First-Year Multilingual International Students' Academic Socialization and Identity: Narratives of Personal, Social and Academic Development

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Abstract

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This study examines the academic socialization of seven first-year multilingual international students at the University of Washington in the context of the increased linguistic and cultural diversification of US universities. Building on previous studies of academic literacy practices and academic socialization among multilingual undergraduates (e.g., Kobayashi, 2016; Leki, 2007; Li, 2020; Sheridan, 2011; Wu, 2019; Yang, 2010; Zamel & Spack, 1998, 2004; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015; Zuo, 2015), this dissertation explores the academic demands placed on first-year multilingual international students, as well as the strategies and

resources they used to respond to those demands. Through an examination of the factors influencing students' academic socialization, their self-positioning, and the relationship between students' identity and their process of academic socialization, the study brings to light the voices of multilingual international students as they negotiate academic tasks and activities and integrate into the campus community. Data were collected over one academic quarter in the students' first year in the form of audio-recorded interviews, observations of students' school days, focus group discussion, and course documents. Follow-up interviews with students were conducted in the students' second year. Key findings reveal that students navigated academic challenges such as course readings, class discussions, and group work by leveraging metacognitive skills, effective time and workload management, self-efficacy, help-seeking behaviors, and friend networks. The process of selecting a major and joining academic cohorts was crucial for their academic and social integration, whether students entered STEM, business, or humanities fields. The study findings suggest a need for holistic support systems that address academic, social, and cultural dimensions of international students' experiences, including targeted academic services, cross-cultural communication initiatives, and other inclusion efforts. This study contributes to our understanding of the nuanced experiences of multilingual international students, appreciating both their generalized and highly individualized experiences. By understanding the challenges and resources involved in students' academic socialization as well as their perspectives on the process, members of the academic community may become more equipped to meet the needs of incoming first-year multilingual international students through pedagogical, curricular, or institutional initiatives.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements **9**

List of Tables **11**

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION **12**

1.1 Personal Background **12**

1.2 Institutional Context **14**

1.3 Research Context **15**

1.3.1 Purpose of the Study **16**

1.3.2 Research Questions **17**

1.4 Organization of the Dissertation **18**

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW **20**

2.1 Academic Socialization and Identity **20**

2.1.1 Language Socialization **20**

2.1.2 Language Identity **23**

2.2 Academic Practices and Collaborative Work **29**

2.2.1 Oral Interactions **30**

2.2.2 Classroom Participation **31**

2.2.3 Peer Collaboration In and Out of Class **35**

2.3 Academic Engagement and Social Integration **37**

2.3.1 Academic Engagement **37**

2.3.2 Academic and Social Integration **38**

2.3.3 Sense of Belonging **40**

2.4 Conclusion **42**

CHAPTER 3: FRAMING THE STUDY/METHODS **44**

3.1 Introduction **44**

3.2 Theoretical Approaches **44**

3.2.1 Sociocultural and Poststructuralist Theories of Identity **44**

3.2.2 Situated Learning and Community of Practice **45**

3.3 Methodological Approaches **48**

3.3.1 Qualitative Methods with Ethnographic Traits **49**

3.3.2 Narrative Inquiry **50**

3.3.3 Participants **52**

3.3.4 Settings **53**

3.3.4.1 Data Collection/Sources **54**

Table 1 ... **54**
3.3.5 Data Analysis ... **59**
Table 2 ... **61**
3.3.6 Tensions and Limitations ... **62**
CHAPTER 4: INTRODUCING THE STUDENTS ... **67**
4.1 Emma ... **68**
4.2 Eve ... **73**
4.3 Chloe ... **77**
4.4 Cassandra ... **83**
4.5 Arielle ... **90**
4.6 Frances ... **96**
4.7 Jae ... **101**
4.8 Conclusion ... **107**
Table 3 ... **108**
Table 4 ... **109**
CHAPTER 5: ACADEMIC TASKS AND STRATEGIES ... **110**
5.1 Selected Academic Tasks ... **110**
5.1.1 Course Readings ... **110**
5.1.1.1 Prior Experiences with Reading in English ... **111**
5.1.1.2 Active Reading Techniques ... **114**
5.1.1.3 External Factors Influencing Reading Skills and Practices ... **117**
5.1.1.4 Conclusions on the Course Readings ... **119**
5.1.2 Class Discussion ... **120**
5.1.2.1 Challenges of Class Participation ... **121**
5.1.2.2 Conditions for Successful Participation in Class Discussion ... **126**
5.1.2.3 Conclusions on Challenges and Successes in Class Discussion ... **131**
5.1.3 Independent vs. Collaborative Work ... **132**
5.1.3.1 Independent Learning ... **133**
5.1.3.2 Group Work ... **134**
5.1.3.3 Conclusions on Group Work ... **136**
5.2 Skills, Strategies and Metacognitive Awareness ... **137**
5.2.1 Study Strategies ... **137**
5.2.1.1 Study Groups ... **137**
5.2.1.2 Note-taking ... **141**

5.2.1.3 Preparation for Exams ... 142
5.2.1.4 Students' Notions of How to Succeed ... 145
5.2.2 Transfer ... 153
5.2.3 General Knowledge of one's Strengths and Challenges ... 157
5.2.4 Time and Workload Management ... 165
5.2.5 Conclusion ... 170
CHAPTER 6: OTHER FACTORS INFLUENCING ACADEMIC SOCIALIZATION ... 172
6.1 Academic Predispositions: Course planning and long-term academic plans ... 172
6.2 Evidence of Self-efficacy ... 176
6.3 Selecting a Major ... 189
6.4 Help Seeking Behaviors ... 206
6.4.1 Professor's Office Hours ... 206
6.4.2 Review Sessions ... 215
6.5 Effects of Friend Networks ... 216
6.6 Conclusions on Other Influencing Factors ... 220
CHAPTER 7: IDENTITY ... 222
7.1 Integration into the Campus Community ... 222
7.1.1 Role of Social Life in Identity Formation ... 222
7.1.1.1 Social Skills ... 229
7.1.1.2 Interactions with Roommates ... 233
7.1.2 English Proficiency ... 236
7.1.3 Language Use and Choice ... 240
7.1.4 Campus Jobs ... 248
7.1.5 Conclusions on Integration into the Campus Community ... 254
7.2 Student Identity ... 254
7.2.1 Good Student Identity ... 255
7.2.2 Identity as a Planner ... 263
7.2.3 Academic Adventurers/Extracurricular Explorers ... 265
7.2.4 Leadership ... 269
7.2.5 Conclusions on Student Identity ... 272
7.3 Students' Sense of Belonging at the University and Beyond ... 273
7.3.1 On- and Off-Campus Activities ... 274
7.3.1.1 Campus Activities ... 274
7.3.1.2 Off-Campus Activities ... 277

7.3.2 Race and National Origin 280
7.3.3 Power and Authority 294
7.3.4 Conclusions on the Factors Influencing Students' Sense of Belonging 299
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS 301
8.1 Summary of the Interpretation of Data Chapters 302
8.2 Findings in Response to the Research Questions 309
8.3 Points of Convergence with Campus Surveys from 2015 313
8.4 Additional Implications 319
REFERENCES 323
APPENDIX 336

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List of Tables

Table 1 Sources of Data

Table 2 Examples of Code Networks, Code Families & Codes

Table 3 Focal Students' Profiles

Table 4 Selected Accomplishments of the Focal Students

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I introduce the dissertation study of seven multilingual international students. I situate the study by presenting my personal background, and I then describe both the institutional and research contexts for the study. Next, I explain the purpose of the project and the research questions guiding the study. I conclude the chapter with a description of the organization of the dissertation.

1.1 Personal Background

I began my Master of Arts in TESOL studies in the Department of English at the University of Washington, a large, public, research university in an urban center in the Pacific Northwest with a vested interest in second language (L2) socialization in academic, athletic, and workplace environments. I myself had experienced two years of study abroad at the undergraduate and graduate levels in France, and had lived, rowed, and worked for two years in Spain. With this sort of experiential, immersion-style language learning as part of my background, I sought to explore elements of my own L2 socialization experiences from a theoretical perspective at the master's level. Early on, I was exposed to theories of identity (Norton Pierce, 1995) and situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). I was then able to blend this interest in theory with my teaching practice when I started teaching academic reading and writing to university-matriculated multilingual students. In this context, I explored practices outside of merely reading and writing to include the presentations, group work and other communicative acts that characterize academic literacy classes. Acknowledging the various communicative situations students encounter in their university classes, I have sought to incorporate a range of activities in my teaching in my Academic English Program courses, expository writing courses and disciplinary writing courses, thus allowing students to practice

the target skills - whether reading, writing, building content knowledge and rhetorical awareness, or grammar - in a student-centered, communicative way.

Furthermore, in teaching classes like English 108, a preparatory college writing course designed to build students' reading and writing fluency, group work, and basic research, communication, and presentation skills, I witnessed one avenue through which international students are exposed to campus resources. In this class, not only did I help my multilingual students adapt academically to their new classroom environment, but I strived to build their awareness of additional resources available to them, whether through social or athletic activities, support for their health and emotional well-being, or academic resources on campus. In teaching multilingual sections of English 199, a linked, multilingual section of English 131, and the General Studies 391 studio courses, I also gained first-hand knowledge of students' use of writing centers, studio courses, and targeted tutoring, sometimes all in combination with one another. This study derives from my interest in the resources multilingual students have chosen to use in developing academic competency in the university environment. Several years of commenting on multilingual writers' work, observing strategies they use to meet academic demands, and reflecting on how relative novices learn to accomplish academic tasks leads me to the present research.

At the time of my entrance into the doctoral program in Language & Rhetoric, I noticed a marked change in the departmental composition program's interest in incorporating teaching strategies for multilingual writers into all classrooms and in its overall preparation for undergraduate multilingual students. Through a series of curricular adaptations offered in the 100-level composition classes, such as linked classes and self-identified multilingual sections, as well as pedagogical initiatives in instructor training, such as a statement on the role of grammar

correctness, de-emphasis on grades, and varied pathways for students' revision of their work for the final portfolio, the composition program has made adjustments to meet the academic literacy needs of incoming students, and has worked in conjunction with other campus entities to garner support for multilingual students in the form of studio courses, targeted tutoring, academic support courses, and writing center expansions. These changes have been undertaken with good reason, since a notable part of the multilingual student population is composed of international students, who have been enrolling at this university in increasing numbers.

1.2 Institutional Context

At this institution, during the years surrounding the current study, the incoming first-year class comprised approximately 15% international students, with 974 incoming first-year international students in September 2013. Notably, in the five years from 2010 to 2015, total numbers of undergraduate international students in the US surpassed the total number of graduate international students (Institute for International Education, 2015), reflecting a trend in Asian countries to send students away for their education at younger and younger ages. According to the Open Doors Report for the 2014-15 school year, the University of Washington hosted 8035 international students, ranking 10th among US institutions for total numbers of undergraduate and graduate international students. More recently, in the 2022-23 school year, the University of Washington held the 12th position with 10,198 international students at the undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate levels. During the two school years of the pandemic, 2020-21 and 2021-22, numbers of international students in the US dropped, but have recently returned to an upward trend, with an increase of 12.4% in 2022-23 over the previous year. Updates in the Open Doors data charts for the school year 2022-23 indicate that undergraduate enrollment in the US was at 347,602 and will likely continue the increasing trend. In September

2023, 3,964 international students were enrolled at the UW Seattle campus at the undergraduate level. This represented a return to the university's pre-pandemic numbers as it has continued to prioritize globalization, one facet of which is to host a large international student population.

With the increasing numbers of undergraduate multilingual international students in the US and an institutional focus on globalization at the UW, educators have demonstrated a growing concern for the academic well-being of this student population (Silberstein et al., 2016a, b, c), recognizing the need to facilitate their adaptation to the demands of the academic community in order to promote learning. In particular, awareness of multilingual university students' language needs, rights and orientations has been growing over time (Harklau, Losey & Siegal, 1999; Roberge, Siegal & Harklau, 2009). The question of how international students handle myriad academic tasks, from writing papers, to giving presentations, to collaborating in lab work, to participating in class discussions is of significance at this moment of heightened linguistic and cultural diversification of US universities, and more importantly, is of interest to professors, researchers, support program staff, administrators, and international students themselves at the University of Washington.

