I think [international students] need more culturally 
sensitive faculty. So, I think faculty should get more training. So...what the 
program can do is to get more training for faculty members.

Almost all the participants in this study believed that it was essential for faculty and 
supervisors to exhibit sensitivity to Asian cultural backgrounds and to recognize cultural 
differences that Asian international students bring to their training in the U.S. Scholars 
encourage faculty members to become familiar with international students’ cultures, 
understand these students from their cultural contexts, and engage in cultural discussion 
(Hasan et al., 2008; He & Heppner, 2008, Nilsson & Wang, 2008). In this study, 
participants emphasized that it is helpful to have faculty members who not only recognize 
cultural differences, but also address these differences openly. That is, these participants 
appreciated faculty who initiated or facilitated cultural discussion in one-on-one faculty-
student meetings and clinical training settings. For instance, a few participants reported 
that their advisors facilitated “open discussion about...cultural differences” during
advisor-advisee meetings. One participant appreciated that her advisor directly addressed “awkward” exchanges in their interactions due to cultural differences, asked her to openly explain her statements or behaviors from her cultural perspectives, and explained the advisor’s own statements or behaviors from his cultural perspectives.

Strengths of the Study

One of the strengths of the present study is the choice of research methods, which matches well with the research topic and questions. Qualitative research is appropriate for the current study because the research topic had not been fully explored and needed further investigation. Among various qualitative research traditions, phenomenological research methods are suitable for examining common experiences of Asian international doctoral students in counseling psychology programs in the U.S.

The richness of data obtained by initial and follow-up phone interviews is another strength of the current study. The quality of data was enriched by participants’ eagerness, commitment, and strong interest in this study. All twelve participants completed both initial and follow-up interviews. Upon contacting participants regarding participation in follow-up interviews, almost all of the participants responded quickly to the student researcher and all expressed their continued interest. Upon sending a reminder e-mail to one participant who had not replied within ten days, she promptly responded to the follow-up contact and expressed interest in the second interview. Participants also expressed enthusiasm about having opportunities to share their perspectives and experiences at length. One participant stated that she became very engaged in the
interview process and felt that she had a great deal to say for the interviews (in fact this participant spent a total of four hours and forty minutes in interviews). Another participant perceived that participating in this study was “meaningful” and appreciated opportunities to share and reflect on her own experiences:

I really enjoy talking to you because I don’t get asked these things a lot and...you allow me the time to sort of think about my experience and acknowledge them in a very meaningful way to be able to share with you.

A few participants remarked that they talked about “the truth” and told “a lot of true stories” that had not been previously revealed. All the participants remained committed throughout the entire data collection process, and expressed how personally important and relevant the research topic is for these students. For instance, one participant stated that the current study is, “such an important piece to add on to the literature” and expressed desire to “get the word out to faculty...who need to know these things.”

Participants emphasized this research is “really helpful for international students [and for] me” and that it is “so valuable to present international students’ voices.” Overall, participants described the study as “meaningful,” “important,” and “valuable” to them and to the field of counseling psychology.

Comprehensive research questions and depth of information provided by prolonged engagement (i.e., two interviews, lasting approximately four hours on average for each participant) are also strengths of the present study. This study attempted to explore various aspects of Asian international doctoral students’ training experiences including academic, research, teaching, and clinical experiences. Upon being asked if they saw any blind spot in this research, a few participants responded that this study was
“comprehensive,” would provide “very rich information,” and touched on “all the important areas.”

An additional strength of this study is the use of the participant-checks in order to enhance the rigor of the study. During the follow-up interviews, I orally presented a brief summary of initial interview data with each participant to check the accuracy of my understanding of participants’ training experiences. Except for a few minor details, participants responded that my understanding was accurate. I incorporated their feedback and made necessary revisions to data analysis. In addition, during the follow-up interviews, I clarified statements that were confusing or unclear, asked for specific examples to illustrate what they had initially shared and elicited additional information.

Finally, the status of the student researcher as an Asian international student (i.e., being an “insider”) is another strength of the present study (Suzuki, et al., 2007, p.300). A few participants pointed out that it was important for them to know that this study was conducted by a fellow Asian international student who is likely to understand their training experiences. Findings of the current study as well as previous literature indicate that Asian international students may not express their candid voices to someone who in a higher position of perceived power (e.g., a faculty member or clinical supervisor). In this study, the interviewer and participants shared status as doctoral students: this egalitarian relationship between interviewer and interviewees may have helped these participants feel more comfortable sharing their perspectives and experiences.
Limitations of the Study

Conducting phone interviews was the most realistic option to contact participants who reside in various geographical locations across the U.S. However, it was difficult to obtain, observe, or assess non-verbal cues such as participants' facial expressions, emotions, fatigue, and physical engagement over the phone. I attempted to compensate this limitation by focusing on the voice tone and specifically asking participants to let me know if they were too tired to talk and/or needed a break. Only a few participants expressed that they were fatigued during interviews.

Speaking over the phone with the student researcher (whom participants had never met in person) might have been uncomfortable for some participants. One participant asked whether she would have an opportunity to meet me in a professional conference prior to her initial interview. Since this was not a realistic option, I attempted to resolve this limitation by engaging in casual conversations over the phone and allowing her to ask me questions about myself and the research. By the end of this brief conversation, this participant reported feeling more comfortable speaking with me. I became briefly acquainted with over a half of participants at a professional conference a few months prior to data collection; this may have helped some participants to feel more at ease talking with me on the phone.

Another limitation is that it was not possible to observe or control external distractions during phone interviews. A few participants revealed that during interviews, an intimate partner or close friend was present in the room. Although participants reported feeling comfortable to openly and freely share in these circumstances, it was
difficult to determine if the presence of the third party impacted the quality of interviews. In addition, a few other participants were briefly interrupted by unexpected visitors during interviews. Moreover, technical problems due to noises on cell-phones sometimes made it challenging to hear participants clearly. At times, I needed to ask participants to speak more loudly or clearly, and it is possible that some participants might have felt inconvenienced by needing to repeat information.

