ACADEMIC IDENTITY, MOTIVATION, AND SOCIAL SUPPORT OF ASIAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN U. S. HIGHER EDUCATION

Naeun Cheon

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Geneva Gay, Chair

Susan B. Nolen

Manka Varghese

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Naeun Cheon

University of Washington

Abstract

Naeun Cheon

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Professor Geneva Gay

College of Education

This study was grounded in situative theory and explored the academic identity, motivation for class engagement, and social support of Asian international students, and the interaction of these variables in U. S. higher education classrooms. The participants were seven Asian international undergraduate students from China and South Korea. Qualitative data were collected from interviews, classroom observations, and document analyses to provide in-depth descriptions of the participants' perspectives about their academic identity, motivation for class participation, and social support in and out of class. This comparative case study illustrated how international students negotiate their academic roles, identities, and engagement, and how their social support facilitates or limits these occurrences.

Three major findings emerged from the data. They were (1) contextual factors affecting motivations for class participation; (2) academic identity conflicts; and (3) isolated social support networks. Pedagogy, peer assistance, and classroom climate were identified as contextual factors that facilitate or limit motivations for Asian international students to engage in class activities. The participants had to negotiate conflicts between their prior cultural socialization and school

practices in their home countries and those of the host society (U.S.). The participants also had limited and isolated social support networks with U.S. faculty and peers because their relationships did not go beyond the classroom. However, the findings showed that the social support networks with co-nationals and other Asian international peers provided emotional and informational support. Recommendations for future research and practices related to educating students like the international participants in this study, and those from other countries also are provided.

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DEDICATION

For God who knows better than I

For my mom and dad

For my love, Byung Dae

For my sweet daughter, Joan

For all teachers and educators who teach international students

Chapter I. Introduction

Statement of Problem and Significance of the Study

As the world becomes more globalized, the number of international students has increased in U.S. higher education. The Institute of International Education (IIE) (2018) defines an international student as anyone studying temporarily in U.S. colleges or universities and holding a F (student) or J (exchange visitor) visa. Recent statistics show that the United States continues to be the leading country in attracting international students. According to IIE (2018) reports, 1,094,972 international students studied at U.S. colleges and universities in 2017/18 and this number reached a new record high. The top three countries of origin of international students to the U. S. are China, India, and South Korea, accounting for approximately 56 percent of the total enrollment (IIE, 2018).

This increasing trend makes it essential to educate for and practice global citizenship. To be specific, Crose (2011) argued that learning with and from international students is important in the global marketplace where cross-cultural relationships and understandings are needed. International students bring diverse cultural knowledge and experiences to the higher education classroom that can contribute to developing intercultural understanding. J. J. Lee (2015) stated that international students bring many other contributions and benefits to U.S. colleges and universities as well. Their higher tuitions and fees, along with living expenses are significant financial contributions. According to IIE (2018), international students and their dependents contributed approximately $42.4 billion to the U.S. economy in 2017, with over 80 percent coming from sources outside the United States, including funding from personal, family, their home country governments, and sending universities. Several other studies confirm that "international students have become vital to the United States in maintaining its competitive

edge in areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)" (J. J. Lee, 2015, p. 106). Furthermore, these "international students provide a wealth of cultural knowledge and diverse perspectives that are vital in preparing future citizens to compete successfully in the global economy" (J. J. Lee, 2015, p. 106).

Yet, many research studies have reported that international students experience challenges in U. S. higher education. The dropout rate for international students is significantly higher than that of host nationals (Westwood & Barker, 1990). The motivation of international students tends to decrease during and after the cross-cultural transition (McInerney & King, 2012), even though they seem to be highly motivated for academic learning before the transition since they usually come to the U.S. to gain a better education. McInerney and King (2012) attributed this motivational decline to "the differences in sociocultural norms between the home and host cultures, the variety of stressors that international students face, and the potential impact of stereotyping and discrimination" (p. 205). In further explaining marginalization and discrimination as reasons for the reduction of motivation of international students, Engberg (2004) suggested that, "few colleges and universities [are] prepared for the inherent challenges in educating such a diverse population of college students" (p. 473).

Other studies (Brender, 2004; Lane, 2002; J. J. Lee, 2005, 2007; MacWilliams, 2004; McMurtie, 2001; Mullins, Quintrell, & Hancock, 1995) have shown that international students face discrimination and hostility in U.S. higher education. For example, J. J. Lee (2015) noted that international students are often categorized mistakenly with domestic students of color, and their specific challenges of studying in another country are frequently marginalized or ignored. By using "neo-racism" as a theoretical framework, Lee and Rice (2007) found that international

students are discriminated against and excluded based on their cultures and national origin. They concluded that discrimination based on cultural attributes and national origins functions to maintain racial hierarchies of oppression, and cultural and national superiority. Glass, Buus, and Braskamp (2013) also confirmed the findings of previous studies in reporting that international students experience a "lack of sense of community and low-quality faculty-student interactions" (p. 3). A sense of belonging is one of the factors foretelling students' academic success, and it correlates positively with college persistence in U.S. students (Hausmann, Ye, Schofield, & Woods, 2009). The fact that international students do not feel a strong sense of community and feelings of belonging to their institutions suggests that social isolation may negatively impact their college persistence and academic success.

Research also indicates that international students from Asia, who comprise the largest group attending US higher education, encounter greater difficulties and discriminations than students from Western Europe and other English-speaking countries in the areas of language, social integration, academic teaching and learning, finances, housing accommodation, different cultural norms, acculturation stresses, making friends, and homesickness (Abe, Talbot, & Geelhoed, 1998; J. J. Lee, 2005, 2007, 2015; J. Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004). Many studies point out that Asian international students tend to struggle with linguistic and cultural challenges from collectivism versus individualism. This finding is supported by Fritz, Chin, and DeMarinis (2008) whose research showed that Asian students find it harder to handle the new language (English) and to make new friends than students from North America and Europe. Similarly, Fuentes (2012) stated, "ELs [English Learners] who may have lacked English language proficiency, familiarity with the American schooling system, and the necessary cultural capital [are] likely to have difficulty in attaining success" (p. 232) in college than native English

students. An English learner participant in Fuentes' study stated that "multilingual students' knowledge was viewed as deficient" (p. 228) simply because of lack of English proficiency.

In addition to positioning international students as culturally and linguistically deficient, several studies (e.g. DiAngelo, 2006; G. Lee, 2009) have shown that Asian international students are often silenced and marginalized in class as "a necessary backdrop, a backdrop that reinforced the rightful place of the White students in the classroom and their sense of entitlement to all the space and resources available in that context" (DiAngelo, 2006, p. 1997). DiAngelo (2006) argued that even in the classroom where Asian international students were the majority, White students and the attention that they receive are normalized. They and White instructors were presented as neutral, thereby perpetuating a Whiteness framework "within which the voices and perspectives of the international students were deemed irrelevant" (DiAngelo, 2006, p. 1997). Furthermore, by "positioning the international students as culturally deficient rather than exploring how they might have been silenced, the problem is located with them" (DiAngelo, 2006, p. 1994). This implies that more critical attention needs to be paid to Asian international students' academic experiences in host institutions.

Many studies have revealed that identity and motivation are key components that influence students' academic experiences, academic achievement, and successful learning (Greeno & the Middle School Mathematics Through Applications Project Group, 1998; Hand & Gresalfi, 2015; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Examining the identities and motivations of Asian international students is imperative to identify how they navigate cross-cultural transitions and how local contexts facilitate or obstruct their feelings of identity, affinity, and academic efficacy. The results could provide teachers of international students with insights on how newcomers from different cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds interact with their academic

communities at host institutions, and how to help boost their learning and engagement in these new academic environments.

Sociocultural theorists have conceptualized identities and motives as social (Gee, 2001; Greeno et al., 1998; Greeno & Gresalfi, 2008; Hand & Gresalfi, 2015; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Nasir, 2002; Nolen & Ward, 2008; Nolen, Ward, & Horn, 2011; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995; Wenger, 1998), shifting, multiple, sometimes contradictory, and jointly constructed through negotiations and social interactions among individuals and practices, relationships, cultural contexts, and learning environments. In particular, recent research studies examine the intersections of identity and motivation to better understand the learning experiences of students and facilitate their engagement in learning. In other words, learning experiences can connect students' identification as members of academic communities with classroom practices. This is possible because "academic socialization is not simply a matter of acquiring pregiven knowledge and sets of skills but involves a complex process of negotiating identities, cultures, or power relations" (Morita, 2004, p. 574-575).

This study considered classrooms in which the process of negotiation happens as *figured worlds* (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998), that produce learning practices as contextual resources with which international students can identify, and within which they can construct a sense of self in relation to the practices. Further, this "identification becomes an important process in explaining motivation to learn" (Nolen, Horn, & Ward, 2015, p. 237). This situative framework illuminates that positive socializing experiences with members in the classroom may provide more opportunities for Asian international students to better identify and engage with the community of learning practices. This identification with the community of practices can facilitate their motives for engagement in learning and the process of

internalization of the motives from the learning practices as well as vice versa, which can affect the process of their identification again, getting them to strongly identify with the practices. Despite the importance of studying identities and motivations transition for successful learning and engagement of international students, little is known about how these cross-cultural transitions affect Asian students' identities and motivations, and the intersections of these two variables.

According to Bevis (2002), responsibility is placed entirely on individual international students to adjust or adapt to the host society rather than on institutions to provide appropriate social and intellectual target-specific support to facilitate the academic success and psycho-emotional engagement of international students. Research confirms that social support and quality of campus life are strong predictors of successful student adjustment, lower acculturative stress, and higher academic achievement regardless of demographic variables (Chavajay, 2013; J. Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992; Sullivan & Kashubeck-West, 2015; Trice, 2004; Westin, 2007; Ye, 2006; Yusoff & Othman, 2011; Zhang, 2012). For example, McInerney and King (2012) found that "students who have a higher degree of social support may be buffered from motivational declines during the transition" (p. 224). Also, social support from host nationals correlated positively with academic success and lowered the probability of dropping out of academic programs for international students (Westwood & Barker, 1990, p. 260). Social support from instructors and host national peers is very important for international students because they are far away from their traditional social networks such as families, relatives, and friends at home, and culturally familiar rituals and routines. Yet, many international students are isolated from host nationals (Arthur, 1997; Mestenhauser, 1998; Trice 2004, 2007).

Despite the importance of social supports for international students, exactly how social supports are experienced with faculty, teaching assistants, and peers in U.S. higher education for Asian international students, as well as implications for intersections of identity and motivation have been under-researched and under-acknowledged in educational research and scholarship. The purpose of this study was to fill this void by exploring Asian international students' academic learning, academic identity, and motivation for actual engagement in academic pursuits, and the nature of their social support networks in U.S. higher education. Social support cannot be directly equated to social capital, it can provide resources for social capital (M. Lee, 2010). Therefore, this study explored social support networks as part of the social capital that Asian international students have (or do not have) in U. S. higher education.

Exploring academic socialization of international students through analysis of their social support networks connected to examining how they identified with members of academic communities and classroom practices. To do this, situative theory was used to help explain the intersections of identities and motivations of Asian international students, and the interactions among their identities, motivations, and social supports (e.g. when social support networks are provided to them, what happens relative to their identification with and motivation for learning practices.).

Summary

This chapter introduced some reasons for studying the academic identity, motivation for class participation, and social support networks of Asian international students in US higher education. Previous scholars contended Asian international students experience a lot of challenges and discriminations after transitioning to U.S. higher education. Yet, some notable gaps exist in research on how academic identity and motivation for class participation of Asian

international students interact with each other, and how social support facilitates or hinders their success in negotiating and navigating learning practices in U.S. colleges and universities. The benefits of incorporating ideas and concepts from situative theory and sociocultural perspectives in creating a comprehensive understanding of Asian international students' academic experiences in the United States also were presented.

Chapter II. Review of Related Research and Scholarship

Research and scholarship about identities, motivation, and social support and social capital of international students in U. S. higher education are reviewed in this chapter. This review explains where and how this study is placed among the related scholarship, and how and why identity, motivation, and social support of Asian international students should be explored. A guiding assertion is international students, faculty, teaching assistants, and peers jointly construct classroom communities of practice that either facilitate or obstruct feelings of identity, affinity, and academic efficacy among international students.

Identity and Motivation of International Students

Although the number of international students has been increasing in U.S. higher education, international students face discrimination and hostility in U.S. higher education and experience a lack of sense of belonging to their institution and low quality faculty-student relationship (Brender, 2004; Glass, Buus, & Braskamp 2013; Lane, 2002; J. J. Lee, 2005, 2007, 2015; MacWilliams, 2004; McMurtie, 2001; Mullins, Quintrell, & Hancock, 1995). Particularly, Asian international students from non-English speaking countries encounter greater difficulties and discriminations than students from Western Europe and other English-speaking countries (Abe, Talbot, & Geelhoed, 1998; Fritz, Chin, & DeMarinis, 2008; J. J. Lee, 2005, 2007, 2015; J.

Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004). Asian international students are often positioned as culturally and linguistically deficient and silenced and marginalized in the classroom (DiAngelo, 2006; G. Lee, 2009).

Some researchers have studied identity and motivation for learning engagement of international students with personal and developmental perspectives. For example, Abdullah, Bakar, and Mahbob (2012) studied student personalities in relation to their class involvement. In their research, international students who actively participate in class have a high degree of self-efficacy and responsibility; like to read; like to question; make early preparations; and love to get attention in class actively participated. On the contrary, passively participating students have a low degree of self-efficacy, self-confidence, and responsibility; do not prepare well before class; are more into passive listening; have difficulties focusing in class; have no interest in learning or the topic being studied; are ashamed to ask questions; and fear showing their intelligence and getting scolded by instructors.

In a qualitative study of 22 international undergraduate students, E. Kim (2012) proposed a six-phase international student identity (ISI) development model. It includes pre-exposure (inheriting self); exposure (opening self); enclosure (securing self); emergence (disclosing self); integration (internalizing self); and internationalization (globalizing self). *Pre-exposure* means the identity international students develop before coming to U.S. college or university settings. Students in this phase "spend extra time striving towards the eligibility requirements for American universities while also learning about its culture, educational system, and language" (E. Kim, 2012, p. 108). *Exposure* occurs after international students arrive in the U.S. higher education institutions. They encounter and respond to new challenges and obstacles by using academic and cultural resources from their own heritage (E. Kim, 2012). Students in the

enclosure phase strongly hold on to the cultural values and heritages tied to their home identities, and do not get involved in activities with people from a different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds from their own. E. Kim (2012) found that the majority of international students in her research were in this phase, and suggested the following possible reasons:

> Some are concerned that American students and instructors might falsely attribute their limited English proficiency to academic incompetence, which acts as an impediment to acculturation. Enclosure students seek security through the comfort of familiar and peer bonds and the closeness of self-ethnicity and the country of origin. (p. 109)

International students in the *emergence* phase begin to form integrated identities through extended contacts with others from different groups on and off campus. According to E. Kim (2012), this is "a somewhat unstable time of self-disclosure, experimentation, search for new identities, and exploration of unfamiliar settings because of the identity conflicts they might encounter" (p. 109) due to "exposure to the pluralistic views of their multicultural surroundings" (E. Kim, 2012, p. 109), and maintaining their own heritages and cultural values. In the *identity integration* phase, international students resolve their identity conflicts through critical examination of their experiences in the U. S. E. Kim (2012) described this phase as "a process of reshaping and redefining their unique selves while embodying and integrating appealing aspects learned from others" (p. 109). During the integration phase, international students also

> create identity in their own way, only after reflecting on who they were in their home country, who they are now, and who they desire to become. Throughout the developmental processes, the identity integration students embody self-respect, do not bind themselves solely to parents or a limited group of peers, and establish relationships on the basis of interdependence. (E. Kim, 2012, p. 110)

The final phase of identity that international students may experience is *internalization*, which is the “most mature and cognizant state” (E. Kim, 2012, p. 110). They see themselves and others as global citizens and build their identities by recognizing and respecting the pluralistic values and benefits of “ethnicity, race, gender, nationality, culture, religion, sexual orientation, political ideology, moral values, behavioral patterns, and social class” (E. Kim, 2012, p. 110). This model is based on personal, cognitive, and developmental perspectives on identity foundation and provides a framework for how international students navigate their identity transitions and make sense of self as they deal with psychological and personal crises in adjusting to American higher education settings.

However, these personal and developmental perspectives on identity development and motivation put too much emphasis on isolated individual experiences and ignore the importance of social or sociocultural contexts (Hand & Gresalfi, 2015; Nolen, Horn, & Ward, 2015). I take the position that identity and motivation are not fixed personality traits, but must be understood within social relations that create or limit the opportunities and resources for Asian international students to identify with and to be motivated to participate in the community of their classroom practices. Since international students are a heterogeneous group, various social constructs and sociocultural contextual factors (e.g., race, ethnicity, language, culture, religion, socioeconomic status, country of origin, prior experiences in their home countries, host academic climates) can influence their identity development, and academic motivations and behaviors. This study draws on a sociocultural perspective and possibly provides better understanding of how contextual factors such as social support networks affect and interact with academic identity and motivation for class engagement of Asian international students.

Motivation is another variable that has received attention in research and scholarship on international students' adjustment and achievement in U. S. higher education. Zhou (2014) examined different types of motivation of six Chinese international students in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields in U.S. higher education. She explained that "An individual's achievement motivation is shaped by his or her perceptions about the values and expectancy about a task; that is, beliefs about why he or she should engage in the task and how likely he or she would succeed" (p. 178). The value of a task can be intrinsic, utility, attainment, or cost belief. Intrinsic value is the "inherent enjoyment that one derives from a task" (p. 178), while a utility or extrinsic value is "related to current and future goals" (p. 178). An attainment value "conveys the information about an individual's ability in meeting his or her professional, personal, and social needs" (p. 178), whereas a cost belief value is associated with "the negative aspect of engaging in a task, such as stress, fear of failure, and the lost opportunities that result from making one choice over another" (p. 179). Specific examples of these types of values Zhou found among the students she studied were "Intrinsic interest in research; overly broad and optimistic views of American doctoral education; high utility value of a Ph.D. in obtaining permanent residence; and high social cost of quitting" (p. 177). However, Zhou's study focused on individual perspective of international students and did not examine how their achievement motivation and valuing process are influenced and constructed by the social interactions situated within the social contexts of their learning environments at host institutions.