1.3 Research Context

In light of the growing linguistic and cultural diversity in undergraduate composition and writing courses across the curriculum, explorations of how multilingual students acquire academic discourse and experience disciplinary socialization have proliferated in recent years. In the field of applied linguistics, writing studies have traditionally focused on how students acquire academic literacy in English as a Second Language (ESL) or English for Academic Purposes classes (cf. Leki, Cumming & Silva, 2008), and parallel currents within the field of composition studies have directed attention at L1 students' acquisition of target discourses (e.g.,

Johns, 2005). The major contributions to the area of L2 academic socialization, academic discourse socialization (Duff, 2010; Duff & Yamamoto, 2024; Kobayashi et al. 2017; Morita & Kobayashi, 2008), academic literacies (Duff, 2010; Lea & Street,1998, 2006), or academic enculturation have examined writing (Casanave, 1995, 2002; Leki, 2007; Prior, 1998; Spack, 1997), oral activities (Duff & Kobayashi, 2010; Morita, 2000, 2004; Ortactepe, 2013; Zappa-Hollman, 2007), and other academic activities such as group work (Leki, 2001; Vickers, 2007).

While many research studies have been carried out on the academic enculturation of graduate students in a range of disciplines, few edited volumes focus primarily on the academic socialization of multilingual undergraduates (Cox, Jordan, Ortmeier-Hooper & Schwartz, 2010; Harklau, Siegal & Losey, 1999; Roberge, Siegal & Harklau, 2009; Zamel & Spack, 1998, 2004), few published studies examine this process for undergraduate multilingual students (Blanton, 2005; Leki, 1999, 2007; Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008; Spack, 1997; Starfield, 2002), and even fewer focus on undergraduate first-year multilingual international students outside of composition classrooms (2 cases in Leki, 2007). In a new academic context, students typically find conflicts among the identities they bring with them and the ones supported by the discourses and practices of the new community (Ivanič, 1998). Casanave (2008) suggests that L2 international students experience an additional layer of socialization in relation to their peers who have been socialized in the US educational system: not only do they need to acclimate to the linguistic and cultural demands of a new academic setting, but they must also learn ways of being in their new academic community.

1.3.1 Purpose of the Study

Building on previous studies of academic literacy practices among multilingual undergraduates (Leki, 2007; Sheridan, 2011; Zamel & Spack, 1998, 2004; Zuo, 2015), this

dissertation explores the academic demands placed on first-year international students, as well as the strategies they use to respond to those demands. Since sparse attention has been paid to the resources students use – whether coping strategies (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999), or L1 or co-national peer networks (e.g., Ho, 2011; Major, 2005; Seloni, 2012; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015), or campus resources such as writing centers (Okuda & Anderson, 2018), studio courses and other forms of support in the academic socialization process (Bastien, Seifen-Adkins & Johnson, 2018), this study contributes to the body of knowledge on multilingual students, of which first-year international students are just one part, so that educational practices and support resources can be adapted to suit the growing multilingual student population in tertiary education in the US. The intention of this study is to provide a balanced view of potential limitations and possibilities in the academic socialization of international students, and to gain insights into this process for first-year students in particular.

The overall purpose of the study is to examine the settings and experiences that constitute academic socialization for first-year multilingual international students at the University of Washington. In this study, students' additional language development is observed in the ways they perceive their academic socialization needs and negotiate academic literacy tasks in their classes and other routine academic activities. The study explores the connection between students' past literacy experiences, their investment in academic socialization, and their current use of resources. Students' self- positioning in terms of membership in their academic discourse communities, and the relationship between their identity and the process of academic socialization has also been examined.

1.3.2 Research Questions

Through qualitative research methods, I explored the following overarching question:

What constitutes academic socialization for first-year multilingual international students and how do students seek to achieve this?

The study was guided by the following sub-questions:

- How do students perceive the tasks related to academic socialization and how do they seek to accomplish these?
- What difficulties do they face in accomplishing their academic tasks?
- How do students position themselves in terms of membership in their academic discourse communities?
- How does identity shape the resources students use for academic socialization?
- What other factors impinge on their academic socialization?

The study shows 1) the most salient academic tasks identified by the focal students, 2) drawbacks and successes of the skills and strategies they used in their academic tasks, 3) the support students sought to achieve their academic goals, and 4) their identities and sense of belonging at the university. Furthermore, since the number of multilingual international undergraduate students has been on the rise in US universities in recent years, the study has implications and potential benefits not only for stakeholders at the University of Washington, but for other universities in the US.

1.4 Organization of the Dissertation

Readers may find this dissertation lengthy, but it is my way of capturing the lives of my seven focal students and honoring their voices through the stories they wished to share about their university experience. In this dissertation, I have begun with an introduction to academic socialization research, including the significance and purpose of the study. In Chapter 2, I provide an overview of the literature on academic socialization of multilingual international students. I focus on academic socialization and identity research in English-medium university settings; I also incorporate research on academic and social integration and its relation to

students' sense of belonging at the university. Next, in Chapter 3, I discuss the theoretical framework guiding the study, and the methodical approaches I have used to gather and process the data. My study is informed by poststructuralist notions of identity as they intersect with a sociocultural view of learning in a community-of-practice model. Through qualitative, ethnographic methods, the study undertakes a purposeful sampling of seven undergraduate international students and their instructors across various disciplines. I seek to understand the focal students' experiences, identities, and strategies within the academic context through interviews, observations and shadowing of students' school days, focus group discussion, and document collection for data triangulation. My objective in the data analysis is to provide rich, contextualized insights into the students' perceptions of the factors influencing their academic socialization at the university. I close the chapter with a reflection on researcher biases. In the fourth chapter, I introduce the seven focal students participating in the study.

In Chapters 5-6, I report on and analyze the data on my seven focal students' academic socialization. Chapter 5 talks about how students experience academic socialization in a US higher education environment. This chapter reviews the tasks students faced and the practices, skills, and strategies they demonstrated in accomplishing these academic tasks. Chapter 6 describes other factors influencing their academic success in a new academic climate, emphasizing the role of selecting a major and following the institutional requirements to be accepted into that major. In Chapter 7, I address the question of how students' identity reflects and is reflected in their process of adaptation to their university. Finally, I elaborate on the conclusions of my research, my responses to the research questions, points of connection with Sandra Silberstein et al's (2016a, b, c) UW academic climate survey, and implications for the various stakeholders involved, most notably students and instructors.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review the literature pertaining to academic socialization and identity, academic practices and collaborative work, and academic engagement and social integration.

2.1 Academic Socialization and Identity

Recent academic socialization research is divided according to scholars' perceptions of the nature of the process and their relative interest in the notion of power. Those who use ethnographic approaches, view the socialization process as multi-directional, dynamic, complex, intertextual, and continually changing, and orient their research to participants' views are of interest to the present study, since they are concerned with the process of how students are socialized, rather than with genre-based pedagogies. Critical perspectives may be mapped onto academic socialization research to examine "how sociocultural, historical, and institutional forces, particularly in terms of power relations, impact disciplinary socialization, as well as how individuals accommodate or resist such forces in different ways" (Morita & Kobayachi, 2008, p.245). The UK-based academic literacies movement (e.g., Ivanič, 2004; Lea & Street,1998, 2006; Lillis, 2003) claims their approach embraces a more explicit orientation to power relations than socialization approaches, yet those who adopt the latter approaches argue that inherent in socialization's basic premises is the exploration of "social processes, negotiation, and interaction" to which power and identity are central (Duff, 2010, p. 171).

2.1.1 Language Socialization

To explore the process of English language users seeking legitimation in their desired communities, whether academic or social, I turn to theories on language socialization. Language socialization, which deals with the process of children learning to speak and gain literacy in their first language(s) by interacting with caregivers (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012; Schieffelin & Ochs,

1986), has direct parallels to the development of cultural knowledge and social behavior and offers a "broad framework for understanding the development of linguistic, cultural, and communicative competence through interaction with others who are more knowledgeable or proficient" (Duff & Talmy, 2011, p. 95). Through interactions with more experienced members of the community, children and novices gain a range of forms of linguistic, cultural, and social knowledge, ideologies, identities, routines, and practices necessary for membership in their communities (Duff & Talmy, 2011). Socialization into academic discourse communities, then, consists of "initializing students gradually into the process of knowledge-making" so that they transition smoothly among different circles in and out of the academy (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 31). Duff and Yamamoto (2024) characterize the underlying motives of language socialization research as "helping people simultaneously become successful, competent, functioning members of a discourse community, affirm and develop their multilingual repertoires and identities, and achieve other personal goals (e.g., academic achievement, cultural learning, interpersonal relationships)" (p. 208).

Relationships among social factors such as race, gender, national origin, class, social status, geopolitical location, and institutional position may be examined within a language socialization framework. Under a language socialization approach, socialization is fundamentally driven by interaction, where all participants, including those new to the field, play a role in influencing the "sometimes contested" socialization process (Kobayashi et al., 2017, p. 239). This perspective suggests that the distinctions between novice and expert status are flexible and co-constructed throughout their interactions (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012). In fact, intercultural communication situations in the higher education context may provide a space for reciprocal language socialization (e.g., Ou & Gu, 2021). In effect, newcomers possess the capacity to either

challenge or alter the beliefs and practices that others attempt to instill in them, highlighting a spectrum of potential outcomes from complete involvement to partial or even no participation in community practices (Duff, 2007; Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012).

A common trend among the extant studies is the incorporation of identity negotiation and performance in the process of socialization. Through “writing games” (Casanave, 2002), students construct identities while learning the rules, or understanding how to fruitfully bend them in order to participate and succeed in their desired communities. Using a term similar to academic socialization, Casanave (2002) takes up Wenger’s (1998) iteration of the community metaphor when she refers to disciplinary enculturation as “ongoing, layered and necessarily incomplete” (p. 27). She further defines academic enculturation as a complex process in which “novice community members learn to engage in a community's practice and hence to participate in ways that redefine their identities" (Casanave, 2002, p. 27). Spack’s (1997) study of Yuko shows the development of an undergraduate writer in the process of familiarizing herself with the academic games of her university. Forced to use strategies to overcome her perceived shortcomings in background knowledge and vocabulary, through trial and error, Yuko gradually gained more control over reading and writing activities over the course of her studies. By gaining access to the reading-intensive International Relations major, Yuko reinterpreted her role within the American college context. On the other hand, Jan, an immigrant student from Poland in Leki’s (1999) 4-year case study continually felt like an “imposter” and recognized the game as a bureaucratic nightmare. Jan’s best coping mechanisms were either to outsmart the system, or to disengage from it entirely. Leki’s (2007) study on the whole portrays the “students’ struggles for identity, social inclusion, and ideological resistance” within the context of their undergraduate discourse communities (p. 282).

This type of socialization (or partial lack thereof) has been the focus of social constructivist approaches in Gee's (1998) world of discourse and Discourse. For Gee (1998), discourse is an "identity kit" and academic literacy consists of learning secondary discourses, or those outside of one's primary discourse community of home and family. However, multilingual international students may lack exposure to their desired secondary discourses (Gee, 1998) as "outsiders" on the outskirts of the academic community at large, as well as specific discourse communities (Angelova & Riazantseva, 1999; Canagarajah, 2002; Casanave, 2002; Crosby, 2009; Frodesen, 2009; Schneider & Fujishima, 1995; Starfield, 2002).

2.1.2 Language Identity

Using an identity lens to understand challenges to academic language socialization reflects the high personal stakes for multilingual international students. Language identity, in particular, is traditionally constructed in terms of one's native language, but Shuck (2010) calls for a revision of this "ideology of nativeness" and posits Leung, Harris & Rampton's (1997) three-part model of language identity so as to honor individuals' investments in their respective languages at a given place and time: language expertise, language inheritance, and language affiliation (p. 120). Language identity is thus composed of a combination of proficiency, birthright and affective attachment.