To maintain participants' anonymity, I decided to not include pseudonyms or contextual information when describing results. Some participants expressed heightened concerns about their faculty members and/or peers discovering their participation in this study because they were aware that there are a limited number of Asian international students enrolled in U.S. counseling psychology doctoral programs. Although providing pseudonyms and contextual information would have enriched findings and provided faces to participants, it was important to eliminate any potential risk that could result in identification of participants (e.g., if all the examples and quotes of a certain participant were combined, it might be possible to identify the participant even after altering or removing any identifiable information).

Lack of diversity in terms of gender may be another limitation of the present study. Only two males expressed interest in participating in this study, and one of them did not meet the selection criteria due to his country of origin. Asian women and men may have greatly different training experiences in the U.S. Hence, the collective voices of participants in this study are likely to be representative of Asian women. Although the male participant in the study did not report significantly differing experiences compared
to female participants, future research could target Asian male students in order to explore how similar or different their collective voices are to women’s voices.

Future Directions for Research

Results of the present study represent predominantly East Asian female international students’ perspectives on counseling psychology training experiences and how they perceive faculty members and supervisors can improve the quality of students’ training experiences. As Jenkins (2000) suggests, there may be significantly differing perspectives between Asian international students and faculty members or supervisors in regards to how to enhance training experiences of these students. It would be helpful to conduct qualitative research investigating how faculty members and supervisors experience training Asian international students and their perspectives on how to effectively provide satisfying training to these students. Future research could investigate how faculty or supervisors of international students believe international students successfully navigate their training experiences. Moreover, future research could examine faculty members’ and supervisors’ perspectives on what it is like to work with Asian international students and what is rewarding or challenging when training these students. Furthermore, future research could focus on pairs of faculty-student or supervisor-supervisee dyads who express great satisfactions with their relationships. Investigating exemplary faculty-student or supervisor-student relationships may offer useful insights as to how to cultivate satisfying relationships with international students.
In addition, the applicability of U.S. training must be explored and investigated through qualitative studies. Future research could address how current international students, who have opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills gained in the U.S., transfer their training to their home cultural context. Alternatively, research could target mid-career or late-career international professionals who received training in the U.S. and later returned to their home countries to work as counseling psychologists.

As mentioned earlier, participants of this study were predominately East Asian female students. Future research could explore how Asian male students experience U.S. counseling psychology training. Future research could also examine the training experiences of international students with diverse demographic backgrounds. For example, it may be important to reach out to international students who are from different parts of the world and/or who have multiple identities (e.g., sexual orientation and social class). Investigating international students with diverse backgrounds and multiple identities could provide in-depth understanding of within-group diversity of this population.

While the previous literature primarily focused on how individual international students adjust and acculturate to U.S. educational environments, the present study attempted to shift its focus by exploring what faculty members or supervisors could do to help international students navigate their adjustment and acculturation to U.S. educational environments. Although this study attempted to explore what participants hoped from the educational system (e.g., training programs), their responses tended to focus on what individual faculty members and supervisors could do to improve their training.
experiences. Future research could examine how faculty, supervisors, and students collaborate or work together in order to improve student training, foster positive faculty-student relationships, and promote effective supervision to international students in clinical training.

Conclusion

Participants in this study strongly wished that their voices would be heard by faculty and supervisors who train Asian international students. The majority of participants expressed their hope that the findings of the present study would reach faculty, supervisors, and training programs, so that those who train Asian international students could gain better insights about how these students experience counseling psychology training and learn ways to provide cross-culturally sensitive, satisfying counseling psychology training experiences for these students. One participant remarked that, “I would like to see the end results of [this study]....I think it’s really important that your work gets published and other people who...want to learn about international students have specifics they can look at.” Another participant concurred that “I’m hoping that this kind of research will be publicized, and give an opportunity [for] American institutions to improve their [counseling psychology] programs.” A different participant stated that, “I want you to send out [findings of this] research to every single training director” in the U.S. so that they would have an opportunity to hear the voices of Asian international students.
Previously, neither the training experiences of Asian international students in counseling psychology nor the methods to best provide such training to these students have been fully examined through empirical research. Findings of this study offer practical, concrete, and valuable suggestions and recommendations for faculty, supervisors, and training programs to consider when training Asian international students. Hearing the voices of Asian international students in counseling psychology is critically important, and can enrich the quality of training programs. My hope is that faculty and supervisors will utilize findings of this study for starting conversations not only among those who provide training, but also with Asian international students. Participants spoke with strong emotion about their wish for more frequent communication in faculty-student and supervisor-supervisee interactions and relationships. It is important for faculty, supervisors, and Asian international students to collaboratively create mutually satisfying training experiences with one another. While keeping cultural differences as well as the power differential between faculty/supervisors and students in mind, when faculty and supervisors openly dialogue with Asian international students, the training experiences of these students are significantly improved.
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Appendix A

Recruitment 1: Research Invitation for Listservs
Dear colleagues,

I am contacting you to request your help in recruiting participants for a study of Asian international students’ training experiences in counseling psychology programs in the U.S. I am a Japanese female international doctoral student in counseling psychology at Western Michigan University. This study will be supervised by my dissertation chairperson, Dr. James Croteau.

I would deeply appreciate it if you would share this research invitation with doctoral students in counseling psychology programs that you may know who may be appropriate for this study. If you are a current international student or recent international graduate, please read the research invitation below and consider participating. This study has been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at Western Michigan University.

Instructions: Please copy the invitation below, paste into a new e-mail message, and send to potential participants. Please use the title (in caps) below in the subject line of your e-mail. Thank you.