Fewer studies have explored international students' experiences, identification, and social interactions using sociocultural perspectives. Morita (2004) examined how international students experience their academic socialization and negotiate their identities. From a study of six

international Japanese students in a Master’s program in Canada, she found that some were unhappy with being rarely recognized as part of their classroom communities and being silent. Morita cautioned that some might easily attribute these Asian international students’ silence to their gender or cultural roles, yet, there are a wide variety of reasons for their relative silence: “In addition to linguistic and cultural reasons, they included limited content knowledge, personal tendency and preference, learning goals, identity as a less competent member, outsider or marginal status, role as a relative newcomer, role as someone with limited English imposed by others, and instructor's pedagogical style” (Morita, 2004, p. 586-587). Since these reasons are often context-specific, it is necessary to examine how the students negotiate their roles and identities while engaging with certain classroom contexts.

Considering many Asian international students from China and South Korea are non-native English speakers, linguistic difference and challenges from language barriers as well as racial, ethnic, and cultural differences should be considered in studying their academic identities and motivations. This need was supported by Fritz, Chin, and DeMarinis (2008) in their research findings that it is harder for Asian students to handle the new language and to make new friends than students from North America and Europe.

Although not focused in particular on Asian international students, Varghese (2012) explored linguistic minority students in postsecondary transitions to college. By using a Bakhtinian framework, she examined the significance and construction of agency in one linguistic minority student demonstrating how she understands herself, her life, challenges, and her decisions about post-secondary education (or staying in college) and how that is influenced by various kinds of available capital (e.g. institutional resources) and social structures. Similarly, Fuentes (2012) addressed how institutional culture in higher education influences students

perceptions and experiences as well as their decisions (e.g. agency). Specifically, Fuentes demonstrated the saliency of English as one of the major features of U.S. university culture. One participant in the study observed that "multilingual students' knowledge was viewed as deficient" (p. 228). Fuentes reported that English Learners in college were more likely to have difficulty in attaining success at U.S. colleges than native English-speaking students because they have lacked English language proficiency, familiarity with the American schooling system, and the necessary cultural capital. These two studies (Fuentes, 2012; Varghese, 2012), therefore, illuminate the role of linguistic minority students' agency influencing their understanding of experiences and barriers in college through their interactions with social contexts and provide some implications for understanding and examining the interactions between international college students and institutional contexts.

Although the handful of studies have examined identities and experiences of international students from a sociocultural perspective, there is little research examining the relationships between academic identity and motivation for learning engagement of international students and the relationship with their social support networks and social capital. Therefore, to address these knowledge gaps, this study examined how international students' academic identity transition, engagement, and social support relate to each other, based on a sociocultural approach.

Social Capital and Social Support of International Students in U. S. Higher Education

One way in which social capital is manifested is through social networks. Of these many different variations and types of social capital, this study focused on social support networks. Because most international students are away from their families, relatives, and neighbors or friends, social support that comes from relationships in school is very important to successfully achieve and engage in institutions in host nations. Therefore, of these various sources of social

capital and social support networks, this study focused specifically on relationships with faculty, teaching assistants, and peers in US college and university settings.

Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as:

> [T]he aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (p. 248)

Bourdieu also explained how social capital is produced, maintained across generations, and used to reproduce social structures of domination.

Putnam (1995) considered social capital as “social connections and the attendant norms and trust” (p. 665). He (2000) identified two types of social capital. First, bonding (or exclusive) social capital means intimate and strong relationships that provide emotional support as substantive support, which “reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups” (Putnam, 2000, p. 22) such as dense networks in ethnic enclaves. Second, bridging (or inclusive) social capital is relatively weak and shallow relationships that involve people across socially heterogeneous groups, which “is better for linkage to external assets and information diffusion” (Putnam, 2000, p. 22) such as the civil rights movement.

In a review of scholarship about social capital, Portes (1998) defined it as the “ability to secure benefits through membership in networks and other social structures” (p. 8). Whereas other definitions of social capital associate it with individual assets, Portes described it as a feature of communities and even nations. He considered negative social capital as restricted

access to opportunities and individual freedom, excessive claims on group members, and downward leveling norms.

Comparatively, social support is described as "support accessible to an individual through social ties to other individuals, groups, and the larger community" (Lin, Simeone, Ensel, & Kuo, 1979, p. 109). Expanding on this idea, House (1981) defined social support as "a flow of emotional concern, instrumental aid, information, and/or appraisal (information relevant to self-evaluation) between people" (p. 26). M. Lee (2010) considered social support as a part of social capital because social support provides useful resources for social capital.

Pinneau (1975) suggested that there is tangible, appraisal (or information), and emotional support. He distinguished them as follows:

> *Tangible support* is assistance through an intervention in the person's objective environment or circumstances, for example: providing a loan of money or other resources…. *Appraisal or information support* is a psychological form of help which contributes to the individual's body of knowledge or cognitive system for example: informing the person about a new job opportunity, explaining a method for solving a problem…. *Emotional support* is the communication of information which directly meets basic social-emotional needs, for example: a statement of esteem for the person, attentive listening to the person…. The term psychological support may be used to subsume both appraisal and emotional support. (Pinneau, 1975, p. 2)

Pinneau added that the major sources of social support are "family (including spouse, parents, children, and members of the extended family), teachers, work relationships (including

supervisor, peers, and subordinates), friends and acquaintances, and professional therapists (including counselors and social workers)" (p. 2).

Although not focused in particular on international students, Stanton-Salazar (2001) examined the importance of accessibility to school personnel of U.S.-Mexican youth as key forms of social capital. His study included 205 Latino students from six high schools in California. Using both ethnographic and statistical data, he argued that the social networks and supports for Mexican-origin adolescents were limited because of networks with school personnel. The majority of students in his research did not have connections with individuals who have important information about applying for college and could help and support them in dealing with academic and personal challenges. He concluded that the lack of supportive relationships in school negatively influenced their academic achievement and college attendance.

Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood (2013) explained two different perspectives prevalent in research on the social capital of international students. The *institutionalist perspective* suggests that international students should acquire social capital from social relationships with host nationals because these resources can provide knowledge of and facilitate adjustment to host cultures and institutions. Other researchers have reported that international students with positive social interactions with host nationals have higher levels of satisfaction with their educational experiences, while those who did not have social interactions with host nationals had higher levels of isolation, anxiety, and negative attitudes toward U.S. host nationals (Chen, 1999; Church, 1982; Klein, 1977; Schram & Lauver 1988). In a study of friendship networks and satisfaction levels of international students, Hendrickson, Rosen, and Aune (2011) stated, "international students with a higher ratio of individuals from the host country in their network

claimed to be more satisfied, content, and less homesick" (p. 292). This finding implied that friendship with domestic peers helps international students to adapt to host societies. Similarly, in a survey of 497 graduate international students about their social interactions with American peers, Trice (2004) concluded that these relationships provided international students with "crucial access to key institutional resources and opportunities according to social capital theory" (p. 675). Furthermore, "students who socialized with Americans the most functioned comfortably in the American culture, socialized with students from other countries, and participated in campus cultural events" (p. 671).

Other research and scholarship on the social capital of international students use *internationalist perspectives* in their analyses. This perspective highlights benefits that international students derive from networking with co-nationals. Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood (2013) criticized the institutionalist approach for de-valuing the social capital international students acquire from networking with co-nationals. They argued that social relationships among international students play a significant role in shaping their experiences in U. S. higher education. Research by Furnham and Alibhai (1985) supported these claims. They found that international students used social networks with co-nationals as a strategy to better cope with isolation from the host nationals. Similarly, Bochner, McLeod, and Lin (1977) explained that international students with social interactions with co-nationals expressed a higher level of confidence in their cultural identities. Consequently, they proposed three categories of international students' friendships according to their functions. These are a co-national network functioning to affirm and express the culture of origin; a network with host nationals functioning to facilitate academic and professional aspirations; and a multi-national network serving recreational functions. More recently, in his survey of 104 international students' perceptions of

receiving support, using the *Index of Sojourner Social Support Scale*, Chavajay (2013) identified two kinds of perceived social support among international students in the United States, which were socio-emotional and instrumental. He reported that international students perceive "greater socio-emotional and instrumental support from other international people than from Americans" (p. 667). This result supports the internationalist perspective, confirming that social networks of international students with co-nationals or other internationals are also important to help international students to adjust to host society as well as those with host-nationals.

For this study, I used both institutionalist and internationalist perspectives to address various functions and benefits of the social capital that Asian international students derive from diverse social networks including relationships with co-nationals, internationals from diverse countries, and host nationals. Both of these perspectives have implications for understanding how social support networks function for international students. This socialization of international students can provide information about how international students fashion their sense of self and internalize motives for learning. Within situative theory, socialization, identification, and motivation are inseparable and entwined with each other.

The faculty and teaching assistants of international students, along with social networks, are resources for possible social capital and the construction of communities of practice that members of classrooms negotiate. Several studies have examined their social interactions and relationships with faculty. For example, Hyun, Quinn, Madon, and Lustig (2007) found that having positive relationships with academic advisors reduced the amount of acculturative stress and emotional problems international students experienced. Other studies report that Asian international students often have difficulties in relating to their academic advisors. For instance,

Y. Kim (2007) found that Korean international students encountered barriers to establishing relationships with their American advisors due to discrepancies in how advisement and communication were conducted, passivity of Korean students in initiating the advisor-advisee relationship, and limited availability to and indifference of the advisors.

Even worse, some studies have shown that non-native English-speaking international students are often misunderstood, stereotyped, and discriminated against by teachers, based on deficit models of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences. For instance, in a study of three English learners transitioning to a community college, Harklau (2000) found that teachers often exhibited doubts about the students' academic and cognitive abilities, and regarded the international students' bilingualism as a disability or deficiency rather than a talent or strength for communicating in two languages. Some studies (Ramsay, Barker, & Jones, 1999; Tompson & Tompson, 1996) also reported that college and university faculty regard the silence of international students as disengagement and complain that they are not fully participating in class discussions.

Therefore, several knowledge gaps in social capital and support networks for Asian international students in relation to their motivation for academic engagement and identity emerged from this selected review of research and scholarship. First, there is little research that examines Asian international students' social support networks in U. S. higher education in a holistic way, involving relationships with their faculty, staffs (or teaching assistants), American peers, and international peers. Most previous scholarship focuses mainly on only one aspect, such as peer friendships or relationships with teachers. This study included the social support networks of Asian international students that include faculty and other instructional personnel, as

well as different types of peers. Also, considering that social support networks from relationships with diverse groups of people may have different effects for international students, this study addressed how having international teaching assistants affects Asian international students' identity, learning, and academic engagement.

Another gap in the existing research and scholarship is the absence of the interaction among social support networks, academic identity, and academic motivation and engagement. To address this gap, this study used a situative approach in examining how international students develop their own self-understanding and motives for learning in response to their assigned social relationships with faculty, teaching assistants, and peers in classroom interactions and social contexts.

Theoretical Framework

Situative theory provided the theoretical framework for examining the academic identity, motivation, and social support networks of Asian international students. In this study, I described the academic identity and motivation of Asian international students and provided snapshots of the intersections of their academic identity and motivation for class engagement. I used some aspects on Hand's and Gresalfi's (2015) concept of identity as "a joint accomplishment between individuals and their interactions with norms, practices, cultural tools, relationships, and institutional and cultural contexts" (p. 190). This concept is characterized by "what someone does in a particular activity is always done in relation to what one has opportunities to do and the personal resources that one brings from repertoires of practices developed in other activities" (p. 191). This study focused on academic identity of international as students and learners in U. S. higher education, exploring how their sense of self was navigated during cross-cultural interactions with new educational contexts in host institutions. Asian international students'

academic identities are multidimensional, including racial, national, and academic factors. These identities are fluid and complex in relation to race, ethnicity, language, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, and learning experiences. Therefore, since some explanations of their academic experiences in relation to identities need to be included, this study examined which intersecting identities were more salient for the Asian international participants in the classroom contexts of this study. While this study examined an aspect of multiplicity of identity development, but limited those multiple identities to a particular context, which is an academic setting.

This study focuses on the construction and effects of social support networks within communities of practice involving international students, and their faculty, teaching assistants, and peers in terms of how they are constructed, and their influences on academic identities and engagement in learning. Because situative perspectives provide "analyses focused on coordination of actions of individuals with each other and with material and informational systems" (Anderson, Greeno, Reder, & Simon, 2000, p. 12), social capital and networks can be understood as both the processes of social interactions with others, and the products of social negotiation of meanings. *Communities of practice* are used as conceptualized by Lave and Wenger (1991) as the specific concepts in which individuals participate—in this case, international students interacting with teachers, peers, and TAs in college classrooms.

Situative theory integrates two approaches to learning. One (traditional cognitivism) focuses on cognition and variables in individuals, and the other (interactionalism) emphasizes on social interactions and contexts (Nolen, Ward, & Horn, 2014). It allows for the examination of "what individuals bring to situations from their individual histories across multiple contexts and

the ongoing histories of specific communities of practice and figured worlds–including the participation of those individuals" (Nolen, Ward, & Horn, 2014, p. 169).

According to Holland et al. (1998), influences from intimate or personal worlds combine with collective cultural forms and social relations in spacing identity. These collective spaces are called *figured worlds*, meaning "socially and culturally constructed realm[s] of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" (p. 52). This explanation suggests that the classrooms of where Asian international students are members are comprised of a combination of their personal worlds and funds of knowledge from their cultural backgrounds, and the host institutions' social networks and styles of academic engagement, usually reflecting the majority, upper or middle class, and monolingual White cultures (Fuentes, 2012). In these figured worlds Asian international students often "experience values and situations inconsistent with their conduct and beliefs" (Fuentes, 2012, p. 221). This study explores how the social support networks of a subset of international students influence their positioning in figured academic worlds, and how they respond to this positioning with agency. In other words, how they author, resist, or negotiate their identities and interactions within particular contexts.

Holland et al. (1998) also suggested individuals negotiate two types of identities as they participate in various contexts and communities: figurative and positional. *Figurative* identities refer to "the stories, acts, and characters that make the world a cultural world" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 127). These are the formal roles with which participants are identified (such as student, teacher candidate, and cooperating teacher) as they moved among different contexts (Nolen, Ward, & Horn, 2014). *Positional* identities are described as "the day-to-day and on-the-ground

relations of power, deference and entitlement, social affiliation and distance—with the social-interactional, social-relational structures of the lived world" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 127). They have to do with "participants' relative status, power, and access to participation in the community" (Nolen, Ward, & Horn, 2014). With the focus on power structures and individuals in context, a situative approach to understanding human development "opens new avenues for understanding issues involving power imbalances and inequality" (Nolen, Horn, and Ward, 2015, p. 237).

International students face several challenges as they adjust to life in U.S. higher education that may result from unequal opportunities and power dynamics. Among these are making sense of an unfamiliar sociocultural environment, language barriers, racial and ethnic discrimination, estrangement, and cultural incompatibilities (Sheehan & Pearson, 1995). Asian international students in classroom are often described as non-native English speakers, foreigners, and native informants. Power dynamics in classroom practices are transmitted through social interactions that are sometimes marginalizing and othering. This study intends to identify some of these power dynamics among students, American or international faculty, teaching assistants and peers, and their effects on the academic identities and engagement of Asian international students.

According to situative theory, social networks, identity, and motivation are jointly constructed through social interactions in contexts of practice. Nassir (2011) noted that having interpersonal relationships with others is one of the important identity resources for students in constructing positive identities. This study examines how social interactions in classrooms relate to the identity formation of Asian international college students, as well as how international students act in, and contribute to the functions of classroom communities of practice.

Research suggests that providing support networks can help Asian international students to be more motivated and engaged in learning practice in classrooms. In their review of research on the motivation of international students, McInerney and King (2012) found that the motivation of international students tended to decrease during and after the cross-cultural transition. They attributed this decline to "differences in sociocultural norms between the home and host culture, the variety of stressors that international students face, and the potential impact of stereotyping and discrimination" (McInerney & King, 2012, p. 205). However, "students who have a higher degree of social support may be buffered from motivational declines during the transition" (McInerney & King, 2012, p. 224). These findings support the ideas of Ryan and Deci (2000) about the need for *relatedness*, which they defined as feeling "belongingness and connectedness with others" (p. 73) in social and learning contexts.

Although situative theory links identity and motivation, it is still rare to find studies that examine these connections explicitly (Nolen, Ward, & Horn, 2012). Yet, since identification is "an important process in explaining motivation to learn" as Nolen et al. (2015, p. 237) suggest, if Asian international students have strong social support networks and if they can identify with certain learning practices in classroom, they may be more motivated for, successful in, and satisfied with their classroom learning practices. This premise is supported by Nolen et al. (2012, p. 269) in their explanation that "In [situative approaches], individuals' identities—as both their senses of self and their dispositions and orientations in situations—are best understood within systems of meaning that also govern goals, objects of motivation, and individuals' relationships with both" (p. 269). The "systems of meaning" are the targets of focus in this study, along with goals of identity development, and increased engagement in classroom practices for international students.

The benefits and resources derived from social networks can provide "information useful in designing learning environments to support identification with a practice and [change] the individual's motive for learning it" (Nolen et al., 2015, p. 238). Given these possibilities, situative approaches can facilitate exploring concomitant and reciprocal operations among the social networks, identity, and motivation of international students in figured contexts. Asian international students may feel disaffiliated and disconnected from U.S. peers and professors because of different beliefs, customs, and traditions in relationships between students and faculty. International teaching assistants may bridge these gaps and ease related tensions by being cultural mediators for Asian international students; assist their adaptation to teaching styles in host institutions; and improve motivation to engage in classroom activities or discussions. Exploring these speculations within the framework of situative theory is another purpose of this research project.

Situative theory focuses on the co-constitutive nature of identity and motivation of learners and contexts (Nolen, Horn, & Ward, 2015). Therefore, this framework illuminates that academic identity and motivation for learning engagement of Asian international students should be understood as situated in specific contexts and changing over time. In the present study, Asian international students-in-context are the unit of analysis for understanding the socially constructive and mutually influential relationships among academic identity, and motivation for class participation, social support networks of Asian international students in relation to their contexts. First, this study examines the interconnections between academic identity and motivation for participation of Asian international students. Second, the present study explains how social capital and social support networks facilitate and limit motivation for participation

and academic identification. The interconnected relationships between motivation for class participation, academic identity, and social support are depicted in figure 2.1.