Since status and power are at stake, both language and social identity constitute a "site of struggle" in what Bourdieu (1977a) calls the "linguistic market" (Norton & McKinney, 2011; Norton Peirce,1995). Not only does identity refer to one's position, but it also reflects one's competences and resources in a broader social context (Kanno, 2003; McKay & Wong, 1996). If English language users can claim legitimacy within the linguistic market through the demonstration of competence and garnering of linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1977a), their success

in negotiating academic socialization is more likely. Yet, academic socialization to the dominant discourses of US education forces a shift in English language users' identity, since multilingual international students' identities coming into new academic contexts rarely match the ones they find in the academy (Ivanič, 1998). On the contrary, they may find a strong monolingual orientation, in which the dominant group (i.e. "broadcast" English speakers) in the US is legitimated in the linguistic market, thus subjugating other languages and varieties of English. In their desire to assimilate and gain access to power, many people *misrecogniz*e the dominant language as superior (Bourdieu, 1977b). Dominant speakers of privileged varieties of English often have access to legitimacy and ownership of English, whereas those who use English as an additional language (EAL) are not accorded that privilege (Dovchin, 2020b). Indeed, linguistic capital may not be sufficiently amassed so that the EAL user is "worthy to speak" (Bourdieu, 1977a, p.648). If they do not possess sufficient symbolic capital through a dominant social identity (read racially white), English language users may be excluded from access to the dominant culture's symbolic and material resources (Benesch, 2008; Kubota & Lin, 2009; Pavlenko, 2001). Tse (2000) confirms the view that adolescents of Asian descent recognize language as a sign of group membership; in their narratives, they described how "acceptance by the dominant culture was often contingent upon language ability" (p. 195).

Having examined the intersections of identity and learning in sociocultural contexts, I turn to the ways identity is variously imposed, negotiable, or assumed (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004).Within largely monolingual and monocultural social contexts where English plays a dominant role, such as the US higher education system (Benesch, 2008), second language users often possess little linguistic or symbolic capital, which limits their choices of identity. Harklau (2007) has identified three main images projected on adolescent immigrants in her study – a

colorblind representation, the exotic “other” idealization, and a cognitively and linguistically deficient image. In fact, a deficit or deficiency model for L2 student identity has been shown to be prevalent in a range of situations, especially institutional settings (Blanton, 1999; Chiang & Schmida, 1999; Harklau, 2007; Kells, 2002; McKay & Wong, 1996; Morita, 2004; Shuck, 2010; Tran, 2011). McKay and Wong (1996) went so far as to characterize the stereotype of ESL students in K-12 education as “candidates for overhaul and rescue” (p. 590). In Morita’s (2004) study on language socialization through oral approaches, graduate students were positioned as linguistically and culturally deficient in relation to more powerful members of their classroom community. Overcoming the marginalization they felt from their native English speaking peers in the classroom, they eventually used their reticence to participate as a strategy to negotiate membership in their academic community.

Even if students often have a limited choice of representation, and those representations remain with them longer than they might wish, they can still wield some power: “individuals have agency and the ability to work against institutional and societal discourses, and to question the deleterious effects of representations” (Harklau, 2007, p. 96). Questioning these negative images might take a range of forms, from resistance to the selection of new self-images. Bayley and Schecter (2003) similarly argue that “identity is not a fixed category and… individuals choose among (and sometimes resist) the identities offered to them, and at times construct new identities when the circumstances in which they find themselves do not offer a desirable choice” (p. 6). Identities are constrained by sociohistorical contexts, but under certain conditions, L2 English users can show agency and contest and reinvent themselves by rejecting undesirable positions and producing new identities (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Through resistance, L2 English users can promote positive visions of self and identity. Michael, a Mandarin-speaking

adolescent in California, similarly rejected the “model minority” stereotype of Asian Americans in order to assign himself a more centralized social identity. Through his participation in sports, he was able to make friends and be part of a mainstream social group (McKay & Wong, 1996). In the Chinese EFL context, Yihong et al. (2005) display the complexities of identity shifts, including their optimistic findings that through English learning, students developed favorable traits, namely higher self-esteem and productive bilingualism. In Koehne’s (2006) study of 25 undergraduate and postgraduate international students in Australia, the focal students constructed their identities through the acceptance and rejection of powerful discourses defining their futures and vacillated between desires for strength and agency and feelings of confusion and a longing to belong. The international students sought “reciprocal dialogue” in the university context as they stood up for the value of their lived realities and challenged the dominance of Western-centric academic discourses (p. 255).

In most cases, identity is not straightforward, and may reveal hidden complexities not visible on the surface. Those who use English as an additional language may possess ambivalence towards one of their languages and attempt to diminish its relative importance in certain situations. According to Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), “identity becomes interesting, relevant and visible when it is contested or in crisis” (p. 19). In Ortmeier-Hooper’s (2008) Generation 1.5 study, Sergej has an ambivalent relationship to English as a representation of the US educational system. He ended up feigning a relationship to English that was not truly his in his portfolio reflections. In order to succeed in his composition class, Sergej had to mask his true feelings as an outsider to US academic culture. In the same study, Jane almost escaped the researcher’s radar as a possible participant in the study because she had obscured her cultural and linguistic background, perhaps in protest against institutional labels. She did not initially admit to

speaking any other languages beside English, and only later did she reveal her Chinese background. Blending with her peers seemed more salient to Jane than proclaiming her affiliation with her Chinese roots, and she characterized her participation in the study as a form of being "outed" as an immigrant (p. 408). Reticence to fully express one's identity may stem in part from the linguistic privilege afforded dominant English speakers with "inner circle" accents (Kachru, 1985), or conversely, the fear of facing linguistic racism (De Costa, 2020; Dovchin, 2020) or other representations of prejudice (e.g., Guo & Guo, 2017; Slaten et al., 2016). Linguistic invisibility, in which students' home language is "peripheral and completely unacknowledged" while English maintains primacy as the dominant language, may also constrain multilingual students' identity choices (Dobinson & Mercieca, 2020, p. 791). Recent research finds that international students themselves may proactively counter negative perceptions of their identities and skills by demonstrating their linguistic competencies and knowledge, and thus bringing these complexities to the fore (Surtees, 2019).

2.1.3 Writing Identity

Another important component of international multilingual students' academic socialization to new discourse communities is writing. The last three decades have cultivated new insights and theories for research and pedagogy in L2 writing. Most notably, a move away from a deficit model has led us to view multilingual writers as having valuable resources to bring to the academic community. In light of the heterogeneity of U.S classrooms today, an orientation away from a deficiency model (Canagarajah, 2002; Jordan, 2012; Spack, 2004) towards a view of students' linguistic repertoires and multi-competences (Cook, 1995) as resources prevails in the literature (Bawarshi, 2010; Canagarajah, 2010; Douglas Fir Group, 2016; Mangelsdorf, 2010). In the context of multiliteracies, students are thus actors and participants in the academic

process, helping to shape the course of their studies, and taking an active role in assuring the quality of their academic experience. In fact, intersections of identity, voice and expectations for academic discourse communities are a viable subject of inquiry (Zawicki & Habib, 2010). Friedman (2023) notes the calls for researchers "to investigate how multilinguals draw strategically from their full repertoire of linguistic, rhetorical, and genre knowledge to suit the demands of different discourse communities and rhetorical contexts" (p. 269). Recent research honors the use of students' multilingual practices (e.g.,Van Viegen & Zappa-Hollman, 2020).

What the current literature lacks is a reflection of this shift in orientation in the students' themselves. Though published in 2007, Leki's work on 4 undergraduates draws from data from the 1990s, when deficit orientations prevailed in the field of applied linguistics, composition, and perhaps the academic community at large. In acquiring second language academic literacy, students who are assigned institutional markers with a deficit view and a monolingualist orientation (Canagarajah, 2013) are marginalized. Indeed, labels are social as well as political constructions (Casanave, 2003; Kubota, 2001; Oropeza, Varghese & Kanno, 2010). Institutionally used terms like English language learners (ELLs), ESL students, Generation 1.5 students, and linguistic minority students offer an imprecise, categorical, static view of the people, their needs and the social realities behind the labels (Harklau, 1998), and may signal novice status as an English user, or a perceived need for additional services (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008). As such, labels hold enormous power to influence students' identities, both their image of themselves, and how others view them (and constrain their future possibilities). For instance, in Chiang and Schmida's (1999) study, the label "linguistic minority" limited students' academic potential as they felt the repercussions of their teacher's assumptions about their integration into academic settings through ownership of English. Its negative effects aside, setting up L1/L2 or

native/non-native speaker dichotomies is ineffective because of the indistinct boundaries of these categories (Casanave, 2002; Mangelsdorf, 2010), and students' "nexus of multimembership" in various linguistic communities (Wenger, 1998). Some students, like Starfield's (2002) Sipho and Ortmeier-Hooper's (2008) Jane and Sergej, may reject institutional labels because they fear the stigmas associated with them. Similarly, Yi's (2010) study of adolescent bilingual writers online provides us the example of Sunny, a transcultural ethnic Korean who rejects identity labels through her journeys: "I just made my own category of who I am…I'm just me" (p. 313). From adopting the role of an outsider to embracing their multiplicity of identities, second language writers have responded in a variety of ways to the pressing need to self-identify while in the process of attaining second language literacy.

2.2 Academic Practices and Collaborative Work

In keeping with Leki's (2007) findings on writing's lack of primacy in undergraduates' views of their education, I now turn to other factors influencing multilingual international students' academic socialization. For international students, developing sociolinguistic competence in order to navigate literacy tasks and surmount academic challenges involves numerous academic practices, from participating in class to building social support networks to using campus resources, with a goal of promoting students' academic integration at the university. Students' approaches to these academic tasks are influenced, and sometimes limited, by their previous educational experiences (Duff & Kobayashi, 2010). According to Duff, Zappa-Hollman & Surtees (2019), research in North American contexts in the domain of language socialization "has analyzed how students use their full multilingual repertoires and other resources to negotiate, perform, enact, and accomplish complex interactive academic tasks" (p. 312). In-class activities engaging students in academic tasks and informal peer interactions and

collaboration outside of class provide students with opportunities to interact meaningfully with academic language, class content, and disciplinary culture, and help them become competent and confident participants in their target communities.

2.2.1 Oral Interactions

Oral interactions are an emerging area for research on the academic socialization of international students. Previous research has focused on academic presentations (e.g., Kobayashi, 2016; Morita, 2000; Yang, 2010; Zappa-Hollman, 2007), class discussion in the graduate level classroom (e.g., Ho, 2011; Lee, 2009; Morita, 2009, 2004; Seloni, 2012), and oral activities in an undergraduate anthropology class (Wu, 2019). Researching the complexities and cognitive demands of academic oral activities offers valuable tools for analysis of discourse socialization and apprenticeship into students' desired academic communities (Duff, 2010). While the body of research on oral academic discourse socialization has gradually expanded to explore how students' interactions influence individuals' learning paths and their integration into broader cultural meaning systems, oral activities continue to garner less attention than other aspects of academic socialization, which likely corresponds to a lack of programmatic enculturation efforts in institutions of higher education (Xiao & Chen, 2023). Campus climate surveys (e.g. Major, 2005; Silberstein et al., 2016) and doctoral dissertations (Fei, 2016; Li, 2020; Wu, 2019; Zuo, 2015) offer windows into the oral interactions of students at the undergraduate level that can help institutions understand multilingual international students' academic, cultural and social needs.