*******************************************************************************

SEEKING CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND RECENT INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES FOR RESEARCH

Dear international student,

Hello. My name is Miki Koyama, and I am a Japanese female international doctoral student in counseling psychology at Western Michigan University. You are invited to participate in a study of training experiences of Asian international students in U.S. counseling psychology programs. Each participant will have an opportunity to reflect on and talk about what it is like to be an Asian international student.

You are eligible for this study if you meet all of the following criteria.

1) You identify yourself as a current or former international student from an East or Southeast Asian country.
2) You are currently enrolled in or have graduated from an APA-accredited counseling psychology doctoral program in the U.S.
3) You have trained in your program for at least one year or you have graduated from your program within two years.

Participation in this study is voluntary and will involve a brief background questionnaire and two phone or in-person interviews. The phone or in-person interviews will last approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. Each participant will receive a $20 gift certificate. If you are interested in participating, would like to know more details, and/or have any questions about this study, please contact me at mkoyama08@gmail.com.

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Sincerely,

Miki Koyama
Doctoral Candidate in the Counseling Psychology Program
Western Michigan University
Appendix B

Recruitment 2: Research Invitation for ICPC Attendees
Dear ICPC attendee,

(Choose one of the following introductory statements in order to personalize this invitation.)

Option 1. Hello! It was a pleasure to meet you at the International Counseling Psychology Conference in Chicago in March, 2008.

Option 2. Hello! It was a wonderful learning opportunity for me to attend _____ (e.g., your presentation, your working group, or your poster presentation) at the International Counseling Psychology Conference in Chicago in March, 2008.

Option 3. I am contacting you because of your attendance at the International Counseling Psychology Conference in Chicago in March, 2008 as well as your interest in issues pertaining to international students and/or international psychology.

I would like to request your help in recruiting participants for a study of Asian international students' training experiences in counseling psychology programs in the U.S. I am a Japanese female international doctoral student in counseling psychology at Western Michigan University. This study will be supervised by my dissertation chairperson, Dr. James Croteau.

I would deeply appreciate it if you would share this invitation with doctoral students in counseling psychology programs that you may know who may be appropriate for this study. If you are a current international student or recent international graduate, please read the research invitation below and consider participating. This study has been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at Western Michigan University.

Instructions: Please copy the invitation below, paste into a new e-mail message, and send to potential participants. Please use the title (in caps) below in the subject line of your e-mail. Thank you.

******************************************************************************

SEEKING CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND RECENT INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES FOR RESEARCH

Dear international student,

Hello. My name is Miki Koyama, and I am a Japanese female international doctoral student in counseling psychology at Western Michigan University. You are invited to participate in a study of training experiences of Asian international students in U.S. counseling psychology programs. Each participant will have an opportunity to reflect on and talk about what it is like to be an Asian international student.
You are eligible for this study if you meet all of the following criteria.

1) You identify yourself as a current or former international student from an East or Southeast Asian country.
2) You are currently enrolled in or have graduated from an APA-accredited counseling psychology doctoral program in the U.S.
3) You have trained in your program for at least one year or you have graduated from your program within two years.

Participation in this study is voluntary and will involve a brief background questionnaire and two phone or in-person interviews. The phone or in-person interviews will last approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. Each participant will receive a $20 gift certificate. If you are interested in participating, would like to know more details, and/or have any questions about this study, please contact me at mkoyama08@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Miki Koyama
Doctoral Candidate in the Counseling Psychology Program
Western Michigan University
Appendix C

Recruitment 3: Research Invitation for Contact Persons
Dear faculty member,

I am contacting you because of your interest in issues pertaining to international students and/or international psychology. I would like to request your help in recruiting participants for a study of Asian international students' training experiences in counseling psychology programs in the U.S. I am a Japanese female international doctoral student in counseling psychology at Western Michigan University. This study will be supervised by my dissertation chairperson, Dr. James Croteau.

I would deeply appreciate it if you would share this invitation with doctoral students in counseling psychology programs that you may know who may be appropriate for this study. This study has been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at Western Michigan University.

Instructions: Please copy the invitation below, paste into a new e-mail message, and send to potential participants. Please use the title (in caps) below in the subject line of your e-mail. Alternatively, you may provide me with names and e-mail addresses of potential participants and I will contact these individuals directly. Referrals can be made at mkoyama08@gmail.com. Thank you!

*****************************************************************************

SEEKING CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND RECENT INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES FOR RESEARCH

Dear international student,

Hello. My name is Miki Koyama, and I am a Japanese female international doctoral student in counseling psychology at Western Michigan University. You are invited to participate in a study of training experiences of Asian international students in U.S. counseling psychology programs. Each participant will have an opportunity to reflect on and talk about what it is like to be an Asian international student.

You are eligible for this study if you meet all of the following criteria.

1) You identify yourself as a current or former international student from an East or Southeast Asian country.
2) You are currently enrolled in or have graduated from an APA-accredited counseling psychology doctoral program in the U.S.
3) You have trained in your program for at least one year or you have graduated from your program within two years.

Participation in this study is voluntary and will involve a brief background questionnaire and two phone interviews. The phone or in-person interviews will last approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. Each participant will receive a $20 gift certificate. If you are interested in
participating, would like to know more details, and/or have any questions about this study, please contact me at mkoyama08@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Miki Koyama
Doctoral Candidate in the Counseling Psychology Program
Western Michigan University
Appendix D

Recruitment 4: Research Invitation for Personal Contacts
Dear Friend and Colleague,

I am contacting you because of your international background and/or interest in issues pertaining to international students and international psychology. I would like to request your help in recruiting participants for a study of Asian international students’ training experiences in counseling psychology programs in the U.S. I am a Japanese female international doctoral student in counseling psychology at Western Michigan University. This study will be supervised by my dissertation chairperson, Dr. James Croteau.