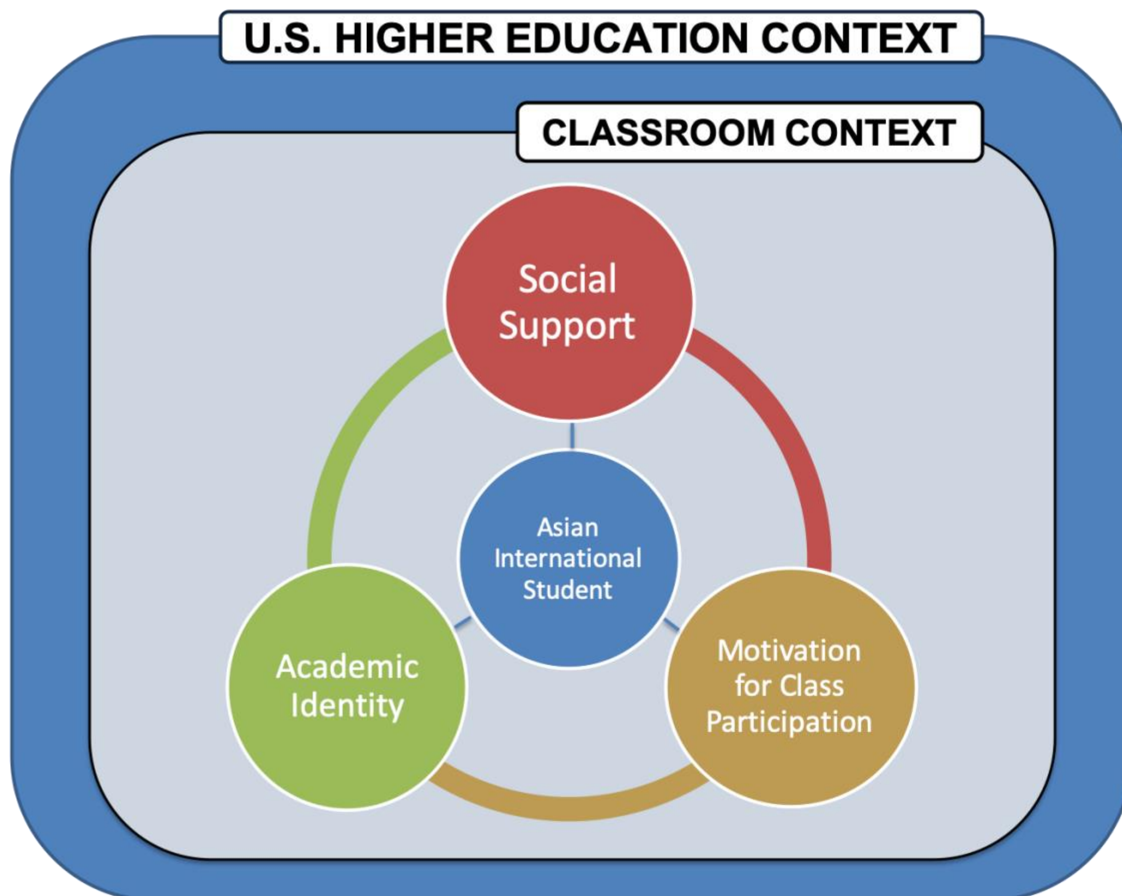

Figure 2.1. Inter-connections of Academic Identity, Motivation for Class Participation, and Social support of Asian International Students

Summary

The selected research and scholarship reviewed in this chapter focused on Asian international students' identity development, motivation for learning, social support networks, and social capital. Sociocultural views on identity development and motivation for learning were addressed as well as institutionalist and internationalist perspectives on social support networks,

and the social and cultural capital that Asian international students derive from diverse social networks with co-nationals, internationals, and host nationals.

This review revealed that few research studies exist that examine the social networks of Asian international students holistically, by including relationships with faculty, staffs or teaching assistants, American peers, and international peers. Furthermore, little research has been conducted on the interconnections among social support networks, academic identity, and learning practices of Asian international students in US higher education.

Chapter III. Methodology

Using a qualitative comparative case study method, this study explored the academic identities and experiences of some Asian international students. Motivations for class participation, and social support networks also were examined. This chapter begins with the research questions that were examined. Next, the positionality of the researcher is described, followed by an overview of the rationale for choosing a qualitative comparative case study methodology. The research setting and selection of participants are then described, followed by the procedures used in data collection and analysis.

Research Questions

The primary four research questions examined in this study are:

- Of the various multiple identities of Asian international students, which ones are most salient in academic settings?
- What motivates Asian international students to engage in learning practices? How do their cross-cultural transitions relate to their motivations?

- What kinds/types of social support do Asian international students receive from faculty, teaching assistants, and peers in U.S. college and university settings? How do these supports facilitate or obstruct academic learning of Asian international students?
- What are the relationships among Asian international students' academic identity, motivation for academic engagement, and social support networks?

Positionality

As an Asian international student in U.S. higher education, my own positionality should be examined throughout this study. Undoubtedly, my beliefs, values, biography, and perspectives affected this study in some ways. I was the human instrument of the research (Denzin, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Malterud (2001), "researchers' background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions" (pp. 483-484). Banks (1998) introduced a typology of cross-cultural researchers that included four categories. The *indigenous-insider* is the researcher who "endorses the unique values, perspectives, behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge of his or her indigenous community and culture and is perceived by people within the community as a legitimate community member who can speak with authority about it" (p. 8). The *indigenous-outsider* is the researcher who "was socialized within his or her indigenous community but has experienced high levels of cultural assimilation into an outsider or oppositional culture" (p. 8), with the values, beliefs, perspectives, and knowledge of the outside community. The *external-insider* is an "adopted" insider, who "rejects many of the values, beliefs, and knowledge claims within his or her indigenous community and endorses those of the studied community" (p. 8). The *external-outsider* has "a partial understanding of and little appreciation for the values,

perspectives, and knowledge of the [studied] community" (p. 8), often misunderstanding and misinterpreting of the community (p. 8). In conducting this research, I was both an indigenous insider and an indigenous outsider.

My academic and social experiences as a female, Korean ancestry international student in U.S. higher education led me to become interested in learning about the experiences and adjustments of other international students into their host country and institutions. By experiencing the shifts in my academic and social lives, identities, and motivations, along with transitioning to a new learning environment, I am an indigenous-insider to the Asian international student community. This gave me an advantage in building rapport with the research participants and in understanding their experiences and perspectives. On the other hand, I also was an outsider to the participants in the study who were not Korean. I was not a regular member of the class, who took the class for university credits while conducting this study as a researcher.

My personal journey to U.S. higher education has provided opportunities to reflect on my positionality while transitioning from being one of the mainstream Koreans in South Korea, to a racial minority, an other, and a foreigner in the U. S. I used to like presentations in class and I thought I was good at public speaking when I was in high school and college in South Korea. After coming to graduate school in the U.S., however, I faced a lot of cultural and linguistic barriers and challenges. I felt embarrassed when I had to say something in English since it took me such a long time to come up with one word after another word. The strategy I chose to avoid feeling humiliated in class in my first year in the U.S. was not to speak up and just smile, which, unfortunately, made me feel dumb and stupid as well. Adjusting to a new academic environment was not easy for me. In a learning context which valued responding to questions posed by

instructors in a quick and fast speed, a slow English language learner could never be the first person to answer.

To prove my academic ability, I had to spend much longer time in reading and writing alone than my American peers, thus, isolating myself from other social experiences and supports on campus. My academic (or student) identity shifted from an active presenter to a passive recipient in class. In the classes that required a lot of class discussions and public presentations, I was discouraged about engaging, and my motivation for learning decreased. After a few years, as my English language skills improved little by little, and as I became more accustomed to the academic and cultural contexts of my institution in the U. S., my confidence, academic identity, and motivation shifted in various ways. These experiences helped me to better understand the experiences, identity transition, and motivation of Asian international students who participated in this study.

Research Design and Methods

To investigate academic identity, motivation, and social support networks of Asian international students in U. S. colleges and universities, this study used a qualitative comparative case study method. Merriam (2009) noted that qualitative research allows researchers to "*understand* how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (p. 23). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) added that qualitative research examines "the socially constructed nature of reality" (p. 8), and "how social experience is created and given meaning" (p. 8). These attributes of a qualitative approach are consistent with the assumption of this study that the support networks accessible to international students are socially constructed through interactions, and these contribute to developing, negotiating, and navigating their academic identities, motivations, and actions.

Case study as a particular type of qualitative research is defined by Merriam (2009) as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 41). This means that such a research methodology describes and analyzes a phenomenon occurring in a bounded context (Miles & Huberman, 1994) intensively and holistically. In this study, the boundaries of the cases are seven Asian international students in a single classroom. The reason for choosing a case study approach was to explore the activity system and interactive relationships among social support networks, identity, and motivation as Asian international students interacted with classroom contexts and learning practices. According to Yin (1994), case study research methodology is particularly suited for situations where the issues of interest are closely intertwined with contexts. This research attribute is consistent with the assumption of the theoretical framework of this study (situative theory) that learning practices and classroom contexts affect participants' identity and motivation and vice versa (Greeno et al., 1998; Holland et al., 1998; McInerney & King, 2012; Nolen & Ward, 2008; Nolen, Horn, & Ward, 2015).

Merriam (1998) identified three other main characteristics of qualitative case studies. These are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. First, a case study focuses on "the way particular groups of people confront specific problems, taking a holistic view of the situation" (Shaw, 1978, p. 2). This feature of case study allowed this study to concentrate attention on the way Asian international students as a particular group develop their social support networks in relation to their academic identities and motivations in higher education classrooms. Second, a case study provides "a rich and 'thick' description of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29) by "includ[ing] as many variables as possible and portray[ing] their interaction (Merriam, 1998, p. 30). This description helped this study identify multiple variables and their interactions that contribute to constructing social support networks, identity, and motivation of

Asian international students. Third, the heuristic feature of case study research facilitates acquiring new understandings of the phenomenon and the relationship among variables under study (Merriam, 1998). This research technique facilitated developing new meaning of social support networks, academic identity, and motivation of Asian international students as they interact with each other, with contexts, and with learning practices. Furthermore, according to Merriam (1998), *cross-case* or *comparative* case studies that involve "collecting and analyzing data from several cases" (p. 40) enhance external validity and feasibility because the variation across similar and contrasting cases can make interpretations of the data more compelling.

Setting, Participants, and Other Sampling Decisions

This study was conducted at Western University (Pseudonym) (WU). It is located in the Pacific Northwestern region of the U. S., and is one of the universities and colleges that host the most international students to the United States. The composition of international students at this university reflects U.S. national statistics, which means that individuals from China, India, and South Korea account for the majority of international students. The majority of students at WU are European American, and the second largest group is of Asian ancestry. The composite students of color population include African, Latino, Native, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Americans, and international students. The faculty is predominantly European American, but does include some Asian, Latino, African, Native American, Pacific Islander, and multiple race ancestry individuals. The number of total university enrollment at WU was 54,223 in 2017-18. International students accounted for 7,356 of that total. The number of Asian international students was 6,186. The largest number of those were from China (3,983), the second largest was from India (796), and the third largest was from South Korea (493).

Purposeful sampling was used to maximize possibilities for answering the research questions by selecting information-rich cases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). This selection technique uses criteria essential to the purpose of the study in choosing the participants and sites to be studied (Merriam, 1998). Criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) was also used to access cases that meet some criteria to assure the quality of sampling people. According to Merriam (1998), two phases of sampling are needed for conducting comparative case studies. One involves the selection of cases and the other deals with choosing participants. The cases to be studied were seven students in a single classroom that included Chinese and Korean international students along with an Asian international professor, an Asian international graduate teaching assistant, and U.S. and international peers. The research participants were undergraduate students from non-English-speaking Asian countries (China and South Korea), and have a F or J visa. They had experienced some form of cross-cultural transitions and benefitted from their social support networks or encountered any discrimination or limitation in gaining access to resources or opportunities from social supports. To be included in the study, potential participants also had to have had meaningful academic experiences in U.S. higher education over at least 12 months. These selection criteria were intended to ensure access to information-rich participants to gain deep insights about the phenomena to be studied. A demographic summary of the research participants is presented in table 3.1.

Data Sources

Data for this study were collected through interviews, observations, and document analyses. For comparative case studies, collecting data from multiple sources help provide intensive and holistic descriptions and analyses of the cases (Merriam, 1998). According to Patton (1990), “By using a combination of observations, interviewing, and document analysis,

the fieldworker is able to use different data sources to validate and cross-check findings" (p. 244). There are five main data sources in this study: (1) three interviews and observation data of participants from the preliminary study exploring social support of Asian international students in relation to their identity and motivation for academic engagement; (2) classroom observations; (3) individual interviews with six Asian international undergraduate students from a single classroom and follow-up interviews with four of them; (4) interviews with the international professor, the international graduate teaching assistant, and American and international peers; and (5) document reviews.

Table 3.1. The participants of the study

Research Participants (Pseudonym)	Race/ Ethnicity	Nationality	Years of learning experience in the U.S. institution	First language	Second language	First Interview Date	Follow-up interview	Major	Minor or Double major
Mina	Korean	Korean	Over 9 years (Senior)	Korean	English	07/06/16 6:30 pm	07/26/16 5:30 pm	Social science	Double: Psychology
Minju	Korean	Korean	4 years (Senior)	Korean	English	06/25/16 9 pm	08/20/16 2 pm	Social Science	
Jina	Biracial-Korean Chinese	Chinese	5 years (Senior)	Korean/Chinese	English	07/22/16 10:30 pm	08/02/16 10 pm	Social Science	
Hao	Chinese	Chinese	3 years (Senior)	Chinese	English	07/27/16 8 pm	10/21/16 11 am	Social Science	Minor: English
Meng	Chinese	Chinese	3 years (Junior)	Chinese	English	09/30/16 3 pm	10/04/16 11 am	Social Science	
Mei	Chinese	Chinese	4 years (Senior)	Chinese	English	10/07/16 11:30 am	10/28/16 2:30 pm	Social Science	
Wei	Chinese	Malaysian	4 years (Junior)	English	Chinese	08/03/16 3:30 pm		Social Science	Double: Psychology

Trisha (TA)	South Asian	South Asian	Graduate Teaching Assistant	Ethnic language/English		07/29/16 11 am			
Prof. Mani	Asian	International	Professor	English/Ethnic language		11/28/16 3:30 pm			
Jessica (American Peer)	European White	American	Junior	English		10/17/16 Email		Social Science	

Classroom Observations

According to Marshall and Rossman (1989) observation is "the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (p. 79). The observation data provide a better understanding of what is happening in the participants' in-school support networks and academic engagement in classroom, as well as help triangulate data from different sources by comparing interview data with data obtained from observations (Merriam, 2009). With the approval of the teaching staffs and students, the targeted class was observed throughout a 10-week instructional period and 18 classroom observations were conducted. This entailed observing lectures, group discussions, group activities, watching video clips, and final project presentations by students. These observations focused on the observable aspects of the relevant dimensions of academic engagement in classroom (e.g., positioning, interaction frequency and type) of the Asian international participants and keeping field notes while conducting observations.

Each observation lasted for approximately 90 minutes to obtain information about the participants' learning experiences and interactions with contexts. The observations provided firsthand information about how Asian international students interact with the communities of practices in the classroom and with their faculty, teaching assistants, and peers, and about the relations between social support and engagement in learning practices. The interview protocols evolved from the resulting observation field notes.

Semi-Structured Interviews

After classroom observations, I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with the participants. The interviews were designed to determine how international students in US higher education perceive their identities and motivations in cross-cultural transitions, and to understand

their social capital, and social interactions with faculty, teaching assistants, and peers. The intent of these interviews was to gather descriptive data from the participants' own perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 2009). They also provided data that could not be obtained from observations and document analyses (Glesne, 1999). In other words, this form of interviewing allows a researcher to enter into the inner world of the participants and acquire in-depth understanding of their perspectives (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Patton, 2002). Follow-up interviews were conducted with six of participants to gain more information and better understand the narratives from their first interviews. Some examples of the interview questions (See Appendix D) are: "How do you identify yourself among multiple identities that you have?", "How do you engage in learning in this class vs. in other classes?", "What motivates you to engage in learning practices in the class?", and "What experiences do you have in relationships with faculty, TAs, and peers?"

Along with the new interviews, the three interviews and observation data of the preliminary study that was conducted between January 2016 and April 2016 were part of the data used to assure the procedures of this study. The pilot study included two Chinese international students and one Korean international graduate teaching assistant.

The international professor and international graduate teaching assistant of the course also were interviewed. Invitations were sent to American peers of the Asian international participants to include their voices and perspectives, but only one of them responded and provided comments to three interview questions via email. The questions for professor, TA, and peers are included in the Appendix E. Some examples of the interview questions are: "How did you interact with Asian international students in class?" and "Have you experienced any challenges in engaging with them in class?". The results helped to better understand how Asian

international participants developed their identities and motivation through socializing with various members of the class. These data also ensured consistency and reliability of the findings by cross-checking different perspectives (Merriam, 2009).

Document analysis

Documents collected included classroom handouts, curricular materials, and evaluation feedback comments from students. These documents were examined for insights about social supports that Asian international students receive from faculty, teaching assistants, and peers, and their academic engagement within the community of practice. They are part of the process of validating or challenging emerging findings from other data sources (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Merriam, 2009). Information derived from these artifacts, handouts, or assignments also helped to better understand the levels and depth of students' engagement in learning practices, or the struggles or challenges they experienced in working on the assignments and in following the progression of coursework.

Data Collection

The study lasted for nine months from March to November 2016. The prospective participants were contacted and indicated their agreement to participate through emails. Prior to their actual selection, potential participants were interviewed in person or by phone to determine their eligibility. They were ensured that their information would be kept confidential and an informed consent form was signed that included the purposes and procedures of the research, compensation and benefits, the use of the findings, non-disclosure agreement, risks and discomforts, and participants' rights. The participants were given a $5 Starbucks gift card as gratitude for involvement in the study. Since the number of participants was small and all were recruited from one university, they could not be considered representative of all Asian

international students in the United States. However, considering that WU is one of ten sites with the largest Asian international student populations in the United States, the data collected were a reliable source about international students' social experiences.

With the instructor's approval, I interacted with the participants as a researcher and one of the international TAs in class, and observed the classes in general in Spring quarter 2016 as a participant observer before recruiting participants. I recruited participants and conducted the initial semi-structured interviews between Summer and Autumn 2016. Along with some standard questions about their college experiences in relation to their identity, motivation, and social support, some interview questions posed were based on the observations conducted (See Appendix D). I observed the participants' classroom to explore their engagement and interactions with faculty, teaching assistants, and peers in classroom practices. The protocol used to guide the observations is presented in Appendix C. Field notes were made during observations about course curriculum, classroom activities, group projects, and interactions among teacher, students, TAs, and the participation and behaviors of Asian international students (all names and identifiers in the field notes were coded as pseudonyms). This information from observations was used in developing interview questions about Asian international students' interactions with their teacher, peers, and TAs, and for acquiring background information about local and curricular contexts of the classroom.