Researchers have sought to understand differences in class participation norms and practices between local and international students and have observed the ways in which students have dealt with cultural differences in the classroom (Huang & Brown, 2009; Liu, 2001; Morita, 2000). Many of these differences manifest in interactions such as class discussions, in which the

"cultural capital given to oral participation …assumes the desired trajectory of learning moves from silence to talk" (Yi, 2020, p. 122). Liu (2001) indicates that sociocultural, affective, and linguistic factors influenced active classroom participation among Asian students, and not all students adapted to the expectations and norms of the US college classroom. In Huang's (2005) study, the Chinese focal students found that a heavy emphasis on class discussion disrupted their focus on the academic content of the course, which was their priority. In such cases, newcomers may exert their agency to resist socialization and pursue their own goals (Duff, 2007; Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012). For example, in Yi's (2020) study, a Korean graduate student, Yoona, did not talk in class because she placed a higher value on understanding the course material than on speaking superficially about it. Likewise, she characterized her active listening, which Americans viewed as just "silence," as a form of participatory engagement in academic discourse (Yi, 2020). In Ha & Li's (2014) study of four Chinese students in an Australian university, the students explained that "silence could be 'a habit, a learning style and a way of thinking,' and hence should be seen as appropriate and legitimate"; they used silence in various ways, including as a form of resistance (p. 242). Another reason students may choose not to participate by speaking in class is the nature of the class atmosphere, in which they may have a fear of not being understood (Cheng & Fox, 2008), they may have to fight to be heard (Koehne, 2006) or they may even face linguistic racism, the premise that language users may experience uneven linguistic power based on their accents, dialects or linguistic practices and repertoire (Dovchin, 2020a).

2.2.2 Classroom Participation

Nevertheless, few studies have explicitly researched undergraduates' experiences in class discussions in content courses. Engaging effectively in discussions in US classrooms requires

myriad interpersonal, cognitive, and linguistic skills to navigate the collaboration and group work instructors expect in student-centered learning environments. Language proficiency in the medium of instruction - English, in this case - can help students listen actively, understand the flow of the discussion and contribute meaningfully to the topics covered, whether in small group work or a whole class discussion. Multiple studies cite students' language proficiency, or students' perceptions of their English language proficiency, as a potential barrier to their acculturation to the new learning environment, of which engagement in class is a key feature (Lee, 2009; Yang, 2010; Zhou & Zhang, 2014). Yet, even students with proficiency in English as an additional language and a strong belief in their ability to accomplish literacy tasks in English may still struggle in certain academic contexts (Andrade, 2009; Wang et al., 2018; Yang, 2010; Zhang & Goodson, 2011). One of the focal students in Liu's (2002) study, Jian, noted the difference in speaking speed between the instructor and his peers, which meant that while he could keep pace with the lecture, he got lost in the fast pace of discussion. Aside from having strong listening skills, to follow the discussion students need to prepare the course materials by analyzing information and evaluating its importance to the day's activities. Another student in Liu's (2002) study, Yuan, identified that participation in class discussion reflects a student's preparedness, but preparation of the readings was not enough: the timing of one's contributions was of great importance. In effect, to participate actively, students need to synthesize information from the readings, lectures and prior peer contributions and figure out how to convey their ideas or ask their questions confidently and with respect at the appropriate time. Accomplishing these tasks assumes that students have surmounted cultural differences related to student-teacher roles and relationships and educational values (Zhou & Zhang, 2014), and are willing to contribute their ideas to the class discussion.

International students may be interested in adapting to the participation norms of US university classes if the class environment is inclusive of their ideas and communication styles. Some international students may see these interactions as opportunities to practice their English and learn more about their peers' perspectives and practices (Ha & Li, 2014; Zappa-Hollman, 2007). Glass & Westmont (2014) suggest ways to facilitate international students' cross-cultural interaction in class, including providing the structure for dialogue on multicultural issues through "engaged pedagogies" (p. 116). In Glass et al.'s (2015) study, a focal student indicated he would participate more when he felt support and encouragement from the instructor. In fact, professors found culturally sensitive ways to foster inclusion by expressing the importance of a student's contributions during class, providing focused attention in one-on-one conversations before and after class, and facilitating cohesive group formation (Glass et al., 2015). In much the same way, the three focal Chinese international students in Liu's (2002) study participated in class when the class community was supportive of their contributions; that is, they had social support from both instructors and peers. Negotiating silence and wait time after questions proved to be a critical concern related to cultural differences around comfort levels with silence in this study. To facilitate participation, American students could withhold their contributions even if they were uncomfortable with longer periods of silence so that Chinese speakers could feel more comfortable participating. However, Liu (2002) indicates that part of being socialized to the American classroom is to understand and adhere to the silence patterns of expected interactional discourse, which means that they would need to strive to respond more quickly and integrate into the expected flow of discussion. A main takeaway from Liu's study was that the focal students "all valued and benefited from classroom communication without necessarily getting themselves involved in discussions" (2002, p. 47). Liu (2002) concludes by raising key questions of how

Chinese students might handle American classroom practices, including seeing adaptation to American patterns of silence as an opportunity to expand the expression of their identities in a new cultural context.

The improvisational complexities involved in speaking up in class discussions are also prevalent in presentations and group work. In Yang's (2010) study of five Chinese undergraduates' experiences preparing a presentation in a business class, the focal students struggled with understanding the classroom and assignment norms, including open dialogue as a feature of the presentation task. The focal students did not realize they were expected to engage the audience by speaking extemporaneously and generate participation in an impromptu way. It was only after observing other student presentations that modeled successful communication with the audience that the students grew to understand this feature as a cultural difference. Similarly, in Kobayashi's (2016) study, the focal student Otome used the skills of observation, task analysis, collaboration, and reflection to prepare, refine and deliver her presentation, based on her understanding of a "good" presentation in a new educational environment. Both studies support other findings on how students' perceptions of tasks situated in sociocultural contexts evolved over time (e.g., Kobayashi, 2003; Morita, 2000).

In Leki's (2001) study on group work, bilingual participants had negative group work experiences because they felt their monolingual English-speaking group mates downgraded their potential contributions to the final product. The international students in the study faced power differentials in their group, primarily from their linguistic and cultural differences, which prevented them from realizing the full potential of social and academic interactions in group work. In Zhou & Zhang's (2014) study on first-year undergraduates, one participant noted a challenge of group work to be that local students did not want to work with international

students, a situation similarly described in Guo & Guo (2017) and in Slaten et al. (2016). Students in Zhou & Zhang's (2014) study also struggled to find study partners or project group mates from among the local student population. To remedy these unfortunate situations, Leki (2001) calls for a "more level playing field" in collaborative work with groups of local and international students. Other implications from Leki's study are that groups do not just function on their own when an instructor assigns a prompt and sets diverse groups. Yang (2010) draws a similar conclusion regarding the need to deliver explicit instruction on how to work cooperatively to maximize both efficiency and learning in group work. Teamwork needs to be scaffolded and team roles should be defined, including a role whose function is to make sure that all group members are invited to contribute in productive ways. While Yang's (2010) study points to some gaps in students' awareness of cultural differences in participatory communication modes, Leki's (2001) study sheds light on power differentials that students could not overcome.

2.2.3 Peer Collaboration In and Out of Class

Despite the challenges inherent in cross-cultural communication, peer collaboration and interactions both in and outside of the classroom play a role in international students' academic socialization. In contrast to Leki's (2001) study, in Ho's (2011) study participants succeeded in achieving academic discourse socialization through small-group discussion, which reflected their collaborative learning and problem-solving capabilities. In this case, Ho (2011) points to the idea that small group discussions or out-of-class group work may offer alternative entry points to student-centered learning for international students from education systems in which teacher-centered learning predominates. For instance, the undergraduates in Kobayashi's (2003) study used peer-coaching and rehearsals outside of class to navigate the challenges they encountered in

preparing an oral presentation. Similarly, Seloni's (2012) focal students used oral discourse in peer collaboration outside the classroom to get help from more experienced members of their community to "co-construct knowledge about academic literacy" practices (p. 57).

In addition, Zappa-Hollman and Duff (2015) explore what they call students' individual networks of practice (INoP) to determine the effect of informal social experiences on English language learning. In their study, an "INoP denotes all the social ties reported by a given individual, however weak/ distant or strong/ close" (p. 339). A key finding was that the students' interpersonal connections outside the classroom provided both emotional and educational support and played a more central role in their academic socialization than did others in their networks (such as professors or support staff). In much the same way, the ten Asian-born students in Major's (2005) study did not use campus support services, which tended to adopt a deficit model of language proficiency, in favor of academic support and cultural mentoring from co-national peers in the form of "cross-cultural therapy" (p. 92). This choice corroborates other findings that international students used resources other than campus services, notably that they preferred their home country peer networks (Rivas et al., 2019; Yan & Berliner, 2013; Zhou & Zhang, 2014). Finally, an important finding in Glass (2012) is that teamwork and dialogue with students from different backgrounds in curricular and co-curricular activities were correlated with positive learning outcomes for many of the international student participants. In contrast, students whose English proficiency was low or whose personality was reserved found it hard to gain access to the successful group work experiences needed to foster growth, development and ultimately, academic socialization (Glass, 2012).

2.3 Academic Engagement and Social Integration

In addition to academic socialization, academic engagement and social integration form a part of the academic acculturation of international students, which has also been examined from psychological perspectives (Jabeen et al., 2019). Berry (2005) offers a definition of acculturation as changes in values, beliefs, and behaviors that people experience as a result of prolonged intercultural contact, emphasizing the mutuality of the process (Berry, 2006). Researchers have studied the affective, behavioral and cognitive dimensions of the cross-cultural experience of international students as they come into contact with new cultures (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). Acculturation models embody two facets: psychological adaptation, or the ability to cope with stress, and sociocultural adaptation, or the development of culturally relevant social skills (Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Ward, Bochner, and Furnham, 2001). At an individual or micro-level, factors such as a student's personality (e.g., Rivas et al., 2019), English language proficiency (e.g., Andrade, 2009; Wang et al., 2018; Zhou & Zhang, 2014), cultural identity, cultural distance between the home and host cultures (e.g., Rienties et al., 2012; Ward & Kennedy, 1993), and social support all played an important role in an international student's academic experience, not to mention social, economic, political and ideological factors at a macro-level (Zhou et al., 2008).

2.3.1 Academic Engagement

Jabeen, Wang & Cheng (2019) consider academic engagement to encompass five sub-dimensions: academic literacy skills, seeking academic help, language proficiency and academic challenges, strategy use and adapting to a new academic environment. These factors interactively influence the academic adjustment of international students, who may use strengths in one area to compensate for weaknesses in another. For instance, despite the aforementioned studies

indicating a lack of campus resource use, Bastien, Seifen-Adkins & Johnson (2018) reveal that help-seeking tendencies among international students in the US had a positive effect on their academic adjustment. They cite campus offerings such as writing centers, career services, tutors, professors' office hours, and conversation groups with American buddies as examples of the ways that international students have sought help (Bastien, Seifen-Adkins & Johnson, 2018). Additionally, strategy use is particularly necessary for students whose English language proficiency is weaker, as they may rely on time management skills, active reading strategies, and meeting in small groups, to name a few, to accomplish their academic goals (Cheng & Fox, 2008).

2.3.2 Academic and Social Integration

Social integration is also a key factor in predicting academic success for international students. As described above in the section on collaborative work with peers, international students seek academic socialization through their social ties. Severiens and Wolff (2008) describe the formal and informal aspects of academic and social integration in their investigation into the relationship between both forms of integration and quality of learning. Formal academic integration includes the immediate learning context at the university, while informal academic integration is not directly connected to classwork or the college classroom. The latter relates to the extent to which students and teachers view each other as social equals and engage in discussions about personal subjects. They distinguish levels of formality within social integration as well, stating that formal social integration relates to collaborative work or other social contacts directly related to course work and learning. Informal social integration, then, refers to the friends students have made at the university through frequent social contact and/or through student activities (Severiens & Wolff, 2008).