I would deeply appreciate it if you would share this invitation with doctoral students in counseling psychology programs that you may know who may be appropriate for this study. If you are a current international student or recent international graduate, please read the research invitation below and consider participating. This study has been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at Western Michigan University.

Instructions: Please copy the invitation below, paste into a new e-mail message, and send to potential participants. Please use the title (in caps) below in the subject line of your e-mail. Alternatively, you may provide me with names and e-mail addresses of potential participants and I will contact these individuals directly. Referrals can be made at mkoyama08@gmail.com. Thank you!

******************************************************************************

SEEKING CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND RECENT INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES FOR RESEARCH

Dear international student,

Hello. My name is Miki Koyama, and I am a Japanese female international doctoral student in counseling psychology at Western Michigan University. You are invited to participate in a study of training experiences of Asian international students in U.S. counseling psychology programs. Each participant will have an opportunity to reflect on and talk about what it is like to be an Asian international student with a fellow Asian international student researcher.

You are eligible for this study if you meet all of the following criteria.

1) You identify yourself as a current or former international student from an East or Southeast Asian country.
2) You are currently enrolled in or have graduated from an APA-accredited counseling psychology doctoral program in the U.S.
3) You have trained in your program for at least one year or you have graduated from your program within two years.
Participation in this study is voluntary and will involve a brief background questionnaire and two phone interviews. The phone or in-person interviews will last approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. Each participant will receive a $20 gift certificate. If you are interested in participating, would like to know more details, and/or have any questions about this study, please contact me at mkoyama08@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Miki Koyama
Doctoral Candidate in the Counseling Psychology Program
Western Michigan University
Appendix E

Recruitment 5: Research Invitation for Training Directors
Dear Training Director,

I am contacting you to request your help in recruiting participants for a study of Asian international students’ training experiences in counseling psychology programs in the U.S. I am a Japanese female international doctoral student in counseling psychology at Western Michigan University. This study will be supervised by my dissertation chairperson, Dr. James Croteau.

I would deeply appreciate it if you would forward this research invitation to doctoral students in counseling psychology programs that you may know who may be appropriate for this study. This study has been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at Western Michigan University. An informed consent form is attached to this e-mail message for your information.

Instructions: Please copy the invitation below, paste into a new e-mail message, and send to potential participants. Please use the title (in caps) below in the subject line of your e-mail. Alternatively, you may provide me with names and e-mail addresses of potential participants and I will contact these individuals directly. Referrals can be made at mkoyama08@gmail.com. Thank you!

*****************************************************************************

SEEKING CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND RECENT INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES FOR RESEARCH

Dear international student,

Hello. My name is Miki Koyama, and I am a Japanese female international doctoral student in counseling psychology at Western Michigan University. You are invited to participate in a study of training experiences of Asian international students in U.S. counseling psychology programs. Each participant will have an opportunity to reflect on and talk about what it is like to be an Asian international student.

You are eligible for this study if you meet all of the following criteria.

1) You identify yourself as a current or former international student from an East or Southeast Asian country.
2) You are currently enrolled in or have graduated from an APA-accredited counseling psychology doctoral program in the U.S.
3) You have trained in your program for at least one year or you have graduated from your program within two years.

Participation in this study is voluntary and will involve a brief background questionnaire and two phone interviews. The phone or in-person interviews will last approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. Each participant will receive a $20 gift certificate. If you are interested in
participating, would like to know more details, and/or have any questions about this study, please contact me at mkovama08@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Miki Koyama
Doctoral Candidate in the Counseling Psychology Program
Western Michigan University
Appendix F

Recruitment 6: Electronic Letter to Self-Initiated International Students
Dear __________ (name of international student),

Hello, my name is Miki Koyama. I am a Japanese female international student in counseling psychology at Western Michigan University. Thank you for your interest in participating in my dissertation study, "Training experiences of Asian international students in APA-accredited doctoral counseling psychology programs in the U.S." I am seeking participants who are willing to reflect on and describe their training experiences in depth. I am particularly interested in exploring what it is like for you to be an Asian international student, what aspects of your training experiences helped and hindered your learning, and what recommendations you would have for training programs in regard to how to effectively train and support Asian international students.

My hope is that this study will offer an opportunity for you to reflect on your training experience, allow your voice to be heard, offer valuable information regarding what it is like to be an Asian international trainee, and provide recommendations to counseling psychology programs on how best to meet the training needs of Asian international students.

Three criteria for being considered for this study:

1. You identify yourself as a current or former international student from an East or Southeast Asian country.

2. You are enrolled in or have graduated from an APA-accredited counseling psychology doctoral program in the U.S.

3. You have been in your doctoral program at least for one year or have graduated from your doctoral program within the past two years.

Procedures for participation in this study:

If you meet the criteria and are interested in participating in this study, you will be asked to complete a brief background questionnaire. This will be used for interview selection purposes and to understand research findings in context. If you are selected for this study, you will be asked to participate in two phone or in-person interviews (whenever possible, in-person interviews will be conducted). The phone or in-person interviews will last approximately 1.5-2 hours. After your first interview, I will e-mail you a brief summary of your personal narrative. As a part of your second interview, you will be asked to provide feedback regarding the accuracy of the description of your narrative. You will receive $20 gift certificate upon completing both interviews.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Minimal risks of participation are anticipated. The information you disclose in your interviews will remain strictly confidential.