After the observations, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to collect information about the participants' learning experiences at the host institution, academic identity development, motivation for learning, academic achievements, and social support networks and relationships with faculty, teaching assistants, and peers. Each interview lasted for about 120 minutes. The follow-up interviews were shaped by information acquired during the initial

interviews. The interviews were conducted in person at a time and place conducive to the participants. The participants were interviewed about the areas covered by the protocol presented in Appendices, but not necessarily in the same sequence for all participants. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed for data analysis.

Data Analysis

According to Merriam (2009), “analysis is the process of making sense out of the data” (p. 175). In this study, the analysis of data was conducted “*along with* (not after) data collection” (Merriam, 2009, p. 269) since “data collection and analysis is a *simultaneous* activity in qualitative research” (p. 151). Considering this non-linear and on-going process of data analysis, this study used two stages of analysis—the within-case and cross-case. For the within-case analysis, data from the cases were used to convey an intensive, holistic description and understanding of each case (Merriam, 1998). All information generated by the interview transcripts, observation field notes, and documents analyses were collectively compiled. While reading through these data, codes were developed and organized into preliminary categories according to the research questions to generate “a comprehensive primary resource package” (Merriam, 1998, p. 194), called the *case study data base* (Yin, 1994) or the *case record* (Patton, 1990). The case record was used to identify emergent and recurrent themes or categories.

For the within-case analysis, open coding was used to “capture some recurring patterns that cut across ‘the preponderance’ (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 139) of the data” (Merriam, 1998, p. 179). Assigning codes to pieces of data was the beginning of the construction of categories. Preliminary codes or themes were derived from situative theory, research questions, and scholarship review. As Glaser and Strauss (1997) pointed out, however, “Merely selecting data for a category that has been established by another theory tends to hinder the generation of

new categories, because the major effort is not generation, but data selection" (p. 37). Open coding helped capture newly emerging themes from the data by inductively constructing categories. The data were first hand-coded during open coding, and subsequent coding work was conducted on ATLAS.ti, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software program. I looked back and forth over the entire transcripts, field notes, and marginal notes and comments (codes) to determine if or how they can be grouped together. This process is called *axial coding* (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). By doing this for each case, I kept in mind the list of groups of codes which were drawn from the data of the first case when I compared it with the code groupings of subsequent cases.

After completing the analysis of each case, a cross-case analysis was conducted. The purpose of this level of analysis is "[t]o build a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, even though the cases will vary in their details" (Yin, 1994, p. 12). Merriam (2009) described a cross-case analysis as "a unified description across cases, … [building] categories, themes, or typologies that conceptualize the data from all the cases, or … building substantive theory offering an integrated framework covering multiple cases." (p. 234). However, Miles and Huberman (1994) cautioned that "Simply summarizing superficially across some themes or main variables by itself tells us little" (p. 205). To avoid this pitfall, "the complex configuration of processes within each case [was examined to] understand the local dynamics, before ... [beginning] to see patterning of variables that transcends particular cases" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 205-206).

Triangulation, reflexivity, and member checking were used to increase the rigor of this study. According to Patton (1999), data triangulation involves using multiple data sources to improve depth and quality understanding of issues being studied. To gain multiple perspectives

and validation of data, this study collected data from different types of people including a professor, a TA, and an American peer as well as Asian international participants. Method triangulation includes using multiple methods such as observation, interview, and field notes to collect data about the same phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The consistency of the findings was established across data from the preliminary study, new interview transcripts, observation field notes, analytic notes, and documents reviews.

Reflexivity refers to "active acknowledgement by the researcher that her/his own actions and decisions will inevitably impact the meaning and context of the experience under investigation" (Horsburgh, 2003, p. 308). It is based on the premise that "knowledge cannot be separated from the knower" (Steedman, 1991, p. 53). Since I was aware that my own standpoint could influence the process and outcomes of the research, I kept a journal during the analysis process that recorded reactions to what was being observed and heard (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004).

Member checking involves getting feedback from informants during a research interview or at the end of the research to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of the study (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It can occur during the interview process as researchers restate, summarize, or paraphrase the information received from the participant to ensure accuracy. I tried to restate and re-check with the interviewees about their responses during the interviews. Member checking also can be done near the end of the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend sharing the analyzed data with the participants so that they can review them for authenticity. In this study, the participants were provided with a draft of the findings and asked to critically review them for congruency between the researcher's interpretations and the participants' comments (Creswell, 2007). After transcribing the interviews, generating

emerging themes, and categorizing the data, the participants were invited to review the data transcriptions and drafts to ensure that the descriptions captured their intended meanings.

Summary

This chapter discussed the research design and methods used to explore how Asian international students engage in learning practices in U.S. college classrooms. Four research questions guided this study. They were What are the most salient dimension of the various intersections of multiple identities of Asian international students?; What are the contextual factors to motivate Asian international students to learn and engage in learning practices?; What kinds of social support do Asian international students receive from faculty, teaching assistants, and peers in U.S. college and university settings and how do these social support networks facilitate or obstruct academic learning of Asian international students?; and What are the relationships among Asian international students' academic identity, motivation for academic engagement, and social support networks? The study took place in a university in the Pacific Western region of the United States. The participants were seven Asian international students from one class where I observed for a term. Data for this study were collected through semi-structured interviews, follow-up interviews, classroom observations, and document reviews. These data collected were analyzed through recursive procedures involving open-coding, within-case analyses, and cross-case analyses.

Chapter IV. Findings

This chapter is divided into three sections corresponding to the research questions of the study. The first section describes class participation of seven Asian international students of the study. The second section includes data on their academic identity related to their cross-cultural transitions. The third section presents data on self-reported social-intellectual support networks of the participants and their interactions with faculty, peers, and TAs related to their learning experiences in the United States.

Contextual Factors Influencing Class Engagement

Data indicated that sometimes the Asian international participants engaged in non-participation, and other times, they were actively involved in participation. In other words, there were in-active participants and active participants. Two of the seven participants (Mina and Wei) participated most actively in class, and interacted with the teacher and peers by asking questions and taking leadership in their group work. Both Mina and Wei have high level of English proficiency. Mina was born in South Korea but spent her middle school years in Canada. Even after returning to South Korea, she was taught through an American curriculum at an international high school. Wei was born in Malaysia, but spent the majority of her life in China, including the middle and high school years. Her nationality is Malaysian, but her ethnicity is Chinese. She came to the United States for college with her older brother. She has a high level of fluency and eloquence in Chinese, English, and Malay.

Five of the seven participants were not orally active in class. Minju, Jina, Hao, Meng, and Mei, did not often speak up in class nor ask questions of the teacher. These students struggled with speaking up in class after they came to the U.S. Mei did not like class discussions when she

first came to the U.S. because she was intimidated about speaking English due to her limited proficiency. Mei mentioned,

> Mei: I went to classes and it's all in English.
>
> Interviewer: Because you were struggling with English speaking?
>
> Mei: Yeah. At first, I was trying to avoid all the classes that have more discussion type.… but Education majors have many discussion classes. So, I was scared at first.

Jina had similar concerns about speaking English in class discussions. She said, “I was worried about making mistakes in speaking in English, so I wasn’t confident to talk in class and became shy and introverted after I came to the U.S.” Meng also was not confident about participating in class discussion but thought “small groups were better than [in front of] the whole class. It's nervous.”

Two others of these five “quiet” students, Jina and Meng, argued that attentive listening to others was a kind of engagement. As Jina explained, “I think that engaging in class is not only speaking up …, but also listening to other students’ opinions and reading the class materials and processing what I learned in class.” Meng expressed a similar opinion about class engagement by saying,

> Some students are not good at speaking or don't like to speak up, but it doesn't mean that they have problems. Maybe it's their habits. They like to stay here to listen, but it's not [that] they are not engaging.

However, Meng, Jina, Mei, Hao, and Minju contended that successful students in U.S. higher education are expected to have their own voice, opinions, critical thinking, and to speak up in class discussion. For example, Meng claimed, “here [U.S.] we need to [put] hands up and say something new. Maybe you need to share your idea with your classmate during discussion.”

She added, “I think most of the professors here like the students who speak more. Most professors think students who speak more are good students.” Jina “was jealous of other American students asking questions and speaking up in class freely and outspokenly,” and thought successful students in the U.S. are “the ones who are expressing their opinions in class and asking good questions.”

All the participants were not in the same place regarding participation. There were some classes in which the inactive participants did participate and speak up in class, sometimes even in front of the whole class. Data revealed several factors that affected their participation. There are three contextual factors that affected class participation of Asian international students. These were pedagogy, peers assistance, and climate of the classroom.

Pedagogy

This was one of the most important factors that affected class engaging practices of Asian international participants. Instructors encouraged Asian international students to speak up by providing opportunities in welcoming ways. During the interview, Hao complained that the professor of Course #1 did not make enough efforts to get students to talk. She compared this experience with others in the classes where she actively participated:

> Actually, this class [Course #1], I didn't really like it. The professor, she didn't give us much opportunities to talk in the class. She didn't encourage us to talk more. She didn't encourage us to raise our hands more, cause she [was] always speaking, she always just lecturing us, gives us information and didn't ask for our participation. Compared to the other class that I took is the [Course title] education class, that professor, she really encouraged people to speak in the class. She asked questions a lot and asked people to raise their hands, even for international students. We felt really comfortable to raise our

> hands and answer the questions. We didn't feel any pressure to do it and her class was so engaging and it's really interesting.

In the observed classes (Course #1) where most of the study participants were quiet, three of them complained that the professor did not provide opportunities for them to speak up. Course #1 was mostly lecture-centered and there were three large group discussions with 12-15 people per group, four small group discussions with four to five people, and three pair discussions, but for the group discussion, she did not encourage international students to speak up or distribute opportunities for every member of the group to speak up in the group discussions.

Minju, Mei, and Wei claimed that encouragement by instructors is important for class participation of Asian international students. Minju insisted that she usually does not talk in class but there was a course in which she wanted to. She explained that “There was a teacher who listened attentively to me. He was not pretending, but he means it. He was really listening carefully to me. He encouraged me to talk and I became confident in speaking up in his class.” Similarly, Mei suggested,

> I think it's still depend on the teachers, because I had a professor [who] invited students to speak up. I like her because she values everyone's opinion and she doesn't judge on what you said. She says, ‘Thank you for your contribution.’ The professor [encouraged] everyone to talk. I liked to speak up in that class because she encouraged everyone, especially international students.

Wei also thought that encouragement by instructors “creates an atmosphere [in which] everyone can speak and everyone's opinions are very highly valued in that class.” She described an instructor who encouraged her participation as being “very open-minded and really cheerful

every time in the classroom, tends to remember students' names, and gives a lot of good feedback to the students".

This instructor validated the experiences and knowledge that Asian international students bring to the class when they share. Wei remembered an instance when she shared her thoughts and personal experiences about going through the Chinese educational system, the instructor provided positive comments validating her personal experiences. She considered these comments as "a confident boost" for her. Wei contended that,

> We [Asian international students] feel very confident when speaking out [in that class] because the instructor would be, 'Oh, that is something new. That's how they experience or that's how they learn. You can learn from people.' So, her comments are really positive. So, it's a confident boost. You really feel confident in that class. ... She will nod a lot and smile a lot when the student is answering a question. She will ask you to take your time. She is really patient until you finish your answer and then, she will say something about it. Mostly it's some positive comments about it.

According to Hao, ironically, when the instructor valued and validated the silence of Asian international students, they felt more comfortable to speak up in class. She insisted that good instructors try to help international students not feel excluded and awkward even in situations when they stayed quiet in class. Hao explained:

> In that class, our professor said, 'Sometimes we need to respect silence because silence sometimes means a lot. Some people just need to ponder and be silent, so if we finish our story before the one minute, then if we don't have much to say, or we are thinking about it, or we won't say anything else, it's totally okay. We will just be quiet and then everyone is just thinking about it and reflect[ing] on it.'

From the perspective of Mei, the instructor who encouraged the participation of Asian international students made positive validations of their bilingual skills, instead of considering them as limited English speakers. Mei recalled, “I was not the only international student who spoke up in that class and she mentioned a lot about international students as bilingual.” Furthermore, the instructor invited Mei to give a short Chinese language lesson in Chinese to the whole class. Mei thought that was a very fascinating experience because the instructor acknowledged, respected, and valued her experiences as well as linguistic challenges as an international student in the U.S. Mei explained,

> When she asked me to like give a lecture in Chinese for a few minutes to the class, I think that's a good experience for the native English speakers because they were like, ‘What?’ Even though it's a very easy class [Chinese lesson] but they couldn’t understand and they would know how we [Asian international students] feel. I think she wanted to let them feel the difficulty or challenge that we have.

This finding is consistent with Hsu’s and Huang’s (2017) research showing that teachers’ confirmation behaviors, such as responding to students’ comments, showing interest in students and their learning, and using interactive teaching approaches, help reduce apprehension of international students and increase their willingness to talk in class. Although these researchers addressed the importance of teachers’ confirmations, they did not provide detailed explanations for how and why these are connected to and support students engagement.

Mina felt uncomfortable speaking up or asking questions in Course #1 because the professor did not give many chances for international students to talk and sometimes questions were not welcomed. She explained that,

> I had to be cautious about what the professor said in class. Otherwise, I would be scolded by her if I had asked again later about what she already announced in class. There were some students who got scolded when they asked something that she already mentioned before. She was like 'Didn't I tell you about this last time in class? Should I repeat again?'

Wei and Mei also suggested that pedagogical intervention by teachers for building relationships between Asian international students and American students encourage their participation in group discussions or work situations. Mei noted that,

> Some instructors just separate students into groups and don't do anything. But in some classes, the instructors encourage building relationships among students. They created a small game to get to know each other in the group. For the game, I had to remember all the group members' names.

Additionally, Wei argued that it is helpful for groups to create norms first before starting to work on their projects. In one class, the instructor asked each group to write a group norm about expectations for group members and the instructor. She explained,

> That's really useful especially for people who are not really confident in speaking out. I remember one of them, the first thing that always comes up is to be open-minded or we have to respect everybody's opinions. Or everybody takes their turns to speak out and [responsibility] is divided equally in the task that they do and stuff like that.

Peer assistance

The observation data showed that peer assistance is another factor that positively affected the participation of Asian international peers. Mina and Wei who are proficient English speakers helped other international peers to speak up in class discussion and perform their duties for their

group projects. In the group work situations, these participants worked as translators and mediators between American and international peers. An example is provided of how Mina supported her international peer. In addition, the interaction between Wei and Jina, another participant, illustrates the significance of peer assistance for Jina's oral participation in class.

During the class observation, there was a group Q&A session with the course instructor in Course #1. It involved answering questions about the final presentation and helping students prepare their final group presentations. There were 13 groups with six or seven members per group. Since these groups were created randomly by the instructor and announced to the class, two days before the group Q&A session, the students did not know each other well. Each group had a meeting with the instructor or TAs to briefly give some preview of their presentations and to ask questions of the instructor or TAs. A shortage of time did not permit all groups to have a Q&A session with the instructor, so they decided that some of the groups would have the Q&A sessions with one of the TAs. Mina was in the group with another Asian international student. They were not close friends, but had known each other for a while and were in the same major. The other international student asked a question about the group presentation, but the instructor did not understand it, so she asked her to repeat the question again. The international student repeated her question again, but there was just silence indicating the teacher still did not understand. Then, Mina broke the silence and tried to speak for the international student by saying, "I think she is asking about if this should be in a video format or, if it is okay with just powerpoint slides. Is that what you're saying?" The international student nodded, saying yes.

When asked about this situation in a follow-up interview, Mina said she did this intentionally because she understood what the international peer was saying while the instructor and the other group members seemed not to understand, so she tried to explain what her

international peer was saying. She said she did not understand why the instructor and other native-English speaking group members did not understand because even for her, she could see where the international peer was coming from. She said they should be able to get her point no matter how badly she spoke since English is Americans' native language. Mina mentioned that she had a Korean roommate who is a native Korean speaker. Her roommate understood her even though her Korean grammar was sometimes incorrect. She thought silence was an awkward and embarrassing situation because:

> I didn't like those awkward moments. When she [the international peer] asked a question but nobody understood, there was a silence. I know that silence is not a bad thing, but this friend would feel a sense of shame in this short silent moment. I was thinking of this, so I spoke for her. … At this awkward moment when other people think about what she said, this international student would be very embarrassed while blaming herself for her bad pronunciation. Other students also can feel that she is embarrassed. So, the awkward moments add up.

Another example from Mina revealed how peer assistance is important to support class engagement of Asian international students in another group work situation. Mina was involved in a group project in another global education course. There was a White American who kept talking to only White peers or Asians who were fluent in English even though there was another Chinese international student in the same group. Mina said she tried to be more active in participating in the group discussion on purpose:

> Since I am the person who spoke up first, I was not offended, but there was a Chinese international student not that fluent in speaking English, and she was shy. In that case, I

> think they should ask her thoughts and try to include her because they are gonna work later in education fields, teaching or whatever it is.

After noticing this discriminatory group dynamics, Mina wanted to intervene on behalf of the Chinese international peer. A week after they did their group project, the professor of the global education course gave the class some time to share feedback. Mina raised the following issues:

> My group members said only good things and positive things. So, I … said, 'I would like you guys to ask questions of all of the group members when you ask other students' thoughts and opinions. I was a little upset when you asked only some of the group members and didn't ask the other group members when we had a group session last week.' After then, their attitudes totally changed! They tried to ask and talk to all of the group members, of course, to the Chinese international student, too.

Mina also tried to encourage her Chinese international peer to speak up in the class by talking about the group activity while hanging out with her after the class. She found that her Chinese international peer lived in her neighborhood, as they walked out together at the end of classes. She added:

> When I walked out with her, I told her that 'you also need to speak up since they [American peers] don't care and ask unless you raise your voice, so you have to show that you have thoughts and opinions and that you have the capacity to express your thoughts.'

Along with the importance of raising her voice, Mina encouraged the Asian international peer to be confident and brave in competing with American peers. She validated the experiences and knowledge of Asian international peers regardless of their English proficiency by saying:

> Even though she is not fluent in English, we all are in the same school and I think there is not much of a difference among us. … She [Chinese international student] took the same SAT as they did and we are all in the same school, so I think there is no reason to discriminate against her because of the fact that she is not fluent in English.