Students' involvement in curricular and extracurricular activities makes a difference in the quality of their academic experience. For first-year students in particular, Tinto's (1998) research on student persistence demonstrates that student involvement correlates with students' completion of their degree. He makes two key recommendations for ways in which students can be involved, pertaining to macro-level factors at the university. The first is for the university to create learning communities. The benefit of learning communities for students lies in the shared experiences of taking multiple classes together and building knowledge with their peers, as well as extending their interest in working together beyond the classroom. The second corresponds to curricular initiatives in providing opportunities for active, collaborative learning in the classroom. The goal is to "construct educational settings that promote shared, connected learning" so as to foster academic success through social interaction (Tinto, 1998, p. 171). These suggestions echo the findings of other studies on the value of active learning strategies in the classroom (Freeman et al., 2014) as well as involvement in other activities like study groups (Slaten et al., 2016), student organizations and clubs (Glass & Westmont, 2014; Zhang & Goodson, 2011), and friend networks from both their host and home countries (Neri & Ville, 2008; Severiens & Wolff, 2008; Wilcox et al., 2005; Zhou & Zhang, 2014). Rienties et al. (2012) confirm that "the *social life* outside the academic environment has a strong influence on academic integration" for international students (p. 689). Neri & Ville (2008) found that international students formed close networks with other students from their home countries more so than from the host country, which supported their well-being but did not have a statistically significant correlation with students' academic performance. The researchers suggest that had international students formed closer ties with local students, they might have gained more access

to academic socialization, which could have positively impacted their academic performance (Neri & Ville, 2008).

2.3.3 Sense of Belonging

International students' academic and social integration also correlates with their sense of belonging. Glass & Westmont (2014) define belongingness as "a sense of connection with one's university, a strong support network, and a balance of academic challenge and support" (p. 106). They discuss the role of resilience-based models of acculturation, emphasizing the need for belongingness to facilitate adjustment and cross-cultural interactions (Glass & Westmont, 2014). An important finding in their study was that "[p]articipation in co-curricular activities, more than coursework alone, increased students' sense of belongingness, and indirectly increased academic success and cross-cultural interaction" (Glass & Westmont, 2014, p. 116-17). In a similar vein, Zhang & Goodson (2011) examined the role of Chinese international students' sense of connectedness with US society, and found that "social connectedness with host nationals, adherence to the host culture, and social interaction with host nationals explained both adjustment domains (psychological and sociocultural)" (p. 624). In other words, connecting with local students both reduced international students' emotional stress and promoted their development of sociocultural skills in cross-cultural exchanges. If international students have a strong sense of belonging at their university, they feel more comfortable seeking out relationships with local students, which in turn, benefits their psychological well-being (Glass & Westmont, 2014). Slaten et al.'s (2016) study had a similar finding that related strong alliances with friend groups to students' sense of belonging, but the finding held true for friends from both the mainstream host culture and students' home culture. Although interacting with the host culture is not guaranteed to generate "meaningful relationships," as Erol discovered in

Ortactepe's (2013) study, having strong sociolinguistic competence in the host country's language may facilitate such encounters (p. 227). Conversely, participants in Boz et al.'s (2018) study saw low English proficiency as "a limiting factor in the language development perceived necessary for academic success, a cause of loneliness, and a reason for an overall lack of engagement in campus life" (p. 376). The sense of social belonging among international students is also influenced by their personal attributes, such as an outgoing personality; those who view themselves as more sociable are more likely to seek interactions with others and, as a result, find it easier to establish connections (Rivas et al., 2019; Slaten et al., 2016).

The connections inherent in a sense of belonging at the university are associated with strong academic performance. Whether through an indirect correlation, as mentioned above in Glass & Westmont (2014), or through a salient finding that academic success is closely tied to students' sense of belonging at the university (Severiens & Wolff, 2008; Slaten et al., 2016; Zhang & Goodson, 2011), international students' sense of belonging is affected by their academic engagement. In fact, students may seek out friends from the host culture or their home culture based on their friends' academic strengths (Slaten et al., 2016). Lee and Ciftci (2014) discuss how social support, in combination with academic self-efficacy, influences socio-cultural adaptation. In their study, higher levels of multicultural competency, or orientation towards a multicultural personality, among international students led to more social support and more confidence in students' abilities to complete academic tasks in U.S academic environments. In addition, those who were assertive tended to have more academic self-efficacy. In turn, having a multicultural personality and possessing academic self-efficacy helped students adjust to their new environment. In short, belongingness serves as a proxy for the social support that

multilingual international students may lack but which has been shown to play a vital role in their academic socialization (Glass & Westmont, 2014).

Even high-achieving international students may not feel a sense of belonging at the university if their social connections with faculty, staff and local students are not strong. From a compilation of campus climate surveys among undergraduates at nine research universities in the US, Horne et al.'s (2018) findings suggest that "social integration often stands out as a more deeply felt challenge for international students than the demands of their academic programs" (p. 365). The researchers go on to confirm the primacy of the role of peer interactions in combination with contact with faculty and staff at the university to international students' sense of belonging. Other findings from Horne et al. (2018) include comparisons between international students and their local US counterparts, in which international students are less satisfied with their social interactions, feel less respected on campus, face more discrimination, and have a lower sense of belonging than local students. These findings suggest that institutions must continue to evaluate the ways they can support multilingual international students' academic and social integration, psychological well-being and sense of belonging.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the literature on the multifaceted process of academic socialization, emphasizing the role of identity negotiation, collaborative work and social integration in the academic success of international students. The three sections cover the following: first, academic socialization and identity, followed by academic practices and collaborative work in and outside the classroom, and then the relation of academic engagement and social integration to students' sense of belonging at the university. In the first section, I describe the influence of perceptions of power and social dynamics on academic socialization,

how students' interactions with more experienced community members aid in the acquisition of academic/cultural knowledge and social behaviors (sometimes in a bidirectional process), and how identity plays a crucial part in students' ability to navigate and adapt to academic discourse communities. The second section highlights the significance of engaging in academic practices and collaborative work for the socialization of multilingual international students. Focusing on oral interactions, class participation, and the multidimensional demands of academic activities, this section examines how collaborative efforts in class and peer interactions outside the classroom contribute to meaningful academic and social experiences, facilitating students' competence and confidence within their target communities. The last section outlines the importance of academic engagement and social integration in the academic acculturation process, showing how both psychological and sociocultural adaptation play pivotal roles in international students' academic experiences. The literature underscores the impact of social support, active learning, and a sense of belonging on students' overall academic success and their adjustment to the new cultural and academic environments.

Gaining insight into multilingual international students' academic practices and views in the current climate of the internationalization of education is of paramount importance. Examining students' perceived levels of academic and social integration as well as their identity negotiations helps elucidate the corresponding effects on their academic socialization. This chapter has shown that many studies have explored the various aspects of academic socialization of international students in English-medium universities, yet few have brought forth the views of undergraduate multilingual international students on their identity and resources in their first year. This is the gap that my study seeks to fill.

CHAPTER 3: FRAMING THE STUDY/METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This dissertation study takes as its theoretical framework sociocultural and poststructuralist perspectives on the process and products of academic socialization for my focal students. I draw from poststructuralist notions of identity as they intersect with a sociocultural view of learning in a community-of-practice model (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) to illuminate the relationship between multilingual identities and multilingual international students' academic socialization at the university level. In this conceptualization, students' identity and agency are reflected in their background, their current situation, and their imagined future experiences. I also incorporate Sommers and Saltz's (2004) findings on learning in relation to first-year students' self-positioning as novices or experts.

3.2 Theoretical Approaches

In this section, I describe the theoretical approaches informing my study. I draw from sociocultural and poststructuralist theories of identity formation and Lave & Wenger's (1991) model of situated learning in communities of practice.

3.2.1 Sociocultural and Poststructuralist Theories of Identity

Identity, social practice and language resources are considered to be inextricably linked and mutually constitutive (Norton, 2000, 2013; Norton Peirce 1995; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004), and as such, can provide a site for situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The communicative contexts of second language use in academic contexts have social, cultural and political dimensions; in turn, issues of language, power, and context are mapped onto the identity

of multilingual international students through the academic socialization process. Salient issues in the exploration of identity include the relationship of one's position to power, access, investment, and legitimacy in the target language practices and community, and possibilities for recreating identities through re-visioning the future in imagined communities, to use Anderson's (1991) term (Norton, 2013). The consensus within sociocultural and poststructuralist theories is that identity is fluid, multiple, conflicting, negotiated and influenced by status and power in the larger social context (Canagarajah, 2004; Norton, 2000, 2013; Norton Peirce, 1995). Norton (2013) defines identity as "the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 4). In essence, the individual is an agent in the dynamic, fluid process of the co-construction of linguistic and cultural knowledge, which is diverse and changeable over time (Norton Peirce, 1995; McKay & Wong, 1996). Norton Peirce's (1995) encouragement to view students' application of skills and understand their choices in academic environments within an "investment" framework highlights students' agency in their decision-making.

3.2.2 Situated Learning and Community of Practice

To explore the process of multilingual international students seeking legitimation in US academic communities through use of expected practices, I draw on theories of situated learning. Emphasizing the contexts for learning through a decentralized, experiential notion of the learning process, Lave & Wenger's (1991) model of situated learning is highly productive within a poststructuralist framework for explorations of identity within second language socialization. In this model, when newcomers join a community of people with shared practices, such as the university community at large or in a specific discipline, they start out on the periphery, and

through apprenticeship, gain greater responsibilities. With more practice with academic tasks such as reading texts, writing papers, and discussing issues in class, in theory, students become more centrally situated in the community. Members, or in this case, students negotiate their participation and membership in their communities and seek legitimate peripheral participation, or active participation in those communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As newcomers' positions change in relation to the community, their identities also evolve and are reconfigured. Exploring students' identity negotiations and shifts over the course of a quarter is possible within this model. This socialization is reciprocal, a sort of two-way negotiation, since identities and practices of older community members change as newcomers join a given community (Morita, 2004; Talmy, 2008). Through interviews with faculty, such tensions might surface in valuable ways.

In the process of L2 academic socialization, the multilingual international student is similar to a newcomer or novice in a "community of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 89). While novices are not always accorded opportunities for full participation in their desired communities, examining variables such as students' positioning, the availability and use of resources, or structural barriers is fruitful in the exploration of students' academic socialization. Such variables can be brought to light through poststructuralist theory in its applications to second language socialization research since this framework "recognizes the sociohistorically shaped partiality, contestability, instability and mutability of ways in which language ideologies and identities are linked to relations of power and political arrangements in communities and societies" (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p.10). Poststructuralist theory allows us to explore issues of social justice and ask who has access to symbolic and material resources, and what hidden powers are working to determine that access (Pavlenko, 2000; Pavlenko & Blackledge,

2004).These applications fill in the gaps where the community of practice model is lacking, namely through explicit mention of intersections of language, literacy, discourse, and power (Barton & Hamilton, 2005).

A social constructionist view of learning suggests that learning trajectories are not linear or unidirectional but work in a web-like form of “macro and micro practices and ecologies” (Bayley & Schecter, 2003, p. 21; Kramsch, 2002; McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton, 2000; Norton Peirce, 1995; Pavlenko, 2000, 2002). The relationships within this web of multilingual identities are “infinitely more complex” than a linear process (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 6; Duff, 2010). More precisely, multilingual international students’ trajectories and socialization are shaped by and reflect their identities, which in turn determine access to and legitimacy within the desired academic networks and communities, such as students’ future majors. Intragroup diversity and individual variations in status and competence are inherent in communities of practice.

Not all students, however, seek full acculturation and/or assimilation into a given discipline, or community of practice, as everyone has their own fluctuating objectives and approaches to academic work. Multiple facets of learner identity shape and are shaped by second language socialization (Lantolf, 2000) in such a way that learners have a range of identity options, only one of which is considered a “learner” (Duff & Talmy, 2011). Novice status might be unappealing and marginalizing to some, as viewing oneself as a “collection of deficiencies in English” (Shuck, 2010, p. 134) might not match up neatly with multilingual international students’ self-concept or view of themselves as students, especially when they are engaged in academic tasks that are not heavily dependent on language. Even if they are engaged in

language-dependent work, these students might still position themselves as strong in English, and not have an open mind to acquiring new knowledge or strategies for academic success.