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After reading this information, if you are still interested in participating, please reply to this electronic letter by providing your name, mailing address, and phone number(s) at which you can be reached. Upon receiving your e-mail, I will mail you a research packet containing an informed consent form, a background questionnaire, and a stamped, self-addressed return envelope. If you complete these forms and return them to me, I will notify you whether you are selected for the study. If you are selected, I will call and ask you to schedule the first interview. I will discuss with you whether we can arrange an in-person interview, and if so, a date, time, and place will be determined. If an in-person interview is not possible, a phone interview will be arranged.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding my dissertation study, please contact me at mkoyama08@gmail.com or (312) XXX-XXXX.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Miki Koyama
Doctoral Candidate in the Counseling Psychology Program
Western Michigan University
Appendix G

Recruitment 7: Letter of Invitation to Referred International Students
Dear __________ (fill in international student’s name),

Hello, my name is Miki Koyama. I am a Japanese female international student in counseling psychology at Western Michigan University. Your name was given to me by __________ (fill in referring person’s name). I am inviting you to participate in my dissertation study, “Training experiences of Asian international doctoral students in APA-accredited counseling psychology programs in the U.S.” I am seeking participants who are willing to reflect on and describe their training experiences in depth. I am particularly interested in exploring what it is like for you to be an Asian international student, what aspects of your training experiences helped and hindered your learning, and what recommendations you would have for training programs in regard to how to effectively train and support Asian international students.

My hope is that this study will offer an opportunity for you to reflect on your training experience, allow your voice to be heard, offer valuable information regarding what it is like to be an Asian international trainee, and provide recommendations to counseling psychology programs on how best to meet the training needs of Asian international students.

Three criteria for being considered for this study:

1. You identify yourself as a current or former international student from an East or Southeast Asian country.
2. You are enrolled in or have graduated from an APA-accredited counseling psychology doctoral program in the U.S.
3. You have been in your doctoral program at least for one year or have graduated from your doctoral program within the past two years.

Procedures for participation in this study:

If you meet the criteria and are interested in participating in this study, you will be asked to complete a brief background questionnaire. This will be used for interview selection purposes and to understand research findings in context. If you are selected for this study, you will be asked to participate in two phone or in-person interviews (whenever possible, in-person interviews will be conducted). The phone or in-person interviews will last approximately 1.5-2 hours. After your first interview, I will e-mail you a brief summary of your personal narrative. As a part of your second interview, you will be asked to provide feedback regarding the accuracy of the description of your narrative. You will receive $20 gift certificate upon completing both interviews.
Your participation in this study is voluntary. Minimal risks of participation are anticipated. The information you disclose in your interviews will remain strictly confidential.

After reading this information, if you are still interested in participating, please reply to this electronic letter by providing your name, mailing address, and phone number (s) at which you can be reached. Upon receiving your e-mail, I will mail you a research packet containing an informed consent form, a background questionnaire, and a stamped, self-addressed return envelop. If you complete these forms and return them to me, I will notify you whether you are selected for the study. If you are selected, I will call and ask you to schedule the first interview. I will discuss with you whether we can arrange an in-person interview, and if so, a date, time, and place will be determined. If an in-person interview is not possible, a phone interview will be arranged.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding my dissertation study, please contact me at mkoyama08@gmail.com or (312) XXX-XXXX.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Miki Koyama
Doctoral Candidate in the Counseling Psychology Program
Western Michigan University
Appendix H

The Background Questionnaire
If you would like to be considered for participation in two interviews concerning training experiences of Asian international doctoral students in APA-accredited counseling psychology programs in the U.S., please complete this background questionnaire, sign the enclosed informed consent form, and return both documents in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. The information you provide below will be kept strictly confidential and will be used only for interview selection purposes as well as to understand/describe research findings in context. Thank you for your consideration! Fill in the blank or circle the appropriate responses.

1. Pseudonym: ______________

2. Age: ______

3. Gender: Female Male Transgender/Gender Variant


5. Ethnicity: ______________

6. Primary/Fluent Languages: ________________________________

7. Current Relationship Status: Single In Committed Relationship Married Other________

8. Sexual Orientation: Bisexual Gay Lesbian Heterosexual Other_____

9. Geographical Location: Midwest Northeast South West Other_____

10. When Did You Start Your Ph.D. Program?: (e.g., Fall 2000) _________

11. When Did You Graduate From Your Ph.D. Program? (For recent graduates only): (e.g., Spring 2007) _________

12. Number of Years in the U.S.: ___________

13. Future Plan(s) After Graduation: Return home Stay in the U.S. Other_____

14. The Degree of Certainty About Your Future Plan(s) After Graduation:

   Very sure Somewhat sure Unsure Very unsure

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Appendix I

The Informed Consent Form
I am inviting you to participate in my dissertation research project, which will examine training experiences of Asian international students in counseling psychology doctoral programs in the U.S. My interest in this research topic has been inspired by my own experience as an Asian international student, witnessing my Asian international friends’ training experiences, and exposure to the literature and research on international student issues. I hope that this study will offer an opportunity for participants to reflect on their training experiences, allow international student voices to be heard, offer valuable information regarding what it is like to be an Asian international trainee, and provide recommendations to counseling psychology programs to best meet the training needs of Asian international students.

The Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to understand and describe training experiences of Asian international doctoral students in U.S. counseling psychology programs and present recommendations about how to best meet the training needs of these students.

The Criteria for Participation: To participate in this study, you must meet the following selection criteria:

1. You identify yourself as an international student from an East or Southeast Asian country.
2. You are enrolled in or have graduated from an APA-accredited counseling psychology doctoral program in the U.S.
3. You have been in your program at least for one year or have graduated from your program within the past two years.

Research Procedure: If you meet the selection criteria and are interested in participating in this study, you will be asked to complete the enclosed brief background questionnaire and the informed consent form. The background questionnaire will be used for interview selection purposes and to describe research findings in context. The questionnaire will take you approximately 10 minutes to complete. If you are selected, you will be asked to participate in two phone or in-person interviews. The phone or in-person interviews are expected to last 1.5 to 2 hours each. My hope is to schedule these interviews about 2 months apart, although they could be scheduled 1 to 6 months apart. Interviews will be
audio-taped and transcribed by me or by a typist. After your first interview, I will e-mail you a brief summary of your personal narrative. As a part of your second interview, you will be asked to provide feedback regarding the accuracy of the description in your narrative. Also of great importance, I will share with you emerging collective themes across multiple participants. I will ask how these themes fit your experiences, how you may describe, formulate, and explain these themes, and if there is anything missing in these themes. The total expected participation time is about 4 to 5 hours across 2 to 6 months.