Mina was very active in initiating conversations pointing out discriminatory group dynamics, breaking up silences, and speaking for her international peer. Her support and encouragement helped her Chinese international peer to be more assertive and vocal in the group sessions.

Because of her fluent English skills, Wei, like Mina, acted as a translator in her study group work situations between American and international peers. For example, Jina, another research participant in this study, said she got a lot of help from Wei while doing group projects together. Wei had been in the same group with Jina in another class. Since Jina was not confident in speaking English, she tended to be quiet in group discussions. According to Wei, at first people asked Jina for her opinions, but they stopped because she was really really quiet. The group members took turns making notes and answering group quizzes. Because everybody had to take their turns, Jina also wanted to do so. The group members agreed to give her the opportunity to do so. Wei translated what the group members said to her and helped her respond to the American peers. Although it took longer to complete the group quizzes than before, Jina had the opportunity to contribute to their cooperative learning practices with the help of her international peer (Wei).

Climate in the classroom

Along with pedagogy of the instructors and peer assistance, two out of seven participants argued that the prevailing attitudes and values affect their oral participation in class. Although

only two participants mentioned this, it is important as an additional dimension to think about and it suggests different aspects to considering the contextual factors that affect the participation of Asian international students.

These two students argued that when they feel they are respectful, safe, welcome, and supported, they are more willing to speak up in class discussion. For example, in a class, Hao spoke up a lot: “there [were] many international students, especially Chinese students in that class but everyone was willing to [participate]. Many Chinese students they raised their hands and answered questions, even in front of the class.” In this class, there was a respectful atmosphere from other students when she was talking. According to her,

> Every time I share stories, my group members will nod and say, ‘Oh, I see mirrors in your story. I see windows in your story.’ So, they will reply to my stories. I feel, oh my story is actually [respected]... They listen to someone else very carefully. Everyone is respecting each other.

She also insisted this respectful atmosphere lead to creating a safe space for students to share their personal stories. Furthermore, the positive classroom climate affected learning practices in a good way. From the perceptions of Hao,

> Hao: There is another concept in the class, that what we learn, what we hear in this class, just leave it there. Actually, we have an agreement that we will not share the story with students out of the class. It keeps the secret [for] only our classmates.
>
> Interviewer: Oh, okay. It is the confidential space. Like safe space.
>
> Hao: Yeah. Everyone feels comfortable to say what they're really thinking about.

Mei shared an individual presentation experience from another class. Her instructor emphasized that students should have respectful attitudes and positively respond for peers who

are presenting. Mei stated, “Like the day I presented, she encouraged all the students to smile and nod to the person who presents.” She added that positive feelings from classmates make you “[feel] better. When I was presenting, everyone was gesturing, smiling, and taking notes. I felt more comfortable because I felt welcome from others.”

Conflicts in Academic Identity during Cross-Cultural Transition

The participants in this study declared they had to experience conflicts in their academic identity along with other identity challenges. Their cross-cultural experiences affected their levels of intellectual competence and self-concept. Frustration arose from the fact that their academic identity that they developed in their home country did not fit with the current context. Their prior socialization at home conflicted with the way that they were expected to socialize in the host society. For example, academic attitudes and values in school were different. All the participants said the elements of a successful student in their home countries included being quiet in class, not speaking up, listening carefully to teachers, following the instructions, and getting good grades. Most of the participants had grown up trying to meet these expectations at home to be a good student. Meng explained that, “In my home country, a successful student is to respect professors, to get good grades, to work really hard, complete all the homework with good grades, and to just follow the instructions. We got used to not talking in class.” Jina added that “In South Korea, there was the class atmosphere that it’s not allowed to ask questions or speak up in class because it’s considered as interrupting the teacher’s lessons or bothering other students’ learning.” Mei described a successful student in China as one who “listens to the teacher and behaves well.”

After coming to the U.S., they faced challenges in adjusting to different academic and social norms of U.S. higher education in order to be successful, especially active participation in

classroom discourse. For example, Mei said, “I think here [U.S.] it's the students who interact with teacher more and ask more questions.” Meng also said, “you need to share your ideas with your classmates during discussion. … I think most of the professors here like the students who speak more. Most of professors think students who speak more are good students.”

The participants wanted to try to construct different academic identities, but they experienced some tension because of their prior cultural socialization. These challenges and conflicts of socialization had a negative impact on their academic self-confidence, self-image, and level of intellectual competence. To be specific, three of the seven Asian international participants said they were not successful because it was not easy for them to speak up in class with limited English proficiency. For instance, Meng said,

> I feel incompetent because it's hard to communicate, especially when [I had] the group presentation, because I don't want to pull other group members' leg, but I still think I did a bad job, because I [do] not speak as fluently as they [do]. I was saying like, ‘Umm… Umm…’ all the time, so I hate myself about that.

Minju and Jina also stated that after the cross-cultural transition to U.S. higher education, their dispositions and personalities changed. They said, they were outgoing and social when they were students in South Korea but, after coming to the U.S., they had both linguistic and cultural barriers. Minju claimed,

> I was social and outgoing when I was in Korean schools. After I came to the U.S., because I don’t speak English very well, I often had discriminatory experiences in school. Sometimes, I was not invited and was not accepted by American peers when I wanted to join their group for the group work. I was often looked down [upon] and felt slighted by them because of the reason I am not good at speaking in English. I have suffered from a

> feeling of inferiority. These experiences lead to low self-confidence and low self-esteem which created a lot of anxiety and stress for me studying in the U.S.

Minju added she was humiliated by some American peers during group work. When one White American peer asked her a question, she took a while to process the question and to come up with her responses in English. While Minju was still processing the question, the American peer said that they have to just move on because she does not know English and would not understand what they were talking about. Minju was able to understand what the American peer said about her, she was embarrassed and afraid of arguing with them, so she could not have an opportunity to contribute to their group work. She said other American group members just watched and neglected her embarrassment.

Jina also experienced decreased academic confidence after her cross-cultural transition. She explained that,

> I was so confident in studying when I was in South Korea. I won second place [for academic achievement] in the whole school. However, after I came to the U.S., I was not confident in English and I was scared to make mistakes when talking to Americans. So, the biggest difference after transition would be my personality. I became so shy and introverted.

In addition to her prior socialization, the skills and strategies Jina developed in South Korea, did not work for her in the new academic setting of the U.S. She recalled that in South Korea as follows:

> I was good at memorizing, and … I studied so hard. I invested so much time in studying and did my best. … In Korea, I figured it out that I just needed to memorize as much information as possible and solve many sample exam questions from previous tests.

However, Jina realized that the skills she had implemented in South Korean schools did not work in the U.S. schools because:

> Here in the U.S., however, no matter how I tried, it didn't work and I feel like my English is not improving at all. I was so frustrated because I found that other American friends spent only 30 minutes to finish homework but I had to spend 3 hours for the same assignment because I had to do it with my poor English. I almost gave up.

Conflicts between the Instructor and Asian International Students

The interview data showed there is another conflict between the instructor and the participants in terms of their academic socialization in U.S. higher education. Professor Mani, the instructor of Course #1, was an international faculty member from Asia, yet English was one of the commonly used languages in her home country. Professor Mani had had some experiences similar to this study participants when she came to the U.S. for graduate school.

Professor Mani seemed to be aware of some of the challenges of Asian international students yet she had high expectations for them. She explained that,

> I don't tolerate certain things in my class. I don't tolerate them from American students, and when I see Asian students doing it, I have really, really high standards for them in terms of their behavior. I do call them up, I do talk to them, and I do tell them, if you want to be successful, not just because I'm an Asian faculty, but all faculty you have to maintain that level of standards that you come with. So, I do hold them up to that, and some Asian students get taken aback, and I say, look, I want you to succeed. Don't walk into my class 20 minutes late and say, "It's okay." I do hold up my American students, but I'm even more tough with the Asian students.

She thinks that Asian international students have to preserve their prior cultural socialization and the academic values and attitudes that students are used to from their home country although they are studying in the U.S. According to professor Mani,

> I feel that we come from Asia with very strong academic or educational attitudes. We respect education. We value our instructors. There's a lot of hard work that goes into it. I find that many Asian students, when they come here [to the U.S.], they think they should let go of all their values and just incorporate American ways of learning. So, they start to slack sometimes, and I hold them up to the standards that they come from. That slacking off is not well regarded in Asia. I think those are all very good values that you need to bring into education.

There was a conflict between the perceptions of professor Mani and the international student participants. While the professor wanted the Asian international students to preserve their prior academic socialization established in their home countries, the students did not want to continue how they are previously socialized. This conflict affected their identity because they seemed to be caught between different cultural and academic performance styles.

The observation data indicated that professor Mani called on Asian international students more often than American students especially when it came to misbehavior issues, such as when international students were late to the class, not focusing while watching videos, and using cell phone during class. They were called out by the professor or asked to stay after class to talk with her. Minju and Jina had these negative interactions with professor Mani. Minju was late to the class a few times because she used public transportation to get to campus and her bus schedule and route were changed, so it took longer to make the trip to campus. She received a short verbal warning from professor Mani about not being late to class. For Jina, it was done in front of the

entire class for using her cell phone during class. After the class, Jina started crying when the professor asked why she used her cell phone during class. In the interview, Jina explained that she did not hear what the professor Mani announced about limiting usage of cell phones in class, and she was scared and afraid of being scolded by the professor.

In contrast to the expectations of professor Mani, all the participants stated that they came to the U.S. for an opportunity to get a better education and to try out different educational practices of the U.S. Four of seven participants do not like the way they were socialized at schools in their home countries, especially in relation to Asian educational values and attitudes. For instance, Meng said,

> In China, there is a hierarchy between teachers and students, and teachers are very strict and scary. However, in America, a teacher respects students. … They have freedom of speech. An American teacher will give students confidence whatever they say. They will not say, 'Oh, you are wrong.' Instead, they will say 'Very good,' no matter [if] you say something stupid because they value different perspectives and creative thinking.

Minju expressed similar opinions:

> I didn't like Korean education. I had a lot of complaints about how I had to behave in class and the way I studied in Korea. In [South] Korea, I should not talk in class and I should behave well. There are lots of things to memorize. That's the reason why I came to the U.S. Although I was nervous to talk in class when I first came to the U.S., and I am still nervous to speak up in class, I like American education. I like to have freedom to speak in class and share my opinions.

Mei also did not like how she was socialized to behave at schools in China because:

> In Chinese culture, we have to respect the teachers and we can't say anything during the lecture. … I didn't like the education in China and the way the teachers teach. That's the reason why I came to the United States.

These comments suggest that the academic identities of these Asian international students are torn because their instructor's preferences for maintaining their home-bound practices and their own desires to develop different academic identities in the U.S.

Social-Intellectual Networking beyond the Classroom

The findings on the social-intellectual relationships of the participants in this study with their faculty, TAs, and peers are consistent with previous research that indicate difficulties in interactions due to linguistic and cultural barriers. However, they were less likely to interact with an Asian international professor in the observed class (Course #1) for different reasons. Unlike the prior research, social networks with other Asian international peers provided both emotional and informational support.

Linguistic and Cultural Barriers to Academic Interactions with Faculty

Five participants mentioned that they have experienced difficulties in developing relationships with American faculty for two reasons. First, because of linguistic barrier, they found it hard to understand when their professors or instructors do small talks using American idioms and jokes. The participants sometimes went to faculty during their office hours for clarity on some questions related to class or assignments, but they had difficulties in developing the conversation further after their questions were answered by the teachers since they did not understand some of the idioms or jokes that the teachers used. Minju stated, "I don't understand their jokes and don't know how to respond to them." She explained further that,

> There is a barrier between American professors and me that I can't get over. I don't think I can develop a deep relationship with them. I see other American peers have deep and close relationship with the professors. They [American peers and professors] meet and talk beyond the classroom and they go eat out together. They look very close. Compared to that, I know that's not possible for me. I am jealous that [American faculty and peers] have deeper conversations and share intimate affairs together.

Jina reasoned similarly that "Because I am not a fluent English speaker, when I talk to professors, … I only ask questions without having any small talks before or after."

Prior socialization and interactions with teachers in their home countries negatively affected how the participants interacted with American faculty. Although Mina and Wei are fluent English speakers, they had difficulties because how they socialized with teachers at home seems to be too passive and submissive in the U.S. higher education context. In terms of learning the social norms around the relationship with teachers and role expectations, Mina claimed,

> In Asian culture, you should respect elders and teachers and you should not disagree with them. Here in the U.S., students can say 'No' to their teachers. They can disagree with or contradict professors. I know that sometimes I am too submissive, but I don't know another way. It is so confusing because I don't even know what to call them. Should I call them professor or doctor? Or should I call them by their first names as other American peers do?

Wei described her relationship with faculty as "subtle." When she wants to approach a professor, she goes to office hours. After asking her questions, the conversation just stops because she does not know what to do next. As she explained,

> we are not supposed to ask teachers personal questions and sometimes, I don't know if it's appropriate to ask them or not. I don't want to offend them in any ways. So, that prevents me from establishing a deeper relationship with the professors. My culture plays a role in that way.

Wei also argued that Asian international students need time to prepare in order to ask questions of teachers, which makes it hard to continue conversations with professors. It is not easy for them to come up with follow up questions right away because they are not accustomed to question-asking behaviors which are not the way that they were previously socialized in Asian educational contexts. She noted that,

> In office hours, it's pretty obvious that the American students basically just ask whatever they want to ask, and then, they just have follow-ups a lot. They follow up with the professor a lot. But I would just be there asking my question and then, I am done. It may be related to the idea that we [Asian international students] have to prepare before we speak, [so that] I can stick to the point…. I cannot think of a follow-up question at the time, but they [American peers] can keep the conversation [going] on and on. I think there is a difference there. … It's really sad and I would love to have a deeper relationship with a faculty member.

Another participant, Hao, also contended that her prior hierarchical socialization with teachers in her home country conflicted with how she interacts with professors in the U.S. She elaborated that,

> There are some domestic students [who] can easily talk with professors whenever they want to, but for me, for international students, we need to think [prepare] first about what I am going to talk about, … in advance, and after that, you can go talk with her.

American students will just say, 'I like your dress' or something like that as if they are friends, but I can't say that because I still got the Chinese mind, and grew up in China for so long and I was taught that I should not talk to teachers like that. So, it's difficult for me to get used to their [American] culture.

More Approachable Asian International Teaching Assistants (TAs)

Only a few participants reached out to TAs for academic help. When they needed help related to their school work, they went to their co-national or Asian international peers first, and then, to domestic peers. If there are still some questions unresolved, then, they went to teachers/professors instead of TAs. However, if the TAs are Asian international students, they were more likely to approach them. Mei remarked that "if the TA is an Asian international student, it encourages students and makes you more comfortable to ask questions."

Participants provided some reasons why they felt more comfortable with international TAs. First, TAs are less authoritative figures to them. Minju stated that "They are TAs, but they are also students." As Jina mentioned earlier about the hierarchical relationships between teachers and students in Asian countries, she was afraid to approach teachers/professors first since it is intimidating for her. However, she thought TAs were more comfortable because "it's more like talking to friends/colleagues because they are not professors or teachers." Another reason is that they have expectations of that Asian international TAs will be more supportive and considerate because they share and understand the experiences and challenges of international students in the U.S. Meng remarked that her Asian international TA "made me comfortable to reach out to her and ask questions because she would understand me better." Similarly, Jina commented that a Chinese TA when she met in another class was helpful because "I felt much comfortable to talk to that TA because this person walked in my shoes as an international

student, so she would better understand my situations and challenges." Also, with linguistic aid from the Chinese TA, she could better understand lessons and class assignments.

However, when she had a Korean TA in class, Mina was hesitant about reaching out to her. She was cautious about people hearing them talking in Korean. She was afraid that if she talks in Korean with the TA and if they look like they are in a close relationship, people might think that the Korean TA was biased and gave better grades to her. She explained that,

> I do not want to provide anything that could be misleading. I tried not to talk to the TA on purpose to avoid giving any wrong impressions to people. I was worried about what if the professor thinks that the TA could be biased because we are both Koreans and we look close. Last time when we were talking in Korean, I was uncomfortable because the professor kept watching us attentively for so long. So, I had to stop talking in Korean and left the classroom.

Limited Social-intellectual Networking with American Peers

For all seven participants, most of their close friends were co-nationals or Asian internationals. They did not usually hang out in social settings with domestic or American students beyond classroom. Minju stated, "I did several class projects with American peers, yet we do not hang out after the group work is done." Hao tried to socialize with American peers outside of classroom when she first came to the U.S., but it was really hard for her to develop meaningful peer relationships with them because:

> I know that I study abroad right now, so, it's time for me to interact more with American peers. But that is ideal, the ideal thing. I tried [hanging out with American peers] at first, but I don't want to try anymore. [When] I first joined [School Project], they are mostly Americans, but I realized it's hard for me to talk with them"

Meng also described some discriminatory and negative interactions with American peers in class, related to the same group projects:

> I sometimes feel they don't want to be in the same group with me. [If] you're in the same group, they look a little bit upset. There are some people [who] are really open-minded and nice, but some others, I can tell they are a little bit upset [because] mostly people think that your English is not good, so they might not want to talk to you or be in the same group with you because they think you might hold them back.

An American peer (Jessica) from the same class had perceptions similar to the international participants about doing group work with international students as in need of patience in American peers' stance: "I think that for some, it might take patience in working with international students because of a language barrier, or a lack of understanding about what the other person is talking about."

Relations with domestic peers showed the same pattern even for the two fluent English-speaking participants. Mina and Wei said that although they have some American friends, their relationships with American peers do not go beyond the classroom and workplace. Mina has a few American friends in the same major and they have taken classes together over a year. She stated that "we (American peers and I) became friends while taking classes together but it's hard to have bonding as I have with Koreans." Even though English is more comfortable for her and she has lived in a Western society since she was 14, there is a limitation in establishing relations with American peers because she does not have many things to share in common with them since they grew up in different cultural backgrounds. She explained that,

> I feel like I have a different common sense from American peers, and we don't share the same jokes. I grew up in a Western society, yet only academically because I went to a

> school in Canada, but I didn't grow up in an American cultured family like American peers. So, I don't know how they grew up in their families, how they talked, what kinds of common sense and jokes they share in their families and communities. So, there is always a hidden wall between them and me.

Outside class and the workplace, she usually hangs out with her ingroup friends including Koreans and other Asian internationals such as Chinese and Malaysians.