However, Sommers and Saltz (2004) offer important insights into the value of first-year undergraduates viewing themselves as novices. Their findings on the development of college writers are that if two conditions are met, students will thrive in their first year of undergraduate studies: 1) students accept a novice status, and 2) they write for a greater purpose than fulfilling an assignment (i.e., they write to learn). Adopting a "novice as expert" role, according to their research, might actually backfire in that it may limit students' potential for growth within the academic community if they feel they do not have more to learn in a given discipline or course. Even though Sommers and Saltz (2004) focus on local L1 students in writing classes in particular, their concept is germane to the study of students' general academic acclimation to a new educational setting. If multilingual international students acknowledge that they will need to evaluate their past strategies, they are more likely to be open to adapting to the new academic environment.

As described above, through a mixture of sociocultural and poststructuralist tools, we can understand the complex social and linguistic positions multilingual international students occupy in the academic socialization process in English dominant educational settings.

3.3 Methodological Approaches

In this section, I reveal the qualitative methods that guide the study, including ethnographic practices and narrative inquiry. I describe the participants, settings, data collection and analysis, as well as tensions and limitations in my research and my role as a researcher.

3.3.1 Qualitative Methods with Ethnographic Traits

Developing an understanding of the social processes of academic socialization as a situated activity has the potential to improve educational practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). A systematic examination and description of international students' academic socialization process and their experiences and identities within that process is, thus, the goal of this study. Qualitative methods are particularly well-suited to educational research since they broaden our understanding of sociocultural contexts; through listening, observing, and questioning we can discover important details about the learning process from the learner's perspective. Ethnographic methods, in particular, use descriptive, naturalistic and holistic approaches (Merriam, 2009) so as to capture what actually goes on in social and educational settings through participant observation. Such methods are a relevant tool for studying the learning process within its broader context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Harklau, 2005; Heath, Street & Mills, 2008), since language socialization relies on social interaction with more experienced members of a culture, be it specific classroom communities or whole academic disciplines (Watson-Gegeo, 1998). Through ethnographic methods, we can gain a wider socially situated view of textual production and reception, moving beyond the constraints of the classroom (Tardy, 2009).

With a socially situated view in mind, researchers triangulate their data by verifying interpretations and meaning, gathering a range of sources of data and identifying the culture from various points of view: observation field notes, participant reflections, interviews, and other similar records. For example, in Kanno's (2008) ethnography on language and education in Japan, she cross-checked her interpretations with informants, verified her field notes and observations, confirmed the accuracy of material, and got feedback on the image being presented to the public of the schools she investigated (Personal communication, 2008).Through

ethnographic methods, researchers can avoid problems associated with traditional quantitative research in applied linguistics, such as the risk of overgeneralizing the findings and stereotyping (Heath, 1982).

Attentiveness to methods, allowing for multi-method approaches and "methodological experimentation," is paramount to developing my analysis and addressing emergent questions as they arise (Motha, 2009, p. 110). Through a qualitative mixed method approach with ethnographic traits (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), I provide rich, contextualized accounts of the learning and identity of my study participants through the ways in which multilingual international students experience academic socialization into their new discourse communities. The micro-level interactions of students' activities and agentive roles are paired with a macro-level focus on the broader educational context. Using critical discourse analysis (CDA), this study examines interviews, course documents and other discourses I have observed through a critical lens. The discursive construction of social factors such as class, race, and gender, as well as power relations of domination and resistance among experts and novices in the academic community can be productively explored through CDA (van Dijk, 2009). With a macro(contextual) and micro(textual) focus, CDA practitioners critique social inequality and the way dominance and social power are institutionalized through discourse (Blommaert, 2009). With the presence of social power and domination in educational contexts, CDA serves my study well by inquiring into the effects of power, including students' power and agency, in the academic socialization of multilingual international students in higher education.

3.3.2 Narrative Inquiry

With the objective of representing and understanding students' experiences through their own voices, the other vital component of my methodology is narrative inquiry. Many scholars

have found narratives to be of value in characterizing the human experience (Barkhuizen, 2010; Bell, 2002; Linde, 1993; Pavlenko, 2002; Polkinghorne, 1991; Taylor, 2006). Narrative inquiry deals with the ways in which multiple components of our lived experiences surface, using a single story to explore the concept of self in the past, present, and future (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). The story, then, becomes reality; regardless of whether the events actually occurred, the fact that they were *said* to have occurred is relevant (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Accordingly, telling a story about one's experiences with academic tasks during an interview is a way to negotiate and construct knowledge, and to grapple with issues of identity, since narratives are considered to be a site of knowledge formation and identity negotiation.

In fact, narratives allow research participants to claim their group membership and identities, which are fluid, multiple, and changeable over space and time. As one's identity develops over time and changes from one context to the next, such as from high school in one country to college in another, narratives are poised to represent and constitute these changes (Bamberg, 2006; Norton, 2000; Kanno, 2003; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Through narratives, Bamberg et al. (2011) encourage us to study "identity as constructed in discourse, as negotiated among speaking subjects in social contexts, and as emerging in the form of subjectivity and sense of self" (p. 178). For instance, narratives in educational research as revealed in interviews serve to highlight individual and social growth (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004) and display valuable insights into the complexities of students' academic socialization, allowing us access to idiosyncrasies rather than stereotypes. Higgens and Sandhu (2015) confirm the value of interviews in eliciting "big picture perspectives of [students'] past experiences … to gain a holistic understanding of an individual's experiences" (p. 107) and detail "the various selves that are articulated" (p. 109). In effect, narratives are an ideal site for such a study of

identity shifts and transformation. Other benefits of narrative include the potential for honoring participants' experiences in ways that "seek to disrupt, transgress and challenge traditionally dominant forms of research strongly embedded within colonial, Eurocentric or Western thought and forms of knowledge production" (Welply, 2023, p. 69).

3.3.3 Participants

Through "purposeful sampling" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 73), I recruited 7 first-year undergraduate university-matriculated international students with variable educational experiences and demographics. Recruitment began before the quarter started, upon IRB approval. I emailed selected first-year students who were former students of mine from ENGL 108 or GEN ST 391 since I was already familiar with their initial college experiences with academic literacy development, and we had previously established a relationship of trust. For the students who were interested in finding out more about the study, I set appointments to meet and explain the study and their rights as participants and obtain their written consent.

I strived for variety among my student participants in terms of the following factors: gender, country of origin, prospective major, previous use of campus resources, and exposure to the US education system. Since China was the predominant country of origin among international students at this university and in the US at the time of the study (Institute for International Education, 2015), most of my student participants were Chinese. The following students agreed to participate in the study: 5 Chinese women, 1 Korean man who had grown up in China, and 1 Indonesian woman. Among the recruits, 2 female Chinese students were interested in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) majors, and the remainder of the group were interested in humanities, business, or social science majors. I was interested in finding some

students among my recruits who had frequented a writing center on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, suggesting they would be predisposed to using available campus resources. Lastly, I sought to find students who had no previous experience with English-medium instruction, as well as those who had some experience with it, such as in international schools outside the US. All students were newcomers to the US education context.

In addition to the 7 focal students, I recruited the instructors of theirs who agreed to let me observe their classes and interview them. On occasion, an instructor invited me to observe the course but declined to be interviewed. Students typically had 3-5 instructors during the quarter, and collectively, I interviewed 20 of their professors, lecturers, and teaching assistants (functioning as instructors of record). Since first-year students often take classes that satisfy graduation requirements, the instructors came from a range of disciplines including Physics, Math, Computer Science, Biopsychology, Economics, Japanese, Statistics, Family Studies, Geology, Astronomy, Art History, Political Science, and Honors, and were not necessarily related to the students' prospective majors. Four support program administrators from two campus writing and/or academic support centers also participated in the study so as to further elucidate the role of institutional resources in facilitating students' academic socialization.

3.3.4 Settings

My research setting included classrooms, writing centers, libraries, cafes, outdoor benches, and other public spaces on the campus of this large, urban, research university in the Pacific Northwest.

3.3.4.1 Data Collection/Sources

In this study, I collected data from a range of sources over the course of an academic quarter to identify and interpret the process of multilingual international students' academic socialization from various points of view. Uncovering routine as well as unpredictable or conflictual events in individuals' lives was more likely to happen through a combination of observations, interviews, and informal group discussion. My hope was that by examining and representing the sociocultural context of the whole phenomenon under scrutiny, I could at once- co-construct knowledge with my participants, give voice to their concerns, and celebrate their successes (cf. Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Motha, 2009).

Table 1

Sources of Data

Type of Data	Source
Interviews with focal students: 6-7 interviews with each student	Co-constructed by participants and researcher
Interviews with instructors (professors and TAs)	Co-constructed by participants and researcher
Interviews with support program administrators	Co-constructed by participants and researcher
Observations/Shadowing of school day: 3 observation days per student	Generated by participants, documented by researcher
Field Notes: Taken during the observation day, and before/after interviews	Generated by researcher
Course materials (course syllabi, course websites, discussion boards, writing prompts, readings, handouts)	Provided by professors, instructors, TAs or students
Schedules and Grade pages	Provided by students
Email exchanges	Co-constructed by student participants and researcher
Websites (Office of the Registrar, other University sites)	Publicly available

Interviews. Interviews were the primary data collection tool I used in my interactions with the study participants, in keeping with other qualitative research foci (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The participants – students, their instructors, and support program administrators – and I pre-arranged the time and place for the interviews according to their schedules and preferences. I prepared an interview protocol in advance, which I then used as a point of departure, allowing for modifications to my approach based on the experiences of and interaction with the interviewee. Throughout the interview process, I privileged the stories told by the participants, as well as those that were co-constructed with the researcher in the process of narrative research. All interviews were conducted in English and were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Initial interviews with students: At the beginning of Spring Quarter 2014, I had an hour-long initial interview with each participating multilingual international student. In this interview, I asked the students about their background, previous academic experiences, reasons for studying at the University of Washington and in the US, particular experiences adapting to the academic demands of their courses, and strategies that they thought would be necessary to succeed in the courses (cf. Appendix). Each interview took about an hour.

After-shadowing interviews with students: After each observation day (see the following section on shadowing/observations), I had a 30–40-minute interview with the student. In this interview, I asked students about their perception of the classes, and we clarified moments based on the observations (cf. Appendix). The after-shadowing interviews took place about 3 times during the quarter for each focal student.

Interviews with focal students' instructors: Twenty of my focal students' instructors were interviewed briefly about their goals and expectations for student learning in the course, and overall perceptions of the class (cf. Appendix). The interview was oriented toward gathering

information about student tasks, including any writing assignments, group work, readings, and exams. I also asked about the instructors' impressions of international students' progress, difficulties, advantages, or disadvantages in the course. Each interview lasted about 30-60 minutes, depending on the availability of the instructor.

Interviews with support program administrators: Since my students used two different academic support centers on campus, I interviewed support program administrators in those programs to offer a broad view of the context in which my focal students gained experience with academic tasks. Interviews with support program administrators focused on the academic goals of their program or center and overall perceptions of their role in international students' academic socialization, including their impressions of international students' strategies for handling difficulties, as well as the resources international students use in accomplishing academic tasks. Each interview lasted about 30-60 minutes (cf. Appendix).

End of quarter interviews with students: During the final week of the quarter, I conducted an hour-long in-depth interview with each multilingual international student. The purpose of this interview was to capture the student's perception of their academic work over the course of the quarter (cf. Appendix).

Follow-up interviews with students in their second year: At the end of students' second year at the University of Washington, I held hour-long follow-up interviews with the students to accurately understand their perceptions of their first year at a US university, after time had elapsed to allow them a position of distance from which to reflect on their successes and challenges from their first year at the university. I used this opportunity to clarify questions that had arisen for me from the previously audio-recorded data and interactions.