**Risks and Benefits:** Minimum risks of participation are anticipated. You may experience mild discomfort in recalling or revealing training experiences that are unpleasant or personal in nature. Potential benefits of participation include having an opportunity to reflect on your training experiences with a fellow Asian international student and contributing to a study that may inform faculty, students, and training programs in counseling psychology regarding Asian international students' training needs. As an incentive to participate, you will receive a $20 electronic gift certificate from amazon.com upon completion of both interviews.

**Confidentiality:** The information you disclose in your interviews will remain strictly confidential. Your real name will be masked by a pseudonym of your choice. Audio-tapes and transcripts will be identified with pseudonyms. From audio-tapes and transcripts, I will remove or replace names of people, schools, programs, geographical locations, and demographic information by general descriptors. Data will be stored on flash drives and on the hard drive of my computer. A password will be required to access the data on my computer. The flash drives, audio-tapes, background questionnaires, and transcripts will be stored in a secure locked filing cabinet accessible only to me. A list of participants, which contains corresponding pseudonyms, the informed consent forms, the background questionnaires will be stored in another secure location separate from the data. After data collection and analysis, audio-tapes and the list which contains your name and corresponding pseudonym will be destroyed. All other research materials will be retained in a secure locked filing cabinet for at least 5 years at the Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology at Western Michigan University. I will also keep a copy of these research materials for at least 5 years in a secure locked filing cabinet.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decline to answer any questions and to withdraw from participation at any time without any negative consequences.

**Contact Information:** This study is conducted by Miki Koyama, M.S., a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at Western Michigan University. This study is conducted under the supervision of James Croteau, Ph.D. at Western Michigan University. If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact Miki Koyama at (312) XXX-XXXX or mkoyama08@gmail.com, or Dr. James Croteau at (269) 387-XXXX or james.croteau@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair of
the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at (269) 387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at (269) 387-8298 if you have any questions or concerns regarding this study.

By providing your signature below, you indicate that you have read and understand the procedures described above, and that you agree to participate in this study, involving completion of a background questionnaire and two phone interviews. Please return this signed form to me in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. An additional copy of this consent document is enclosed for your records.

If the informed consent form does not arrive within ten days after the research packet is mailed, an e-mail remainder will be sent to you.

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.

Participant’s Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

Miki Koyama, M.S. ___________________________ Date ____________
Appendix J

The Follow-up E-mail Script 1
Dear ____________ (fill in the name of student),

Thank you for your interest in participating in my dissertation study, “Training experiences of Asian international student in APA-accredited counseling psychology doctoral programs in the U.S.” About ten days ago, a cover letter describing this study was sent to you by e-mail. If you have not received it, please contact me at mkoyama08@gmail.com or (312) XXX-XXXX. If you still are interested in participating but have not yet responded to the cover letter by providing your contact information (i.e., your mailing address and phone numbers), please do so within a week. No matter what your decision, I thank you for considering this study.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Miki Koyama
Doctoral Candidate in the Counseling Psychology Program
Western Michigan University
Appendix K

The Follow-up E-mail Script 2
Dear _____________ (fill in the name of student),

Thank you for your interest in participating in my dissertation study, “Training experiences of Asian international student in APA-accredited counseling psychology doctoral programs in the U.S.” About ten days ago, a research packet containing an informed consent form, a background questionnaire, and a stamped self-addressed return envelop was mailed to you. If you have not received it, please contact me at mkoyama08@gmail.com or (312) XXX-XXXX. If you have already mailed it, thank you very much! If you still are interested in participating but have not yet mailed in your materials, please do so within a week. No matter what your decision, I thank you for considering this study.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Miki Koyama
Doctoral Candidate in the Counseling Psychology Program
Western Michigan University
Appendix L

The Phone Script for Potential Participants Selected for the Study
Hello [fill in name], this is Miki Koyama. I am contacting you regarding my dissertation research about Asian international students in counseling psychology. Is this a good time to talk? [If yes, proceed with the script. If no, ask when I can call him or her back.]

Thank you for responding to the background questionnaire. Based on your responses, I would like to invite you to participate in this study. Are you still interested in participating?

[If yes],
I would like to set up a time for our first interview. The interview will last approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. I will e-mail you a pre-interview guide that may help you stimulate your thoughts. Do you have any questions?

[If it is an in-person interview],
When is a convenient date and time for you to meet in the next few weeks? How about [fill in date and time]? Do you have any place in mind in which we can meet? It will be important to talk in a place that can maintain your privacy such as your office. [Obtain an address and a direction of a place suggested. Also, obtain a phone number that I can reach him or her.]

[If it is a phone interview],
When is a convenient date and time for you in the next few weeks? How about [fill in date and time]? What is a phone number that I can reach you on the day of the interview?

Thank you for your participation.

[If no],
Thank you so much for your time and participation so far.
Appendix M

The E-mail Script for Potential Participants Not Selected for Interviews
Hello [fill in name], this is Miki Koyama. You expressed an interest in participating in a study about Asian international students in counseling psychology. I am contacting you to let you know that I appreciate your response; however, I will not be able to include you in the interviews. I selected a small number of participants with an aim to make my participants diverse, and unfortunately I am unable to interview everyone who expressed interest in participation. Thank you so much for your response and interest in this project.

Sincerely,

Miki Koyama
Doctoral Candidate in the Counseling Psychology Program
Western Michigan University
Appendix N

Confirmation Letter
Dear _____________ [fill in name],

Thank you for your participation in my dissertation study! I am writing to you to confirm our appointment on _____________ [date] at _____________ [time]. [If this is an in-person interview], we are going to meet at _____________ [location]. [If this is a phone interview], I will call you at _____________ [phone number]. I am looking forward to speaking with you.