According to Wei, even though she works in a group with American peers for class projects or class discussions during class, she does not engage in relationship with them beyond the classroom because

> I feel like, if you are in the classroom-wise, it's gonna be hard to be friends, because unless you are in a group, well, even, cause I have some classes that involve a lot of group projects, even if I am in the same group as them, I just talk to them or you know kind of be acquaintance with them in the group, but we don't hang out after class. That's really how I feel about that. There is something that separates international and domestic students apart. Like, student-wise, it's okay working with them in a group setting or you know in a discussion, but you can't bring that out of the classroom, like, the relationship. It doesn't go out of the classroom. It just stays there.

While working at a campus cafeteria, Wei was able to make some American friends. She said that "I wouldn't say I know any Americans until I worked at the campus cafeteria because I think that's the only place where I actually spend a lot of time together with my American friends." She called them friends because she thinks "it took [her] quite a period of time to know them well."

Nevertheless, there was still a limit to her relationships with American coworkers because they do not go beyond the workplace as well as the ones with American classmates. These peers do not see each other or hang out in other settings. According to Wei,

> I don't bring that relationship [with American friends] out of work cause it's hard. I feel it's really hard to talk to them.… First of all, sometimes it starts from small talk and then, I don't know what I could say anything other. I don't know what other things I could talk to them about. I just cannot come up with things that I can talk to.

The data showed that there are three reasons why the participants did not socialize with American peers beyond the classroom. First, they do not have many topics to talk about with domestic students because they do not have in common due to cultural and linguistic barriers. Jina claimed that “it’s hard to hang out with American peers out of the class because we are too different to find common topics to talk about.” Hao reasoned that,

> Because we don't have the same topics to talk about, all we can discuss is schoolwork. But obviously, they don't want to talk about school and I don't want to talk about school, either. But besides school, we don't have much to talk about. When they talk about their favorite TV shows, I don't know about it and when I talk about my favorite TV shows, they don't know it. So, I don't try anymore.

Another obstacle to building personal relationships with domestic students was culturally different ways of socializing. Several participants did not like American college parties and drinking habits which are common among some college students in the U.S. and sometimes involves binge drinking alcohol. Although some of the participants commented that drinking seems to be the only way to socialize and party with American peers, they did not like the atmosphere of parties, and they were not familiar with drinking. When they first came to the

U.S., they tried going to parties for the purpose of socializing with American peers but at the end, they gave up those ways of socializing. Meng reasoned that,

> I have several good friends, American peers, but they party. They drink, which I don't really do. When we do study abroad, we want to have really good relationships. So, on Friday night, we would always party out a whole bunch and drink. And I would always die next day. I can't drink at all. They would force me to. So, I wouldn't want to hang out with them.

Wei shared similar experiences and opinions about socializing through parties:

> I don't enjoy parties in America because I don't like drinking. I can't drink also. I don't like the atmosphere of the parties here; they all go crazy. It's very surface. So, I don't enjoy. I was at a party and I was just sitting there the whole time because I don't know how to approach and be one of them, and I don't like that either.

Meng talked about culturally different socializing and cultural values in a relationship with her American roommate. She explained that "I spent a whole year with my American roommates, and we have a good relationship but we both know that we cannot be that kind of friends since we are doing things differently." Meng had some conflicts with her American roommate balancing between social and academic life in college. Asian cultures value education extremely highly and many Asian parents still believe that education is the only means to a good life. Therefore, one of her prior socializations at Chinese schools was striving for high academic achievement. She argued that,

> For Chinese people and for me, I care about grades a lot and I will sacrifice almost everything for a grade. If I need to study for an exam or if I have a paper due, I will sacrifice my free time. I won't watch video. I won't watch films. I won't go out with

> [friends]. I just need to study because I need my grade. [However], my roommate is kind of, 'You just need to pass. What's the point? It's your freshman year, you need to enjoy your life. It's college.'

She had to turn down hanging out with her roommate during the semester. Every time she said no, it made her feel bad, sorry, and embarrassed because "I don't want her to feel bad too and I don't want her to [think] me an idiot. I just care about my grades."

Another obstacle or cause that emerged through the interviews was participants missing social connections with host friends due to too much processing needs and language issues. In the situations when the participants were doing group works with American peers, they had to do multi-process. They had to process the knowledge needed for completing their group assignments, and, at the same time, they had to communicate with peers in their second language. Interacting with American peers requires a lot of energy and multi-tasking which is not a restful and relaxed time for them. A graphic example of these demands was provided by Hao. She has five White American roommates and they often wanted to study together in their shared living room whereas she preferred to study alone in her room. She attributed this to a cultural difference:

> They prefer writing homework together in the living room with one another and checking with each other when doing the homework, but I prefer to stay in my own room and do my homework individually. They don't understand this. They ask me to join them. They say why don't you join us, but I don't know what to say. I just prefer to write homework by myself. That is an awkward situation because there's six of us and five of them are in the living room but only me in my own room. … I really need to focus on my homework

when I'm doing it, so I don't want to chat with others and eat and drink, I really need to focus. That's the reason why I moved out.

Therefore, Hao chose to socially isolate herself from the study group. She could not focus on doing homework or studying in the situations of continuously having conversations in English with American peers. As Jina mentioned earlier, it takes much longer (usually twice or three times longer) for Asian international students with limited English proficiency to do the same assignment that domestic students do since they had to process it in their second language. Hao shared another experience in which her roommates invited her to join a party, but she did not go. She chose isolation over connection with American friends because she wanted to have relaxing weekends. She worked all week to get school work done and tried to recharge herself during weekends, so that she could be ready to go back to school work refreshed. She explained that "I feel like hanging out with Americans and speaking English take lots of energy and thinking; it's not relaxing, it's still like studying."

Support from Co-national and Asian International Peers

The data showed that the social-intellectual networks with co-national and Asian international friends of the participants serve emotional and informational functions. All participants usually socialized with their conational/Asian international friends. They felt alone and lonely after they first came to the U.S. without their families to begin a new life journey in a foreign country. The following comments about the emotional support that Minju received from her conational Korean friends:

I usually meet Korean international friends a lot. I don't meet American peers except during class or class quiz sessions. Because you live alone in a foreign country for the first time, you want a friend who is more comforting than a distant person. That's why

> students from the same country get attached to each other. I prefer to hang out with friends from my home country. [It's] just more emotionally comforting. I think it's because we share the same food, culture, and personality, so they are more accessible and it's easier to share my concerns.

Mina networked socially with other 1.5th generation Korean international or Korean American friends because she identifies with them better than 1st generation Korean peers even though she is not an immigrant. This is because she has studied abroad in Canada since she was 14 years old, so using English is more comfortable for her. Also, they share similar westernizing cultural experiences as Mina explained,

> I usually hang out with 1.5th generation Korean students. We speak in English and sometimes, some of Korean and some of English together when we talk to each other. We share similar experiences, interests, and challenges as 1.5th generation. We are similar in what we don't know and in what we know.

As a member of the international student organization and Malaysian student association, Wei had many Malaysian and Chinese friends. She classified her peers into three groups depending on the perceived degree of closeness; Malaysian friends; Chinese and other Asian international friends; and American peers. She described Malaysian friends as her "closest relationships" because,

> They are people who I will look to. They are my safe base. Whenever I [need] something, I will look for them. We will hang out with each other very often. Whenever we just text and someone will respond. It's a close relationship.

She described Chinese and other Asian international friends as sharing the same experiences as international students:

> I have more common topics with them. We can just talk and talk and talk. It never ends. The conversation flows really well between us. … We share the same experiences as international students here [in the U.S.]. That's like you have more to talk about in common.

However, Mei felt some guilty about her with Chinese friendships since her parents wanted her to spend more time with American friends to practice and improve her English. She explained that,

> When [parents] send their children to America, don't they wish their children to make American friends? In China, I think all the parents want their children to make friends with Americans, not hanging out with Chinese friends. I think we should not feel comfortable to just [hang out with Chinese friends].

Another benefit that co-nationals or other Asian international peers provided was informational support. Often the start of a journey as an international student in the U.S. can be fraught with uncertainties. Having international senior mentors was helpful for new international students because they have already walked the path and have experiences. The mentors can share their experiences and offer knowledge-based resources about how to adjust academically to US higher education. For instance, Wei benefitted from her social networks with Malaysian senior mentors. When she came to the U.S., she joined a Malaysian student association that had mentor-mentee systems connecting Malaysian international freshmen with seniors. These senior mentors were great references for her, and their advice and suggestions helped her to understand different academic norms of US colleges. They were willing to share some of their learned wisdom and experiences and support her along the way. This support helped her in anticipating "what will come and go ahead and what will challenge me." Hao agreed that, "there are organizations of

Chinese students, so [that] always provide information and resources for us about all kinds of things. I don't really get information from my American peers." Jina elaborated of these benefits of supportive friendships with co-nationals in commenting that,

> I think co-nationals and other Asian international students can better help since they've undergone similar experiences. They can give me useful tips like, … 'I've tried this before, but this teacher didn't give me a good grade. I got a better grade when I tried a different writing style.' They've experienced similar trials and errors that, I believe, I would probably experience, too.

Furthermore, social networks with co-national and Asian international peers helped participants by providing opportunities to better understand class instructions and assignments. Hao claimed that "I got help, resources, and information from my international peers in class". When the participants socialized with their co-national or Asian international friends, they talked about their classes and lessons, shared their takeaways from the class, and provided clarifications of assignments for each other. Most of the participants asked co-national and other Asian international peers to clarify information presented in class before they went to American peers, professors, or TAs to ask. Meng insisted,

> They [Co-national/Asian international peers] are useful and helpful for my learning because we talk about the classes. When I don't understand what it means [class instructions/lessons], we always contact each other. If I don't understand what this part means, I will ask my friend, like Wei, then, she will [explain] it in Chinese. And then I will be like, 'Aha!' … We always contact each other to talk about the class materials and assignments.

Summary

Several themes emerged from the data provided by the participants in this study (seven students, one professor, one teaching assistant, and two American students), observations, and document analyses. The data showed there were in-active participants and active participants. Also, participants engaged in non-participation, and other times, they were actively involved in participation. They had different motives for engagement depending on the contexts. Several contextual factors affected their participating practices. Among them were the pedagogy of the instructors, peer assistance, and classroom climate. The more the instructors encouraged and invited the international students to speak up and to share their ideas in class discussions, the more often they were likely to orally engage and participate in the class community of practices. When they had more assistance from their international peers, they were more likely to participate in group works. In addition, the more the classroom climate was welcoming toward the international students, the more likely they were to engage with group work and participate in class discussions. These contextual factors contributed in providing more opportunities for the experiences and voices of the participants to be valued and to be heard.

Another significant theme that emerged from the findings was academic identity conflicts of the participants. They experienced conflicts in navigating and negotiating between their prior social practices in their home countries and new social practices in the U.S. society. The way they have been socialized in their schools at home in order to be successful, was to stay quiet in class, follow the rules, and listen to the instructors without asking questions. By comparison, in US higher education, they were expected to actively speak up in class and highly engage with class discussions. With these academic identity conflicts, some participants were in conflict with their instructor who wanted them to preserve and value their prior academic practices. However,

the participants did not want to continue how they were previously socialized and wanted to learn to better adapt to the participation expectations of their host educational environments. This conflict affected their identity because they seemed to be caught between different cultural and academic performance styles.

The findings of this study also revealed that the Asian international participants had limited social-intellectual networking with their U.S. faculty and peers. Linguistic and cultural barriers limited their interactions with them beyond classroom. However, more interactions occurred with Asian international teaching assistants because the participants considered the more approachable, and that they could ask them for help. Some participants intentionally chose to isolate themselves as a survival strategy due to too much processing workloads and cultural and linguistic issues. When some participants studied in groups with domestic peers, they had to interact and translate in their second language as well as work on the assignments or group projects together. The cultural and academic processing added to the time needed to complete assignments, and their American peers were often intolerant. Therefore, some of the participants chose to isolate themselves by staying at home or staying at the library. However, social-intellectual networks with co-nationals and other Asian international peers provided the participants with emotional and informational support that helped to compensate somewhat for their isolation from U.S. peers and being at odds with the procedural expectations of their classroom dynamics.

Chapter V. Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations

In this chapter, a summary of the study is presented, followed by a discussion of findings. The significance of the study and some limitations are also documented. In the last section, some recommendations for future study are suggested for practitioners and researchers to consider in teaching, advising, and supporting Asian international students, and making classroom and campus climates more inclusive for all students in US higher education.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the academic experiences and adaptations of Asian international students in US higher education. This includes examining struggles in their academic journeys and learning practices in classroom related to their motivation for class participation, identity, and social support. The participants were seven Asian international students recruited from one classroom at Western University (pseudonym). The data were collected for nine months including class observations and interviews. Data analysis involved open-coding, within-case analysis, and cross-case analysis.

The findings revealed three main themes. These are *contextual factors affecting class participations*; *academic identity conflicts*; and *diverse functions and aspects of social support networks with faculty, TAs, and American and co-national/Asian international peers.* Three contextual factors affected the participants' oral participation in class discussion, which were pedagogy, peer assistance, and classroom climate. Instructors' encouragements and confirmations had a major impact on their class engaging practices. When pedagogy was more engaging and encouraging, the participants were more likely to participate in class discussion. With assistance from other Asian international peers, the participants were able to legitimately

engage in the group work in class. They also were more willing to speak up in class discussion when they felt respected, safe, welcome, and supported.

The Asian international participants in this study encountered frustrations, challenges, and conflicts within themselves and between the instructor and the participants when they were navigating and negotiating their academic identities during cross-cultural transitions. They were often conflicted because the academic identity they developed and the way they socialized in their home country did not fit with the way that they were expected to socialize in the host society.

The participants also encountered difficulties in relating to their American faculty, TAs, and peers due to linguistic and cultural barriers. Obstacles in socializing with American peers included linguistic challenges, different norms of socializing, and heavy processing workloads in group work situations. Social networks with other co-nationals and Asian international peers provided both emotional and informational support.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that Asian international student participants' identities and motives for class participation were constructed through interactions with the contexts in the host institution and classes. This process involved negotiating and navigating their positions and agency in the community of classroom practices and the interconnectedness of identities and motivations for class participation.

Situated Positionality and Negotiated Class Participation

This study provided some contextual explanations for why Asian international students behave in particular ways in different college classroom environments, and how the instructors' confirmations, classroom climate, and peer support aid or obstruct their participation in

educational practices. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), "learning as increasing participation in communities of practice … focuses attention on ways in which it is an evolving, continuously renewed set of relations; this is, of course, consistent with a relational view, of persons, their actions, and the world, typical of a theory of social practice." Situative theory also explains that "Participation is always based on situated negotiation and renegotiation of meaning in the world." (p. 49, 51). The findings of this study confirmed this theory.

The findings of this study also suggested that pedagogy is one of the significant factors affecting class participation. Instructors acknowledging the experiences of Asian international students as legitimate, encouraged them to become more engaged participants in the classroom dynamics. For instance, in classes where the participants were more actively engaged, instructors invited them to share their thoughts and experiences, and validated and valued their voices, ideas, and even silence. The instructors used an asset-based approach to teaching by setting the tone, such as the notion of bilingual/multilingual learners compared to English language learners (ELL). These approaches helped the participants to be seen positively rather than in deficit ways, which were incentives and motivations for them to speak up.

Lave and Wenger (1991) claimed that when newcomers are brought into a setting, they must receive ways that they can participate legitimately in the work in that setting, in order to gain membership. Some instructors in this study provided this assistance some of the time while others did not. Those whose assistance was helpful acknowledged that the international students had different cultural experiences and prior educational habits of engagement. This finding is consistent with the results reported by Hsu and Huang (2017) that teachers' confirming behaviors "positively predicts classroom connectedness, which in turn, positively influence self-

perceived language competence, which subsequently reduces classroom apprehension and increases willingness to talk in class" (p. 38) of international students in the U.S.

These findings offer different insights for understanding class participation of Asian international students. Some researchers (Abdullah, Bakar, & Mahbob, 2012; Fassinger, 1995) claimed that student personalities are better predictors of class involvement of students. For example, Abdullah, Bakar, and Mahbob (2012) insisted that actively participating international students have a high degree of self-efficacy and responsibility; like to read; like to question; make early preparations; and love to get attention in class. By comparison, passive students show a low degree of self-efficacy, self-confidence, and responsibility; do not prepare well before class; are more into passive listening; have difficulties focusing in class; have no interest in learning or the topic being studied; are ashamed to ask questions; and fear showing their intelligence and getting scolded by instructors.

The participants in this study did not exhibit the same participating practices (or patterns) in different classrooms. Instead, they acted differently and showed different engaging behaviors depending on which contexts they were in, and the opportunities provided for them. Jina, Minju, Mei, Hao, and Meng were mostly silent in the observed classroom (Class# 1), yet, they were more engaged in certain other classes. This finding is consistent with researchers (Bevis, 2002; DiAngelo, 2006) who have suggested that placing all the responsibilities and problems on international students for class participation is not a meaningful way for educators to productively engage students in US higher education settings. In other words, this study suggests that being cognizant of and responsive to social and contextual factors affecting class engagement of Asian international students are necessary.

Negotiating Academic Identities and Agency

The cases of Mina and Wei showed how individual agency interacts with educational context. They had an impact on their own context as well as the resources and affordances that other international students experienced in their context. They acted as mediators and connectors between American and international peers. They took advantage of their proficient English and being in an "in-between" position on the cultural borders spectrum. The linguistic expertise in both English and home languages helped in navigating their identities in dual cultures which, in turn, impacted their learning experiences in U.S. colleges. Their skills in both understanding and speaking English, and their bilingual and bicultural competencies allowed them to effectively interact with diverse people. These skill sets helped them reposition themselves in the classroom discussions and group work situations. This increased the likelihood of their voices being genuinely heard, and the possibility that their ideas and opinions would be considered by both classmates and instructors. This was a form of personal and academic empowerment. Other participants whose English proficiency was lower participated less in class discourse, and were often marginalized academically.

Thus, the bi/multi-cultural identities/competencies of the participants had a powerful effect on their engagement in learning experiences, and navigating relationships with Asian international and American peers both in and out of class. For example, Mina and Wei had some tools for interacting and making changes in that context that opened up opportunities for themselves and other Asian international students. These tools included cross cultural living experiences in the U.S. along with their higher levels of English proficiency. As a result, they helped their international peers gain fuller membership and participation in their classroom

communities, and exercise more agency in negotiating their roles, responsibilities, and relationships.

All of the participants were not able to exercise the same agency as Mina and Wei. Different level of English proficiency and different years of Western living and schooling experiences created some disparities among the participants in their academic identity and navigational effects, and contributed to how well they negotiated cultural barriers and interpersonal interactions, both academic and social. Many participants stated they had difficulties in engaging in class discussion because the linguistic and cultural barriers were highly challenging for them. However, even those participants who did not actively engage in class discussions, demonstrated some agency by reaching out to and seeking help from more competent international peers in their areas of need. This collaboration helped them to speak for themselves and be more legitimatized participants in the community of learning practice.