Observations of the Students' School Day. During Spring Quarter 2014, I shadowed each multilingual international student on 3 non-consecutive days interspersed throughout the quarter. The primary goal of these observations was to capture the routine academic activities and experiences of the participants, observe how they constructed their identities in their classes, and note their interactions with their classmates and instructors. I followed the student from the first class of the day until the last class, observing what the student did in class and between classes on a given day. As my observation schedule permitted, I arranged to shadow students on different days of the week to understand the variations in their daily academic life. For instance, if a student had a lab class that met one day per week, I tried to include that day in my observation schedule. I sought to understand what students did, where they went, with whom they interacted, and how they reacted to situations they encountered during the school day. During the classes I observed, I sat quietly next to or behind my focal student, recording my observations.

After the observation day was over, I created more formal field notes, focusing on my impressions of the student's orientation to academics, perceptions of academic progress, and reactions to class sessions. I held a brief post-shadowing interview at the end of each observation day to provide more contextual information about the student's behavior, clarify moments from the day and gather more information about the student's writing and reading assignments, study habits, and other projects or group work. The lag time between the first interview and the first shadowing day allowed me to reflect on the background information presented in the first student interview and establish contact with the faculty member teaching the course to gain entry into the classroom setting.

Group Discussion. On one occasion, the focal students and I met informally over coffee/snacks and held a discussion on relevant student-generated topics. Since it proved to be impossible to coordinate a time when all 7 students could meet, I divided the group into 2 smaller groups of 3 and 4 participants each and held two separate forum sessions. I opened each forum encouraging students to discuss ideas of relevance to them about what college was like, including their concerns in their first year, the changes they have experienced, and their successes. I gave suggestions for possible topics such as classes, workload, assignments, student-teacher interactions, peer-peer interactions, and campus resources, but left the actual content of our discussions up to the students. Students made important intellectual, social, and emotional connections with one another as they talked about their peers' approaches to learning at the University of Washington. Their selected topics for discussion ranged from academic and personal goals to strategies for handling institutional challenges such as registering for desired classes, taking a course for credit rather than a grade, and finding a campus job.

Document Collection

In order to triangulate the data from interviews, observations and the group discussion, I also collected the following documents: the course syllabus and calendar for each focal student's courses, class handouts on days of observations, and all assignment directions and prompts. When it was possible, students shared their written work with the instructor's feedback so I could further examine the learning context and explore the extent to which the student succeeded in meeting faculty and/or disciplinary expectations. In the follow-up interviews, we discussed the students' perceptions of the work they had done.

3.3.5 Data Analysis

In keeping with qualitative research practices, I gathered data from multiple sources; the data generated from student interviews were triangulated with observations of students' academic activities during the school day and with instructor and support program administrator interviews so as to produce a rich, thick description of students' full experience. Data analysis began at the moment that data collection began, from the first interview or interaction with participants in an ongoing data analysis process. In this first phase of data analysis, I transcribed and coded the audio-recorded interviews, and then used inductive analysis of the interviews, observations and documents by identifying themes and patterns, and following leads as they emerged. This method of data analysis promises to add to the richness of the data and foster the accuracy of the portrayal of the whole picture of academic socialization for international students (Charmaz, 2006). Where possible, I transcribed, or at least summarized the key points of the interview data as soon as possible after each session to incorporate new information into subsequent interactions as part of an iterative and recursive research process.

Since the practice of collaborating with participants is conventional in inductive analysis, I consulted with participants to clarify points from the interviews or observations, all the while remaining sensitive to participants' well-being (Motha, 2009). As the findings appeared on the surface not to constrain the academic possibilities of the students in question or to risk otherwise negatively affecting them, I asked focal students to comment on the accuracy of certain interpretations of the data. I adopted this practice throughout the quarter-long period of the study, and again when we met for a follow-up interview at the end of the students' second year at the university. After having transcribed the data from the focal students' first year, and these remaining 7 follow-up interviews, I considered the data collection phase to be complete.

However, this is not to say that the data collection process was without complications. On occasion, I wish I had been able to video record our interactions or classroom interactions to visualize students' place in their space, their body language, and facial expressions. Some of the richest conversations were impromptu musings while student participants and I walked away from the interview site, and thus, I could only capture them in my field notes as I remembered them.

In the second phase of analysis, I re-evaluated the focal students' experiences in the context of the research questions and goals of the study. Then a substantial amount of time passed between the transcription phase and final data analysis. This meant that I needed to derive a strategy to reorient myself to the data. What I decided to do was to relisten to the recordings and edit the transcriptions for accuracy. This activity proved to be an excellent way to ensure that I had captured the participants' stories exactly as they had told them. I sought to ensure the precision of the material I planned to quote so that the students' voices would shine through the written account of their spoken words. In this second pass through the transcriptions, I collected all the data on a given student and went student by student, adding pages of notes to my field notes on each focal student.

At that point the students' voices (and the data) were fresh in my mind, and it was time to code and interpret the data. Having spoken to more senior researchers on the data analysis methods they had used, I decided to steer away from software programs like atlas.ti and Nvivo in favor of analyzing the data "by hand." In this case, "by hand" meant that I created an organizational system for the Word files with the transcriptions of 70+ hours of interviews, and from there I printed the transcriptions of approximately 54 hours of student interview data. I then annotated the printed transcriptions. Keeping in mind my study's purpose, overarching question,

and the sub-questions guiding my research, I identified emerging themes in the data. From those themes I determined the relevant codes to shape my understanding of the data. I returned to the digital versions of the transcriptions and used Word's Ctrl-F feature to locate any instances of the theme that I might have missed in the first pass of annotations. For instance, in response to the question "How do students perceive the tasks related to academic socialization and how do they seek to accomplish these?" I located and grouped students' comments on two separate aspects of the question: the tasks themselves and the skills and strategies they used in accomplishing their tasks. For the tasks themselves, I paid special attention to the codes that emerged in multiple students' accounts or that emerged repeatedly within the experiences of one student. I classified them into code families based on their commonalities, with two or more code families comprising a code network.

Table 2

Examples of Code Networks, Code Families & Codes

Code Network	Code Family	Code
Class Discussion (How do students perceive the tasks related to academic socialization?)	Challenges in participating in class	Fast pace, disorganization of ideas, large class size, lack of understanding/following, listening, repeat points of others, cultural differences
Class Discussion (How do they seek to accomplish these tasks?)	Conditions for successful class participation	Prepared readings, strong opinions, courage/confidence, motivation, small group work, invitation to participate, discussion boards

Table 2 reveals the relationship among the codes, code families and code networks. In this example, two different code families constitute the code network of an academic task: class discussion. Each code family responds to a different part of the research sub-question. The codes

and code families proved to be a useful organizational strategy to examine the data within the larger code networks.

I then integrated poststructuralist notions of the role of interview participants – the researcher and the study participant – into the analysis of the data as discursive constructions, from the point of view of critical discourse analysis and narrative inquiry. I examined the self-representations of participants, as well as my own role as a researcher and students' former instructor through the collaborative construction of discourse and narratives in the data, and in this way systematized reflexivity (Talmy, 2010). Admittedly, my attempts to interweave critical discourse analysis and narrative inquiry were at times less-than-streamlined. Finally, I returned to my research questions and extracted findings.

3.3.6 Tensions and Limitations

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) characterize the value of qualitative research as follows: "Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry" (p. 8). In the chapters that follow, I analyze the socially constructed realities of academic socialization for my students and our collaborative understanding of them through their narrative representations to which I am privy because of my relationship with these students – now my study participants, but also my former students. Qualitative studies will not necessarily yield the same results each time because the human experience is mutable, highly context-dependent, and in flux. One researcher might be more skilled at getting certain information or might have more access to a phenomenon than another. I had access to all of these students owing to our previous relationship, having spent 10 weeks building a rapport of trust through my interest in their

learning. Preliminarily addressing the situational constraints of the study is relevant here since critics of qualitative research may have some reservations about the validity of the project. The researcher's position is indeed said to be "subjective, limited and therefore partial" (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999, p. 61). Yet, researcher bias does not have to be a drawback or deterrent to conducting qualitative research. On the contrary, Motha (2009) demonstrates that under certain conditions, the researcher's positionality can be used strategically to gain access to a larger data set, such as the community created with her afternoon teas. I do believe my students' generosity, curiosity, and candor allowed me to gain insights into their academic (and to a lesser extent, personal) lives because of or in spite of my previous student-teacher relationship with them. The benefits of having created a safe space were evidenced in the group discussions, in which my focal students freely shared ideas and sought advice from their peers on topics of interest to them.

To respond to the critiques of qualitative research, I have attempted to determine if the results were consistent with the data collected. Peer examination, or getting colleagues to review and comment on the data, is one strategy I have used to ensure that my interpretation of the data seems plausible to others. Merriam (2009) points to several basic strategies to enhance internal validity, or the reflection of reality, based on her research experience and review of the literature. Triangulation of multiple data sources, member checks as to the validity of findings along the way, and long-term observation, which presumes an extended length of time and intensity of engagement with the participants, are three strategies to provide some measure of response to critique. Likewise, my goal has been to reinforce the dependability and consistency of the results by triangulating the data as described above, and offering a detailed description of how data were collected, categories established, and decisions made. Clarifying and explaining my position as a

researcher, the students' former instructor, and an L1 English speaker might also alleviate concerns about internal validity.

As much as I have sought out participatory or collaborative modes of research with my student participants, I still recognize that my role as a researcher may have influenced the data or limited the freedom of my focal students to express their identities fully. Some of my students may have agreed to participate in the study because they wished to maintain a personal connection with a more experienced member of the university community, imagining that they could leverage my assistance in providing references, help with personal statements and other high stakes writing, and advice about academic matters. During the recruitment process, I did not mention concretely the nature of help I would be willing to provide in exchange for their participation, but since most student participants in the study had already taken a writing support course with me, they perhaps tacitly understood that they could call on me for a range of academic concerns. They may have performed or been inclined to perform an expected or habitual role as one of my previous students, which could constrain the ways that they comfortably expressed their identity. I purposely had us meet for interviews in non-academic settings such as public spaces in the student union, the main grassy lawn, or coffee shops on campus so as to diminish the teacher-student power differential. On occasion, students may have altered their behavior to accommodate my presence in class during the observation days. For instance, one student saved me a seat next to her in lecture, while another asked me to meet her outside of the class so that she could introduce me to her instructor herself. Clearly, including multiple types of data proved to minimize the researcher's effects on students, or perhaps distribute those effects over a wider data set. In one study of adolescent second language students, Talmy (2008) combined methods in his research at Tradewinds High School to promote

analytic accountability and elaborate his descriptions (Atkinson, Okada and Talmy, 2011). I also strived to achieve a similar sense of accountability by combining qualitative methods with ethnographic traits.

Reflexivity, or reflection on and acknowledgment of one's biases, is of the utmost importance to the integrity and the credibility of the research and is the best approach to combating any possible negative repercussions arising from such critiques (Johns & Makalela, 2011; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999). Higgens and Sandhu (2015) describe the value of "engaging in researcher reflexivity" for generating insights into the researcher's process and product as well as the relationships formed and narratives co-constructed among researchers and their participants. If I entered the project with any biases, aside from the implicit biases developed from years of exposure to higher education in the US, they were primarily that the student participants in my study were competent, self-motivated students capable of handling academic challenges with poise and aplomb. I celebrated their successes, but also wanted them to feel it was okay to struggle while working through strategies for success and make adjustments for a better outcome next time. I may have seemed at times overly optimistic since several students felt uncomfortable when I asked to see their grades at the end of the quarter (and politely declined at that time). I tried to remain aware of my role as a researcher in their academic lives, all the while acknowledging that the quality of interactions with the student participants may have been due in large part to our pre-existing relationship. In 6 out of 7 cases, the students had taken a course with me that received credit/no credit rather than a grade on a 4.0 scale, so we had fostered authentic interactions without grade-related pressures. In a sense, this group of students had already demonstrated they were predisposed to help-seeking behavior and use of available resources from having enrolled in my academic writing support course, which,

in turn, may have contributed to the openness of our relationship. In fact, I played multiple roles for my focal students: mentor, sounding board, personal statement reviewer, and recommendation letter writer, among others. My students felt comfortable enough to seek advice on their friends' personal statements and to invite me to their public art installations and final capstone projects. A couple of my students clearly just wanted someone to be there to offer them support as they figured things out at the UW in their first year, as college was harder than they thought it would be. The interviews themselves may have influenced the focal students' socialization through reflection on and reframing of their experiences (Friedman, 2019). For my part, I developed a rich knowledge of the personal, social and academic contexts influencing their academic socialization and identity development.