I have enclosed a pre-interview guide that aims to stimulate your thoughts and help you prepare for the interview. Please take some time to review it prior to the interview.

If you have any questions about your participation, please feel free to call me at (312) XXX-XXXX or e-mail me at mkoyama08@gmail.com.

Thank you!
Sincerely,

Miki Koyama, M.S.
Doctoral Candidate in the Counseling Psychology Program
Western Michigan University
Appendix O

Pre-Interview Guide
I am interested in exploring your training experience as an Asian international student in a U.S. counseling psychology program.

Please take some time to review the following questions. This interview guide aims to help stimulate your thinking about your training experience. This guide will also help you prepare for our first interview.

- What is it like to be an Asian international student in a U.S. counseling psychology program?
- What positive, helpful, and/or empowering training experiences have you experienced?
- What discouraging or unhelpful training experiences have you encountered?
- What advice or recommendations would you like to give to counseling psychology programs in the U.S. in order to best serve and support Asian international trainees?

In addition, the literature has suggested the following areas as relevant to many international students. However, I will be most interested in learning about your individual and personal experiences whether or not they involve the areas below:

Adjusting to U.S. classrooms
Language
Social support
Financial concerns
Career concerns
Stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination
Transferability of training to your home country
Appendix P

The First Interview Guide
Hello ________ (fill in name of participant), this is Miki Koyama speaking. As arranged, I am calling to speak with you about your experience as an Asian international student in a U.S. counseling psychology program. Before we start talking about your experience, is there anything you would like to know about me?

First, I would like to ask you a few background questions. If you could keep your responses brief and concise, it would be helpful.

- Where did you do your undergraduate education (e.g., in your country)? What was your major? Where did you complete your master’s education (e.g., in the U.S.)? What field?
- Have you had work experiences before beginning your doctoral program? If yes, what did you do? How many years did you work?
- What initially motivated you to pursue your doctoral degree in counseling psychology in the U.S.?
- What stage are you at in your program? I would like to know which aspects of training you are currently working on, and what aspects of training you have completed.

Now I would like to ask you some more in-depth questions. The overarching question for this interview is “what has your training experience in a U.S. counseling psychology doctoral program been like for you?”

1. **Could you describe what it is like for you to be an Asian international student in a U.S. counseling psychology program? How have you experienced being an Asian international student?**

   Possible Follow-Ups/Probes:
   - What does it mean to you to be an Asian international student?
   - How has your cultural, ethnic, and international background impacted your training in the U.S.?

2. **Could you describe what and how training experiences have been helpful, important, meaningful, and/or inspiring to your learning and professional development?**

   Possible Follow-Ups/Probes:
   - In what ways was _________ (name an experience) helpful to you?
   - How did you feel when you had that experience?
   - How did your experience impact you?
   - Could you elaborate on your experience?
   - Could you give me some examples?
3. Could you tell me what kinds of training experiences have been discouraging or unhelpful to your learning and professional development?

Possible Follow-Ups/Probes:
- In what ways was ______ (name an experience) unhelpful to you?
- How did you feel when that experience happened?
- What did you do when that happened?
- Describe training experiences that you wished could have been different.
- Could you give me some examples?
- How did your experience impact you?

4. Have you ever given feedback or recommendations about your training program to university faculty or supervisors specifically related to supporting you or other Asian international students? If so, what did you share? What recommendations would you like to make to counseling psychology programs in the U.S. in order to offer the quality of training for and support Asian international trainees?

Possible Follow-Ups/Probes:
- What was it like for you to be able to give or unable to give feedback to your training program?
- In your opinion, what are strengths of your training program?
- What are areas that you believe need to change in your training program?

[May ask the following questions if these topics have not yet discussed by participants.]
You have not mentioned _____ (fill in topic). Is this a part of your training experience?

1. What kinds of classroom experiences have you had in the U.S.?

Possible Follow-Ups/Probes:
- Describe your experience with participating in classroom discussion.
- Tell me more about being silent during classroom discussion.
- What were the reactions of peers and/or faculty?

2. What is like to communicate your ideas/thoughts in English (e.g., writing academic papers, making presentations, conducting therapy, and teaching)?

Possible Follow-Ups/Probes:
- Describe your experience with writing academic papers in English.
- How have you experienced conducting therapy in English?

3. What kinds of experiences have you had with your peers and/or faculty?

Possible Follow-Ups/Probes:
- What are positive experiences with your peers and/or faculty?
What are negative experiences with your peers and/or faculty? Could you describe what happened? Give me an example.

4. What has your experience been in terms of paying for graduate school?

Possible Follow-Ups/Probes:
- How do you support yourself financially?
- Does your family support you financially?
- How is funding from your department?
- Does financial stress impact your training experience? If so, how?

5. What has your experience been in terms of planning and pursuing your future career? Where do you see yourself after graduation? What about five/ten years from now?

Possible Follow-Ups/Probes:
- What was your initial career plan?
- Has your career plan changed in the course of training? If yes, how so?

6. What are your thoughts about how well your training in the U.S. would apply to your home country? In your opinion, how relevant is your U.S. counseling psychology training to your culture?

Possible Follow-Ups/Probes:
- Do you have any examples?
- In what ways have your training program helped you prepare your future career plans in your country?
- [For those who have relevant work experiences in their home country], could you describe differences and similarities of working with clients in your country and working with clients in the U.S.?

7. How diverse is the student population in your program? Could you describe your experiences with diversity of your program?

Possible Follow-Ups/Probes:
- What is it like to be the only international student?
- What is it like to have other international students?
- How included do you feel in social situations?
- Have you experienced feelings of belonging?
- Have you experienced feelings of isolation?