While some aspects of identity were not explicitly examined, they were presented implicitly in the data. For example, the participants' prior socialization of how to be a student in their home countries implies their national, ethnic, and cultural identities. Also, Mina and Wei have shown multiple social identities such as mediators, brokers, students, and peers. In other words, there are some data that is by who participates rather than what the participants say it. Consequently, the findings presented multiple intersecting identities of the participants both explicitly and implicitly.

This study also revealed the need for changes in teaching Asian international students in higher education because their help-seeking process is only limited to their international peers. This may be due to the participants were socialized in their home schools where there is a hierarchical relationship between teachers and students since teachers are usually considered as

highly authority figures in Asian countries. This socialization makes it difficult for some Asian international students to initiate interactions with American professors or instructors. It suggests the need for some training in cross-cultural communication and unequal status interpersonal relationships for both students and teachers. In other words, cross-cultural border crossings in educational contexts should be reciprocal processes.

The findings in this study imply that the International Student Identity (ISI) model suggested by E. Kim (2012), is insufficient for determining individual differences in the experiences and meanings associated with the identities of Asian international students for several reasons. Contextual and sociocultural components of positionality and classroom negotiations, are not necessarily included in the ISI model. In other words, the ISI model fails to account for the role of social contexts. People in different social contexts with different histories and experiences have different opportunities to develop and navigate their identities and positions. The ISI model implies that if one "accomplishes" a stage (especially the more advanced ones), then it is all good. It focuses on how individuals see themselves and how they achieve advanced stages by themselves. Situative and sociocultural perspectives of identity development emphasize how identities are culturally created in context with other people. The findings of this study revealed complexities of ongoing negotiation of identities within and across contexts. The participants were continually negotiating their positions and identities depending on how different teachers and classmates interacted with them and what opportunities were offered for them to engage in different communities of practices. For instance, when there was no interventions or invitations provided, they did not engage actively in class discussions, and their prior socialization in their home countries made it difficult for them to participate. Dreier (1999) suggested, "human actions and their psychological aspects must be grasped as

particular parts of social practices" (p. 7). Thus, international students' academic engagement is not just about what is developing inside their minds, or their academic competency; it is also about the kind of opportunities and invitations provided, as well as their psycho-emotional efficacy.

This study demonstrated why and how the classroom of Course #1 was a *figured world* where the process of negotiation happens (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). In this figured world, the professor believed that Asian international students needed to maintain the cultural, educational, and behavioral practices from their home countries, and that they should value these practices even after transitioning to a host society. From the perception of the professor, this consistency could help these students feel comfortable explain why these students felt more comfortable and competent during lectures than class discussions. For this reason, this professor did not have high values and expectations for international students' verbal engagement in class discourse. For instance, the professor of Course #1 criticized students for using cell phone in class and being late to the class, because she thought Asian international students would not do these things if they were in their home countries.

However, the data from the student participants in this study did not support this professor's position unequivocally. Even though they often found the U.S. college teaching style challenging, they wanted to experience the different ways of learning they offered along with better assistance with how to navigate them. Due to this disparity, the findings of the study revealed that there were some conflicts between the student participants and their professor. Some participants actually did not like the way they were socialized in their home country (which was one of the major reasons for studying in the U.S.) such as the hierarchical relationship between teachers and students, and teacher-centered or lecture-centered learning

practices in their home schools. Surprisingly, they declared a preference for discussion-based learning practices despite the difficulties they had navigating them. In this figured world of Course #1, their behaviors that are not consistent with their home values and prior socialization were considered as problematic. Some participants were not comfortable with its strict rules and norms, and were dissatisfied because they had fewer opportunities to try different social and academic practices that could move them toward becoming the ideal successful student in the U.S. of highly engaging in class discussion.

Interconnections between Class Participation and Academic Identity

The findings of this study suggest that motivation for class participation and identity of Asian international students are interactive. These results are consistent with Delpit's explanation about the culture of school, *culture of power*, and the culture of non-mainstream students. She said, "Children from middle-class homes tend to do better in school than those from non-middle-class homes because the culture of the school is based on the culture of the upper and middle classes — of those in power" (p. 283). Therefore, some students from the culture of power come to school with all the accoutrements of the culture of power already, while some with less, which is in line with *cultural capital* suggested by Apple (1979). In other words, students who are not from the culture of the school, may have difficulties adapting their home cultures to the normative practices and procedures of educational institutions. While Delpit's focus was K-12 students and schools, her claims are applicable to the international university students who participated in this study. They experienced conflicts between the learning practices from their home countries and the ones in their host university because their membership in one "culture of power" did not transfer to another. Most of the participants who do not have the cultural capital

often used in U.S. academic dynamics (i.e. expected high levels of active engagement in student groups and class discussion) had more difficulties in learning, adaptation, and achievement.

The participants realized there was a gap between their actual selves and their position as inactive participants, and the ideal student identity of high engagement in class discussion. They were frustrated in this mismatch and, if this continues, it may threaten their sense of their academic selves. These conflicts also cause tensions about academic competence between at home and in the U.S. Some of the participants self-identified as successful students in their home countries. However, after transitioning to the U.S., classrooms, they were positioned differently. They struggled with linguistic barriers and the mismatch of their prior socialization. Some of the participants began to question their own academic identity and competence by identifying themselves as unsuccessful students in the U.S. Their non-participation affected their sense of who they are academically and their sense of academic competence. This inter-related connection between class participation and academic identity also suggests that it affects academic and social efficacy. Nolen et al (2015) suggested a connection between identification and motivation to learn. Providing access to participate in the classroom community motivated the participants to speak up in class. This helped meet their needs to identify with the U.S. image of a successful student who actively engages in class discussions.

Social support also affected the class participation and identity of the participants. Encouragement and assistance from the instructors and co-national/Asian international peers motivated the participants to actively speak up in class and engage group work. This is consistent with a study by Frisby and Martin (2010) who found that good student-to-student relationships facilitate class participation. It is also similar to the findings of Zhou, Knoke, and Sakamoto (2005) that “the reactions of their professors and peer students in the classroom influenced

[Chinese students'] level of subsequent participation" (p. 307). Having social support in class provides the opportunities that they could be positioned as legitimate participants to engage with the community of learning practices, which further allows resources for them to identify with the ideal "a successful student" in US higher education context. Therefore, even though class participation, academic identity, and social support of Asian international participants were presented separately in the findings, in reality, they are closely interrelated and more than likely, what influences one had a consequence on the other.

Isolated Social Support Networks of Asian International Students

The data indicate that the Asian international participants were socially isolated in US higher education. This result is consistent with Gillette's (2005) research findings that Asian international students are more likely to contact their co-national or other Asian international peers first when seeking support before reaching out to faculty or other peers. One of the major obstacles is cultural and linguistic challenges that they experience in relationships with American faculty and domestic peers. In Confucian-based cultures teachers are given high levels of public respect and considered as authority figures. Thus, these participants had experienced hierarchical relationships with teachers. They bring these values to a host society and struggle with how to interact differently with teachers in the U.S.

Along with the cultural disparity, the participants had difficulties in understanding and developing "small talk" with their American faculty who often used idioms during communications. It is usually hard for English language learners to acquire a knowledge of this form of the speech and it has negative effects on cross-cultural interactions. These cultural disconnections can lead to interpersonal misunderstandings, compromise academic quality, and even invite microaggressions since individuals often attach meaning to communication styles

through cultural filters. When these communicative inconsistencies occur, trust among students and teachers is compromised, and academic and social engagement in classroom interactions diminish. Asking for help from faculty was much more difficult for the Asian international participants than domestic students because of these communicative and cultural barriers. This may also lead to missed opportunities to deepen student-teacher relationships. These situations are consistent with claims by Hansen, Shneyderman, McNamara, and Grace (2018) that seeking support can be daunting for international students because they have "a more limited ability to articulate the systems they are experiencing" (p. 219).

Considering these challenges, the findings of this study suggest that international graduate teaching assistants can be cultural mediators between U.S. faculty and Asian international students. The TAs have higher English proficiency and experiential knowledge of US culture and higher education. At the same time, they may share some of the same experiences as international students and are culturally familiar with the heritages of Asian international students. The participants in this study received a lot of help and support from the graduate TAs. Some of the participants asked questions to the TAs because they were reluctant to reach out to their professors. The TAs answered the questions themselves or mediated by asking the professors on behalf of the participants and then, shared the professors' responses with the students. Some of the participants also had some TAs whose first language was the same as theirs which allowed them to provide translation and interpretation support for the participants. This linguistic mediation helped them better understand lectures and instructions for assignments. The interactions with TAs helped the participants engage more frequently and qualitatively in the classroom activities.

Another social isolating factor for the participants was their limited interactions with American peers. Their relationships rarely went beyond the classroom and workplace. This is similar to the results reported by other researchers such as Gareis (2012), Glass, Buus, and Braskamp (2013), Glass et al. (2015), Lee and Rice (2007), Pandit and Alderman (2004), and Trice (2004). The participants in this study considered some of their American peers as reluctant or unwilling to do group work together with international students.

These perceptions were also similar to what Leki (2001) reports that the international students in her study were concerned about lack of opportunity to contribute to group projects, and were considered as less capable and positioned as novices while the domestic students saw themselves as masters and experts for the group projects. The domestic students had assumptions that non native-English-speaking international students were incapable of making meaningful contributions to projects, and they used power to deny the international students access to full participating in group-based learning activities. In the findings of this study, some of the participants acknowledged different positions of American and international peers in group work situations. For example, Jina talked about the psychological effects of being labeled and positioned as helpless, dependent, and less capable. She said,

> I am always placed in the position of being dependent and helpless, but I believe I can offer something to other people. It was pretty awkward when I wanted to offer help and people didn't value my help because I am often positioned in that way. So, sometimes I feel like … our opinions [are] not valued as opposed to people who [are] always talking.

This study provides more detailed and contextual explanations of why isolation and separation occur. The participants faced a lot of constraints and limitations in navigating social positions at their host institutions. They were not accustomed to the way their American peers

socialize, and the English spoken in these settings was a different version from that spoken in the classroom. In social settings, people are more likely to use more informal speech such as colloquialisms rather than formal and academic English, which international participants do not understand. This made it more difficult for the participants with limited English proficiency to socialize with American peers. For this reason, they felt socializing with their American peers was not relaxing, but intellectually and socio-linguistically challenging.

The findings also show that some participants chose to isolate themselves even when they wanted to study and otherwise socialize with American peers. This is considered a “contextually forced choice,” because some participants isolated themselves in order to be academically successful. They had to spend so much time preparing for and responding to academic tasks that there was little left for socializing. One of the main reasons is that they have too much processing (work)load while doing study group with domestic students. The language issue made it more difficult for them to see socializing as a friendship incentive. Instead, the participants had to translate back and forth between their native language and English to communicate with American peers, while at the same time working on their assignments or studying academic subjects. Therefore, social isolation was an academic survival strategy for completing assignments in time. The participants took much longer to do assignments than domestic students, so they chose to study alone at the library or at home. This created missed opportunities to be socially connected and integrated with their U.S. peers. As a result, the participants chose social isolation for academic achievement. This is similar to the findings of Hansen, Shneyderman, McNamara, and Grace (2018) that higher-achieving international students exhibited feeling of social disconnectedness. They argued that “universities should not

necessarily assume that academic achievement alone indicates satisfactory social integration or somehow counteracts a sense of not belonging" (p.365).

Social support networks with co-nationals and other Asian international peers helped the participants emotionally and academically, similarly to the findings of Feng (1991) and Yan (2017), whose research participants were Chinese and community among these students was an important factor in their adjustment. Since international students are physically separated from their families and significant others, social supports from faculty and peers in host institutions are essential for their academic success and social adjustments. The relationships of the Asian international students in this study with American faculty and domestic peers were very limited. Social support from their Co-nationals and other Asian international peers were their primary support networks and were powerful factors in their academic and social practices and persistence. This is also consistent with the observation of Andrade and Evans (2009) that the relationships of international students with conationals are influential. They noted further that the social supports from co-nationals can have both positively and negatively emotional and academic benefits through shared experiences, knowledge, and information in the host institution.

Limitations

Major limitations of this study included the small sample size, the nonlongitudinal research, and possibility of researcher bias. Since there were only seven Asian international participants, they cannot be considered representative of all Asian international students in the United States. The results of this study cannot be generalized to a wider population. Since the participants were recruited from one classroom in one department within one university, a singular research site provided a limited perspective on examining the learning experiences of

Asian international students. However, the findings may offer some meaningful insights into theoretical and conceptual notions about the educational experiences of some Asian international students in the U.S. Adding Asian international students from other heritages, colleges or universities in other geographic locations, and areas of the world could provide additional layers of nuance and depth of insights into the questions examined. The participants were all female and all from education major. The inclusion of the perspectives and experiences of Asian international males and students enrolled in other areas of study could have enriched the findings.

Another limitation was the nonlongitudinal design of the study. Data were collected for a six month period through observations, interviews, documents, and member checking. Given that identity, motivation, and social capital and support networks are constructed, situational, and contextual phenomena, they may vary at different places and times. Undoubtedly, this short-term study did not capture all of the variations, nuances, and manifestations of shifting social interactions of the participants.

Another limitation was the possibility of researcher bias. As a Korean international student in the U. S., I acknowledge that my identities, preferences, and perspectives influenced the entire research process including design, data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation. As an insider-researcher, the participants may have felt empathetic with me in the sense that they could be more candid, but they may also have given me what they thought I wanted because they think I am of them. To counter potential biases, I used a member-checking method. I invited the participants to review the data transcriptions and a draft of the research report, as well as providing feedback throughout the entire process of the study. This was done to

ensure that the descriptions captured what they said accurately, and that the findings were informed by their understanding and experiences.

Although this study did not use a comparative research design, since I did not observe other classrooms where the international participants said they actively spoke up, this could be another limitation of the study. To check the validity and truthfulness of the data and some degree of consistency across, I triangulated data by involving multiple data sources such as observation, interview, and document analysis and multiple perspectives from a professor, a teaching assistant, and an American peer as well as by reviewing the course materials such as syllabus of the other courses that the participants talked about in the interviews.

In spite of these limitations, this study still makes an important contribution to the scholarships on the social capital of international students, and how their support networks, identities, and motivations for academic engagement interact. It also may produce some important implications for improving the overall quality of the educational experiences of international students in U. S. colleges and universities.

Significance of the Study

This study raised questions about looking carefully at the quality of the academic life of Asian international students on U.S. college campuses. It provides some guidance as to the type of research that can be done to reveal some of the contextual factors that affect the general quality of their lives, and the consequences of how they interact in their classroom which also affects the quality of their educational learning.

This study also adds to the scholarship on the academic identities of Asian international students, their class participation, their social support networks, and the interactive constructions and connections among these dimensions. Although there are many studies on Asian

international students, there is a lack of research on how academic identities, motives for class participation, and social support constitute each other. This study considers identities as evolving and interacting with contexts through participation in the communities of classroom practices.

Another noteworthy contribution of this study is the detailed contextual explanations it provided for understanding Asian international students' motives for class participation and engaging practices in class discussions. These contextual factors included pedagogy, peer assistance, and inclusive classroom climate. Thus, this study challenges (and may inspire) educators in institutions of higher education to better understand their international students' social and cultural capital to better help them engage more effectively in classroom teaching and learning practices.

This study also challenges some models of identity development that focus mostly on the individuals by providing additional layers of explanations for socially and contextually evolving dimensions of academic identities for international students in U.S. higher education settings. It offers other avenues for examining how socialization in different contexts between home and host countries interact and counteract each other in formulizing personal and academic identities. This study also adds to the body of research on social support networks of Asian international students. It also highlighted some possibilities of positive social support that international TAs can offer as cultural mediators between professors and Asian international students.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practices

Future studies could compare Asian international students from different parts of Asia as well as comparing international students from other parts of the world. It would be beneficial to examine what similarities and differences exist in these different groups. Also, a future research could be conducted over several years rather than months with larger number of Asian

international students. A longitudinal study would offer the possibility to track and capture the contextually interacting and mutually constitutive characteristics of academic identity, motives for class participation, and social support of international students over time. It could begin with observing them in several different classes to see how they navigate and negotiate participating and engaging in the community of practices of different classes. While this study was conducted at a university in the Pacific Northwestern region of the U. S., future studies could involve Asian international students from other geographic locations for comparative analyses.

This study focused on only female students since in the majors of the participants, females were the dominant population. Future studies could include both male and female Asian international students, and students in traditionally male dominant areas of study such as STEM. This may capture how the gender identities of Asian international students affect their class participation and social support networks. Similarly, future studies could be done in different disciplines. The participants of the study were recruited from the social science, but it would be beneficial to conduct a similar study in the science, technology, engineering, math, or medical schools to see if the area of study has any impact on students' opportunities for the quality of interactions in class discourse.

The findings of this study indicate that different linguistic proficiency and different years of cross-cultural experiences among Asian international students provide different opportunities and resources which affect how they academically identify with the community of classroom practices, and how they engage with those practices. Another extension of this study could be exploring issues and challenges of international students from English speaking countries. It would be insightful to see how the removal of the variable of English proficiency affect the academic identity and engagement of international students, such as those from European and

Caribbean countries. Would identity as a racial minority or a majority be a salient factor? Future studies might also explore how social support networks of international students change over time, and what factors facilitate international students' intercultural interactions and friendships with American peers.

Conclusion

This qualitative study provided some insights to better understand the academic and social experiences of Asian international students from sociocultural perspectives. By using a situative theory, the analyses focused on interactions among social practices, experiences, and resources Asian international student participants bring into their host society, the ways they are positioned in the classroom, opportunities they receive to participate in classroom practices, and their own individual agency.

This study was inspired by my personal experiences as an international student in US higher education and based on the simple question of, "I came to the U.S. for a better education, but do I really have 'better' learning practices with all the opportunities?" I was struggling with a lack of social support in the U.S., and was not satisfied with the levels of social and academic engagement that I made when I first arrived. I was very limited in speaking up and participating in class discussions due to so many barriers. I was a successful student in South Korea, but in the US classroom, I felt like I was dumb and a loser. I spent time blaming myself for not being able to actively participate in class until I realized the cultural discontinuity and disparity between my home culture and my U.S. university culture.