8. Have you ever witnessed/experienced racism/discrimination/racial micro-aggressions? If yes, could you describe your experience?
Possible Follow-Ups/Probes:
How did you feel?
How did you respond?
How did your experience impact you?

9. Is there anything else you would like to share, which may be relevant to understanding your training experience?

General Probes

During the interviews, the following probes may be used when appropriate in order to elicit a more detailed and rich description of Asian international students’ experiences.

Tell me more about that.
Could you explain that more?
Do you mean ______?
Can you give me an example?
What was it like for you?
How did you feel?
How did that experience impact you?

Thank you so much for sharing your experience with me. I will contact you in a few months by e-mail or phone (depending on potential participants’ preference) about scheduling your second interview. Before closing this interview, I am wondering if you know anyone else who may be interested in participating in this study.
Appendix Q

The Second Interview Guide
Hello ________ (fill in name of participant), this is Miki Koyama contacting you to conduct a second interview about your training experience as an Asian international student in a U.S. counseling psychology program. My goals for the second interview are to check the accuracy of my understanding regarding your training experience that you shared during your first interview, ask follow-up questions, and invite your feedback on the preliminary data analysis. Prior to the second interview, I initially planned to e-mail you a summary of your personal narrative based on your first interview. However, I made a change to this plan.

Instead, I would like to orally present my understanding of your narrative by highlighting the essence of your story. Afterwards, I would like to ask your feedback about what I have presented to you. Then, I would like to ask you whether you have any additional relevant experiences or thoughts. Finally, I would like to share with you some themes that emerged for other participants and ask you if you can relate to these themes.

How well does the summary of your personal narrative that you just heard capture your training experience as an Asian international student in a U.S. counseling psychology program? Are there any important aspects of your training experience that are left out? If so, could you tell me about these experiences? [Follow-up with interview probes as necessary.]

Are there any additional experiences and thoughts that came up for you after the first interview or during the second interview? If so, could you tell me about these experiences or thoughts? [If not, I will check in with you in the end of this interview.]

I would like to share with you some experiences that other participants have shared. One theme was ____________ (describe a theme). [Engage a participant in discussion by using the following questions.] Repeat for all the themes.

Possible Questions:
Do you related to this theme? If yes, how so?
Do you think this fits into most Asian international students’ experiences?
Would you change this description?
How would you explain how this theme is expressed in your life?
Would you like to share anything else about this theme?
Appendix R

The First E-mail Script for Scheduling the Second Interviews
Dear [Name],

Thank you for your participation in the study of Asian international students in counseling psychology. I appreciate your involvement with our first interview. I am contacting you to see if we can set up a time for a second interview. The second interview will last for approximately 1.5 to 2 hours.

My hope is to conduct the second interview between [Month/Date] and [Month/Date]. I would appreciate it if you could let me know whether you are interested in the second interview and if so, your availability. I look forward to hearing from you.

No matter what you decide, I thank you for your time and participation so far.

Sincerely,

Miki Koyama
Doctoral Candidate in the Counseling Psychology Program
Western Michigan University
(312) XXX-XXXX
Appendix S

The First Phone Script for Scheduling the Second Interviews
Hello [fill in name], this is Miki Koyama calling about my dissertation study. Is this a good time to talk? [If yes, proceed with the script. If no, ask for a date and time to call back.] Thank you for your participation in the study of Asian international students in counseling psychology. I appreciate your involvement with our first interview. I am contacting you to see if we can set up a time for a second interview. The second interview will last for approximately 1.5 to 2 hours.

[If participants are able to continue their participation],
When is a convenient date and time for you in the next few weeks? How about [fill in date and time]? What is a phone number that I can reach you on the day of the interview? Thank you so much for your participation! I look forward to talking with you soon.

[If participants are unable to continue their participation],
Thank you so much for your time and participation so far.

[If I need to leave a voice mail message],
Hello [fill in name], this is Miki Koyama calling to schedule our second interview. I can be reached at (312) XXX-XXXX. I will also call you back. Thank you.
Appendix T

The Follow-up E-mail Script for Scheduling the Second Interviews
Dear [fill in name],

Thank you for your participation in the study about Asian international students in counseling psychology. About ten days ago, I contacted you by phone and left you a voice message to see if we could set up a time for our second interview. If you are still interested in participating but have not responded, please do so within a week. No matter what you decide, I thank you for your time and participation so far.

Sincerely,

Miki Koyama
Doctoral Candidate in the Counseling Psychology Program
Western Michigan University
(312) XXX-XXXX
Appendix U

A Map of This Study's Findings
I. Understanding Asian International Student Training Experiences: Asian International Students’ Collective Hope to Be Understood by Faculty and Supervisors

(Six essential themes that participants desire from faculty and supervisors)

- Recognize the significance of peer relationships
- Be mindful of the impact that Asian cultural backgrounds have on international students’ training experiences
- Understand the internal adjustment and acculturation processes of Asian international students
- Recognize the impact of using English as a second language
- Be aware of the impact of racism on Asian international students
- Be aware of Asian international students’ financial concerns

II. Providing Helpful Training Experiences for Asian International Students: What Faculty and Supervisors Can Do to Offer Cross-Culturally Sensitive, Satisfying Training to Asian International Students

- Listen to the voices of Asian international students
- Cultivate positive relationships and interactions with Asian international students
- Search for cross-culturally sensitive ways to accommodate the needs of Asian international students
- Address the applicability of counseling psychology training in the U.S. to Asian international students’ home cultures
- Address career development issues of Asian international students
- Appreciate the strengths and resiliency of Asian international students
- Recognize the benefits of recruiting Asian international students
Appendix V

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board Approval
Date: June 23, 2008

To: James Croteau, Principal Investigator  
   Miki Koyama, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 08-06-12

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled “Training Experiences of Asian International Doctoral Students in APA-accredited Counseling Psychology Programs in the U.S.” has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

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: June 23, 2009