While speaking up in class and actively participating in discussion are common expectations of successful students in US colleges and universities, I was socialized differently at the schools in my home country. I brought the skills and tools that had been successful for me

into my host institution, but they were ineffective in this new context. Since I was not from the dominant cultures of the U.S. university and country, I had difficulties in adapting my home social and cultural practices to those normative for the university. Along with linguistic and cultural challenges, I had to navigate and negotiate my position as a novice in new cultural and academic contexts. My personal experiences made me more empathetic with my research participants as they struggled with similar challenges and dilemmas. Hopefully, this sense of affinity will serve me equally as well in my future as an educator who is likely to have international students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the courses I will teach. I find encouragement from researchers and educators who study international students, and the insights they provide on the academic and social experiences, problems, and possibilities of international students. I hope this study will add to their efforts to counter the deficit view of Asian international students, and enhance understanding of and corrections for their marginalizing experiences.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Email Invitation Letter

College of Education
University of Washington
2012 Skagit Lane, Miller Hall Box 353600
Seattle, WA 98195-3600

Dear [Student Name],

I am writing to ask you to take part in a research study. The goal of this study is to explore Asian international students' academic experiences in US higher education in terms of their identity and motivation transition in relation to learning practices and how they experience social support from the relationships with (1) faculty (2) peers (3) teaching assistants in US college and university settings. From this study, I would like to understand academic and social contexts surrounding Asian international students, including the presence and/or degree of prejudice or stereotype toward Asian international students and how these academic and social features affect Asian international students' experiences and opportunities.

I am undertaking this study as part of doctoral studies at the University of Washington. In addition, I may use information from this study to inform my doctoral dissertation.

In this study, I hope to conduct interviews with [You/Student's Name] regarding your learning experiences as an Asian international student in US higher education. If you choose to be in this study, I would like to observe (for roughly 90 minutes) your classes of your choice. Then, I will interview you about your academic experiences in relation to your identity and motivation transition and social interactions with your faculty, peers, and teaching assistants and what difficulties or challenges you have in your learning practices. This interview will last no more than 120 minutes. The study is not in any way evaluative of you or your school, nor of your progress. I will take steps to ensure that the study is not intrusive for you.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. A participant can stop at any time, and all information is confidential. If the results of the study are published or presented, I will not use the names of people, names of schools, or any other information that would identify participants, the school, or the district. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Dr. Geneva Gay at the University of Washington College of Education, 206-221-4797. You may also contact Human Subjects Division, University of Washington, Box 359470, Seattle, Washington 98195-9470, Telephone: 206-543-0098, Email: hsdinfo@uw.edu.

Thank you for considering this opportunity. I will be contacting you shortly by phone to discuss this with you further. Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me by phone (206) 696-3271 or via email at necheon@uw.edu.

Yours sincerely,

Naeun Cheon

Graduate Student
Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education
University of Washington

Appendix B

Consent to Participate in Research Study

University of Washington

Study of Asian international students' social support, identity, and motivation in U. S. higher education

Investigator:

Naeun Cheon
College of Education
Multicultural education
necheon@uw.edu, 206-696-3271

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Geneva Gay
ggay@uw.edu, 206-221-4797

Investigator's Statement

I am asking you to be in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you all the information you will need to help you decide whether or not to be in the study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." I will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore Asian international students' academic experiences in US higher education and how they experience social support from the relationships with 1) faculty 2) peers 3) international teaching assistants in U.S. college and university settings. I would like to understand academic and social contexts surrounding Asian international students by examining their learning experiences and relationships with faculty, peers, and teaching assistants, including the presence and/or degree of prejudice or stereotype toward Asian international students and how these academic and social features affect Asian international students' experiences and opportunities.

PROCEDURES

If you choose to be in this study, I would like to interview you about your academic experiences and interactions with 1) faculty, 2) peers, and 3) teaching assistants and how these academic and social features affect your adjustment to US host society, academic achievement, and opportunities. If you choose to be in this study, I would like to observe (for roughly 90 minutes) your classes of your choice under your agreement. After the initial observation, I will conduct interviews. Each interview will last about two hours. In case that additional questions need to be answered, there will be follow up interviews. For example, I will ask you, "How comfortable did you feel in this class?" and "What is the most interesting activity to you among the class activities in the class?" I want to get a sense of how you experience your academic learning and social relationships with faculty, peers, and international teaching assistants in US higher education settings.

With your permission, I would like to audio tape your interview so that I can have an accurate record of our conversation. Within three weeks of the interviews, I will create a written transcript of the conversation that will identify you by a pseudonym only, and then I will destroy the original recording, leaving only the coded transcript of the interview. Only I will have access to the recording, which will be kept in a secure location. If you would like a copy of the interview transcript, I will gladly provide you with one.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

Some people feel that providing information for research is an invasion of privacy. I have addressed concerns for your privacy in the section below. Some people feel self-conscious when notes are taken or interviews are recorded.

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

As a thank you, you will be given a $5 Starbucks's gift card as a reward for taking part in this study. You may not directly benefit from taking part in this research study. One benefit of this study is the possibility of developing new insights about how to support increasing Asian international students in higher education settings. Another benefit may be the opportunity to reflect on your work and university experiences. I may use information from this study as a foundation for my doctoral dissertation.

OTHER INFORMATION

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You can stop at any time. Information about you is confidential. I will assign you a pseudonym and code the study information. I will keep the link between your name and the pseudonym code in a separate, secured location until June 2016. Then I will destroy the information linking your information to the pseudonym. If the results of this study are published or presented, I will not use your name, or any other identifying information.

Government or university staff sometimes review studies such as this one to make sure they are being done safely and legally. If a review of this study takes place, your records may be examined. The reviewers will protect your privacy. The study records will not be used to put you at legal risk of harm.

I may want to re-contact you for future related studies. Please indicate below whether you give me permission to re-contact you. Giving me permission to re-contact you does not obligate you in any way.

If you have any questions about this research study, please contact Naeun Cheon at the telephone number or email listed at the top of this form. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Dr. Geneva Gay at the University of Washington College of Education, 206-221-4797. You may also contact Human Subjects Division, University of Washington, Box 359470, Seattle, Washington 98195-9470, Telephone: 206-543-0098, Email: hsdinfo@uw.edu.

____

Signature of investigator Printed Name Date

Participant's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later on about the research, I can ask the investigator listed above. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can call Human Subjects Division, University of Washington, Box 359470, Seattle, Washington 98195-9470, Telephone: 206-543-0098, Email: hsdinfo@uw.edu. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

____ I give permission for this researcher to observe my class.
____ I do NOT give my permission for the researcher to observe my class.

____ I give permission for this researcher to audiotape my interview.
____ I do NOT give my permission for the researcher to audiotape my interview.

____ I give permission for the researcher to re-contact me to clarify information.
____ I do NOT give permission for the researcher to re-contact me to clarify information.

____

Signature of participant Printed Name Date

Copies to: Investigators' file
Participant

Appendix C

Observation Guide

Field notes will be recorded during observation in classroom, with a focus on the following information:

Classroom Observation (The class could include: lectures, classroom discussions, group activities, watching video clips in class, and presentations.)

Context:
Date and Time______________________________
Class Topic____________________________
Site:____________________________________
Location in building:_________________________________
Number of Participants__________________________
Demographics (gender, race, age, relationship to child: parent, grandparent, aunt/uncle etc.) of participants ___________________________
Purpose of the lesson and agenda and how is it explained to participants?__________________________

Physical Components of Classroom

- How is the space designed for teaching (seating arrangement, tables, chairs, positions of each)? How many students in class?
- How do people arrange themselves? Where is the teacher's position when teaching?

Teacher's Interactions with Participants:

- How does the teacher communicate (verbally & nonverbally) with his or her students? Is the tone formal or informal and in what ways? What role does he or she play?
- What words and expressions does this teacher use to refer to students (American vs. Asian international students)?
- What behaviors and talks of students do teachers compliment or tell off?
- Does the teacher know students' names? How does the teacher invite students to participate in class activities in general? How does the teacher interact with American students and Asian international students?
- How does the teacher interact with TAs (if there are TAs in that class)?
- How does the teacher respond to the students when they ask questions or speak up to express their opinions? How does the teacher respond to the situations when nobody speaks up to the questions that the teacher asks in class?
- What teaching practice or strategies does the teacher use for culturally diverse students or non-native English speakers?

Interactions with Peers

- Who is greeting and welcoming participants?
- Are participants arriving on time?
- What do people do before class starts?
- Do participants get up and move or stay stationary? How they interact with peers during observation?
- What is happening after class? Are participants continuing discussions with peers? Or do participants leave immediately?

International (Graduate) Teaching Assistants and Participants Interactions

- How do ITAs introduce themselves?
- How are participants invited to collaborate or participate in the class? (WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION/PAIR SHARE/SMALL GROUP?)
- What is body language between participants and ITAs? (Is there laughter, silence, checking phones, eye rolling, fidgeting, crossing arms?)
- Are some participants speaking or sharing more than others?
- What is happening after class? Are ITAs debriefing?

Personal observations

- How is your role as an observer or participant affecting the scene you are observing?
- What do you say and do?

ANALYTIC QUESTIONS

- AN: What is the power dynamic among the teacher, peers, TAs, and participants?
- AN: How they are interacting (or not interacting) during class (including body language / posture / gesture)?

Appendix D

Interview protocol for the participants

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with me. As you know, I am interested in learning more about your work and experience as an Asian international student in US higher education. I am especially interested in understanding your academic experiences and how your identity and motivation navigate during cross-cultural transition in relation to social relationships with (1) faculty (2) peers (3) international (graduate) teaching assistants in US college and university settings. This study will also examine the kinds of constraints are present in learning and engaging in learning practices and in relationships with faculty, peers, and administrative staffs as well as the kinds of supports you need. Everything you say will be kept confidential, and all information will be de-identified. Please feel free to share your thoughts as honestly as possible. Your candid responses will help me understand more about your experience.

Date & Time of Interview: / Location:
Interviewee's Pseudonym:

1. Before we get started, could you tell me a little bit about your backgrounds and how you came to study to US higher education?
   a. Undergraduate student or Graduate student? / Country of origin / Years of learning experience in the institution / Related area of study / English is your first language?
   b. What triggered your interest in coming to study in the United States?

2. Imagine that a new Asian international student has come to your department and you are her mentor. What would you tell her about how to adjust to U.S. higher education in terms of successful academic achievement and social relationships with faculty, peers, and teaching assistants?
   Probe-a: What do you think she would need? How would she get support?
   Probe-b: What would you have to offer her?

3. How do you identify yourself among multiple identities that you have (e.g. racial, ethnic, linguistic, gender, ability, sexual orientation, national, and academic identity)?
   a. Before you came to the U.S.?
   b. When you just came to the U.S.?
   c. After one (or several) year(s) at your host institution?

4. What is the most interesting activity to you among the class activities in the class? and in other classes? Why? What is the meaning or definition of "a successful student" that you had in your home country and that you have in the class?

5. How comfortable did you feel in this class? How comfortable did you feel in other classes? How do you engage in learning in this class vs. in other classes?

6. Have you experienced any challenges in learning or engaging while doing class activities? If yes, could you describe those challenges? Do you think these experiences affect your understanding of who you are? Why?

7. What motivates you to engage in learning practices in the class? What goals do you have in this class? Are these goals congruent with your goals in your home country?

8. Do you think that your motivations for learning and engagement have increased after moving to a new culture or decreased? How and why?

9. Why did you take this class and how taking this class relates to your future career?

10. What experiences do you have in relationships with your faculty in US higher education?

    a. Could you give me some examples if you experience any positive or negative interactions with faculty in this class and in other classes?
    b. Can you compare to other classes that you have taken at your host institution with regard to your social experiences with faculty?

11. What experiences do you have in relationships with your peers in US higher education?
    a. How many friends do you have from the other group? How many friends do you have from American peers and how many from international students?
    b. How many times do you mingle with American peers in a week? With international students?
    c. Do you prefer to stay within your community of fellow international students or do you spend time interacting with American peers? Why?
    d. Have you experienced studying together or working together with your American peers? If yes, how have you done team works with your peers for a class team project? Could you give me some examples with your American peers and international peers?
    e. Have you gotten any information, resource, advice, help or offer from your American or international peers? If yes, how?

12. What experiences do you have in relationships with teaching assistants?
    a. Could you give me some examples if you experience any positive or negative interactions with teaching assistants in this class and in other classes?
    b. Can you compare to other classes that you have taken at your host institution with regard to your social experiences with teaching assistants?
    c. Have you gotten any information, resource, advice, help or offer from your teaching assistants for your successful academic or social adjustment or achievement? If yes, how? OR have you experienced any prejudice or stereotype toward Asian international students from your teaching assistants? If yes, how?

13. Can you compare your academic experiences in the class to those in other classes that you have taken at your host institution with regard to classroom activities or learning practices and interactions with faculty, peers, and TAs?

Appendix E

Interview protocol for instructors, TAs, and peers

Interview protocol for instructors and TAs

1. What do you think students should learn from this class? What do you think the most important **takeaway** from this class for students and for Asian international students?

2. What is your role for teaching in this class?

3. How did you interact with Asian international students in the class?

4. What do you think of experiences of Asian international students in the class?

5. Have you experienced any challenges in engaging with them in the class?

6. How did you try to motivate or engage students including international students?

Interview protocol for peers

1. How did you interact with Asian international students in the class? What are the experiences with them?

2. How comfortable did you feel in interacting with them in this class?

3. Have you experienced any challenges in or benefits from engaging with them?

Appendix F

FERPA CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
Office of the Registrar
Seattle, Washington 98195

CONSENT TO RELEASE RECORDS

I, ____, hereby give my consent to the
(Student Name)
University of Washington to release my____
(specify records to be released)
to ____ for the purpose of
(Specific party or class of parties to receive records)
____ .
(State exact purpose of release)

I do / do not request that the University of Washington provide me a copy of the records
(circle one)
released pursuant to this consent.

I understand that the University of Washington will provide the records cited above only with the condition that the receiving party or parties may not disclose the information, other than directory information, to other parties without my further consent, unless such other parties are otherwise eligible under federal law to receive the records. I further understand that any statements that I have placed in my records commenting on contested information contained in the records listed above will be released along with the records to which they relate.

____ / __________________
Signature of Student Date

VITA

NAEUN CHEON

University of Washington
Multicultural Education, Curriculum & Instruction
necheon@uw.edu

EDUCATIONS

University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA, September 2014 – June 2019
Ph.D., Multicultural Education in Curriculum and Instruction

University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA, September 2011 - March 2013
Master of Education, Curriculum and Instruction

Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul, Korea, March 2005 - February 2009
Bachelor of Arts, Educational Psychology
Bachelor of Arts, English Language and Literature

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

January 2019 – June 2019, Reader/Grader for EDPSY 380 Adult Learning and Development, College of Education, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA

- Assisted the instructor in designing the course and graded student assignments

June 2018 – September 2018, Graduate Research Student Assistant for the RED project, College of Education, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA

- Analyzed qualitative data of the RED research survey with open-ended questions by using Atlas.Ti software program

March 2018 – June 2018, Reader/Grader for EDUC 210 Education and Access to the Good Life (Educational theories), College of Education, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA

- Graded weekly essays and final essays

March 2018 – June 2018, Reader/Grader for EDPSY 380 Adult Learning and Development, College of Education, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA

- Assisted the instructor by monitoring students' comments and communicating with them via Twitter about their takeaways from the class

October 2016 – May 2018, Research Assistant for the RED project (non-paid), College of Education, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA

- Analyzed qualitative data of the RED research survey with open-ended questions by using Atlas.Ti software program

March 2016 – June 2016, Reader/Grader, College of Education, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA

- Assisted the course instructor with lessons and evaluated in-class reflections, student assignments, and group projects

March 2015 – June 2015, Reader/Grader for EDSPE 419 Family and Community Influences on the Young Child, College of Education, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA

- Assisted the instructor with lessons and evaluated homework, tests and community projects

March 2014 – July 2014, English teacher, Muryong High School, Ulsan, South Korea

August 2013 - December 2013, English teacher, Beomseo High School, Ulsan, South Korea

January 2013 - April 2013, Korean teacher, Antioch Korean School, Renton, WA, USA

February 2012 - April 2013, Korean teacher, Seattle First Korean Church, Seattle, WA, USA

January - February 2011, Research Assistant, Teaching and Learning Center, University of Seoul, Seoul, South Korea

- Analyzed quantitative research data with SPSS software program

June 2010, Research Assistant, College of Education, Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul, South Korea

- Conducted surveys and researched the statistics of employment of graduate students of the College of Education
- Consulted undergraduate students at College of Education for job searching and provided information on career development

ACADEMIC HONORS & AWARDS

2018 - 2019 College of Education Scholarship, University of Washington

March 2018, Doi Doctoral Research Award, College of Education, University of Washington

2014 - 2016 Fulbright Graduate Study Award, U.S. Department of States (IIE) Grant

2nd Semester 2005 - 2009, Honor Student, Received scholarships from Sookmyung Women's University

PRESENTATIONS

Davis, S. C., Nolen, S. B., Moise, E. C., & Cheon, N. Investigating Student Perceptions of an Engineering Department's Climate: The Role of Peer Relations. Presented at the annual meeting of American Society for Engineering Education, 2018.

Davis, S. C., Nolen, S. B., Cheon, N., & Moise, E. C. Investigating Factors Related to Disciplinary Identification and Persistence in Undergraduate Engineering Education. Presented at the annual meeting of American Educational Research Association, 2018.

Cheon, N. Mixed heritage identity of an Afro-Latina teacher in context. Invited presentation for the annual meeting of the Korean Association of Multicultural Education, Seoul, South Korea, May 19, 2017.

Cheon, N. Identity, motivation, social support of Asian international students in U. S. higher education, Invited poster presentation for Fulbright Educational Justice Seminar, Washington D.C., April 27 – May 1, 2016.

PUBLICATION

Cheon, N. (2009). The impact of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) on self-regulated learning and problem solving skills (Unpublished Bachelor degree thesis). Sookmyung Women's University. Seoul: South Korea.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Manuscript Review for American Society for Engineering Education "Integrating Inclusive Practices into a Material Science Course" (In press)

Manuscript Review for Multicultural Education Review (Moosung Lee & Yun-Kyung Cha, Editors) "Culturally Inclusive Global Citizenship Education: Metaphysical and Non-Western Approaches" (In press)

CERTIFICATE, LANGUAGES & SKILLS

Teaching Certificates for Secondary Education, English and School Counseling, South Korea
Languages: Korean/English
Computer Skills: ATLAS.ti, SPSS, Qualtrics, and MS word/PowerPoint/Excel