In much the same way, my interpretation of the data was certainly influenced by my background and past experiences as an international student, an instructor, a novice researcher, a member of the LGBTQ+ community, and a graduate student in the Department of English at the University of Washington. Indeed, my intention is to be transparent about my perceptual lens, theoretical assumptions, and methodological and practical considerations at all stages of the research to foster trust in the project and uphold the standard for rigorous research (Athanases & Heath, 1995; Harklau & Williams, 2010). I take inspiration from Talmy's (2008) critical ethnographic work at Tradewinds High School, in which he uses critical discourse analysis to offer a view of community resources, interactions and their implications that "brought [his argument] to life" (Talmy, 2010, p. 138). The complementarity of these methods appeals to me as a researcher working with students whose access to material, symbolic, and linguistic resources is different from my own.

CHAPTER 4: INTRODUCING THE STUDENTS

This chapter offers a window into my seven focal students' academic and personal backgrounds. Here, I include information about each student's schooling, family information, reasons for studying in the US and previous exposure to English. I also describe salient aspects of each student's personality, although I reserve a full discussion of academic behaviors related to the student's personality or identity for the findings chapters. I also include information about the student's intended major or plan of study, future trajectories and goals, and notable accomplishments at the UW in their first two years.

I recruited first-year students at the end of their second quarter at the University of Washington and began interviews and observations in their third quarter – spring quarter. The focal students are introduced in the following order: 1) Emma, 2) Eve, 3) Chloe, 4) Cassandra, 5) Arielle, 6) Frances and 7) Jae. All names of the participants in the study have been changed to protect their privacy. All seven students were former students of mine, predominantly in a support studio for multilingual students enrolled in a first-year composition course. The support studio, General Studies 391, was a 2-credit course, consisting of 10 students per section and meeting 2 hours per week. Jae was the only exception: he had taken an English 108 bridge course with me during Early Fall Start, a one-month, 5-credit intensive course prior to the start of autumn quarter. Emma and Eve knew each other from my winter quarter class, in which they were enrolled concurrently. Even though they shared similar interests, they lived on opposite sides of campus and did not communicate outside of class. Chloe, Cassandra, and Arielle all knew each other from my fall quarter General Studies 391 class, and Chloe and Cassandra were close friends outside of class. When Chloe mentioned to Cassandra that she planned to

participate in my study, Cassandra jumped at the chance and approached me about it. She was thrilled to participate and declared that she had "a lot to say" about her college experience. Frances also took my General Studies 391 class during fall quarter, but she was in a different section, and did not know any of the other participants. Similarly, Jae knew none of the other participants since he had had class with me during Early Fall Start. This detail became relevant in the focus group interviews when Jae momentarily thought Frances was an American. We all had a good laugh, especially since everyone knew the focus of the study was on international students' academic socialization.

4.1 Emma

Emma was the first student I recruited since she was finishing up General Studies 391, a support course for her ENGL 131 first-year composition class, with me when I started recruitment. She enjoyed meeting during office hours and saw me as a resource for her writing. She also willingly shared her strategies for success with her peers in the support course. She had her own note-taking style and volunteered to share some tips and tricks that she had learned to that point in her schooling in class.

When I told her of my study, she was immediately interested. I believe she wanted to continue our relationship as we had a good rapport, and she may have been thinking ahead to the personal statements she would have to write for admission to the computer science major. After the study was over, she never hesitated to seek my input on her applications, for the BS and again for a fifth-year MS. She even solicited my assistance for her best friend, an international student from Iran, who was writing a personal statement for a different major.

Emma was always generous with her time and showed a vested interest in sharing the details of her life with me. On two occasions, our interviews went on for two hours, even though they were slated to last an hour, as she continued to engage with the questions and had plenty to say. On occasion, she even chose to meet with me in lieu of eating lunch. Emma patiently answered my questions and elaborated on all her responses.

Emma had gone to a competitive Chinese public boarding school in Shanghai, the city where she grew up. In her high school, she felt she was strong in academics, but that she could have improved academically if she had gone to a "better" ranked high school with stronger students. Regardless, the rules were quite strict, and she had to follow the students' routine from 6am-9pm.

In her final year, her high school had a class for students who wanted to study abroad. This group did not study for the Chinese national exam and were prohibited from taking it, since the school did not want them to get low scores for lack of preparation and influence the school's ranking. The study abroad students – 70 students out of a class of 470 – spent the day studying on their own – without teachers, but armed with many exercises for SAT, TOEFL, or AP exams. Continually referring to her experience in high school with the subject pronoun "we," she confirmed they were skilled at preparing for exams, even though the high school did not provide materials. Emma, however, did not take AP tests, and thus did not arrive with credits upon entering the university. Most students in her cohort contacted an outside agency to facilitate the college admissions process; Emma did, too.

In high school, she would regularly skip study hall to go jogging, which worked out because Emma was a "really good kid." She sometimes had a stomach ache from stress, so she

took full advantage of the breaks she was allowed. Her parents supported her jogging habit, and especially supported her decision to come to the US.

She had dreamed about coming to the US for college since she was a child; she wanted "to have a choice about what she studied and did" and felt the US would offer her that. She was also curious about exploring religion and wanted to be part of a culture where she could do so freely. Ever since age 6 or 7, when her father returned from a trip to Yale as a visiting professor in computer science and brought her a stuffed animal of the school's mascot, she had had her eye on studying at a US university. She remained on the waitlist at the University of Michigan for a long time since she felt the department for her desired major was strong, but ultimately accepted the offer at the UW. She felt that the UW was the best university to which she was accepted.

Emma started learning English in elementary school and actually "spoke better" then. She felt her skills declined in middle school because she was not comfortable speaking English. She complained about the pronunciation of the teachers and the focus on grammar instruction. She learned Japanese on her own through immersion in the world of anime (hearing and speaking with the characters). She felt more comfortable speaking Japanese because she found it more instinctual; without the burden of grammar knowledge in Japanese, she did not monitor her language use, and she reported not necessarily knowing whether she said things incorrectly. Emma and her family spoke only Chinese at home, even though her dad spoke English for lectures and Japanese from the days of his graduate schooling in Japan. She compared herself to her dad, who was cautious and wouldn't speak a given language if he felt he couldn't speak well enough to meet his own personal standard.

She considered herself shy around her peers, although I found her to be more inquisitive than shy. She felt shyness might be a trait of "science people," especially when they had to bond

as a cohort in a sequence of classes like the physics series. She mentioned that she chose tango over other disciplines within dance because she would not have to look her partner in the eyes since both partners look ahead. As a shy person, she felt more comfortable with that posture. She said she was afraid to go to parties, and she preferred just to watch Netflix in her room. However, since she strongly believed that activities were an effective way to meet and interact with people, she engaged in a number of them on and off campus.

Emma compared herself to her father in her pursuit of excellence, in part attributing her drive to his influence: “We are very similar. We are too alike, like the way we think. We always want more. We are never satisfied.” In fact, she was willing to push herself in academics by loading up her schedule. She took classes in physics, computer science, math and tango during the spring quarter of my observations. That quarter, for fun, she took a computer science class in web programming that proved to be hard: “it’s a challenge but I really like it.” She also admitted to having to scale back her extracurricular activities in her second year, as they were getting out of hand, and took a toll on her energy. Between being on her hall council and an officer in her tango club, working as a tour guide and greeter for the Office of Admissions, running regularly with the Husky running club and carrying a 17-credit load, she had to manage her time well. I did observe a heightened sense of self-control on her part.

Emma had come to the UW thinking she wanted to major in accounting, and in her first quarter, took a computer science course as a prerequisite. She fell in love with programming and changed all her plans. This change was significant since Emma was a planner. If the first plan didn’t come through, she had a back-up plan fully fleshed out as well. In this case, I believe she surprised herself by launching in a direction that had been unplanned and was totally unfamiliar to her. Even if her father was a computer science professor, she had never taken a programming

class, and suggested that the work he did was specialized in medical research, and differed substantially from the current computer science curriculum.

Emma's expectations prior to college were different from what she experienced. She felt she was somewhat naïve about popular culture, for example, and she often had fairytale-like notions about things. She explained that she had had a childhood dream of "ruling the world." This desire perhaps translated to her college-age self in the form of seizing opportunities for leadership positions; she had come in wanting to take advantage of such opportunities, but had only had a fuzzy view of what that meant for her. Hosting an open mic night through the council in her residence hall with 200 people was apparently not what she had in mind, exactly. In a follow-up interview in Emma's second year, she sounded pleased with the Tango Ball she and the other officers had organized for the tango club. The event – hosting around 300 participants – met all her expectations, as she felt they had improved on the prior year's performance. Another of Emma's notable accomplishments was getting hired in her first year by the Office of Admissions to be a greeter and tour guide for prospective and accepted students. She also gave the first tour in Mandarin at the UW, a challenge since all of her prior preparation had been conducted in English.

I found Emma to be humble, as she did not like to brag about her accomplishments or her traits, although she was willing to talk about them. She struggled to "sell" the UW to visitors when she worked as a tour guide in much the same way that she felt uncomfortable selling herself in her personal statement and application to computer science engineering. She did ultimately succeed in convincing the Department of Computer Science Engineering of the value of her potential contribution, and was accepted in February of her second year. At that time, she declared a double major in math and a minor in dance.

4.2 Eve

Eve took my General Studies 391 class during the winter quarter prior to data collection. She went into that class with a strong desire to improve her academic reading and writing skills. She proved to be an enthusiast on all things related to American culture, and she had sought me out after class to talk further about one of our course readings on that topic. She wanted to make sure that she understood the meaning of the slam poet's words about stereotypes and race-based discrimination in the US. I thought she would be an excellent candidate for recruitment since she possessed a certain curiosity for cross-cultural competency and desire to figure out how to fit into the campus community. She was indeed excited to talk about her adaptation to and plans for college.

Eve's hometown was in Shanxi province in China, a town near Beijing that was "partly modern and partly historic," based on her description. She attended the local public high school and lived with her family. For the first two years of high school, she followed the prescribed curriculum for all Chinese students, and then in the final year, she prepared the TOEFL with a teacher. Only two other students in her grade studied abroad, one in Canada and one at Ohio State University. With the help of an agent, Eve applied to ten schools. During the application process, Eve's mother discovered the University of Washington, and thought it would be a good fit for her daughter. Even though Eve had initially been attracted to California schools, she thought Seattle was a beautiful city and both respected her mother's opinion and accepted her guidance. She and her family had gotten the idea for her to study abroad when a cousin seven years her senior had studied in England. Her parents supported the idea of study abroad for their daughter; her mother encouraged her to take full advantage of the opportunities that immersion in a new culture could offer her.

Eve had limited practice in listening and speaking in English, and primarily studied grammar through Chinese-medium instruction starting in elementary school. The most they wrote were 80-word passages in English, which they would occasionally read in class, until her final year of school when she got more practice in all English skills during her TOEFL preparation. She also took AP tests in physics, macroeconomics, statistics and calculus and entered the university with 40 credits, which conferred her with sophomore status in her second quarter. She appreciated her ability to register early for classes, based on her status, because that allowed her to take the classes she needed as prerequisites to the statistics major. Even though Eve had limited exposure to English communication in her secondary schooling, her previous work in STEM classes and her outgoing and engaging personality served her well in college.

I would describe Eve as open-minded to ideas and calm and upbeat in disposition. Although she had a clear plan for her time in college in the US and the plan drove her behavior in and outside of school, she never came across to me as rigid. She was the architect of her life, and found that something special about college for her was that her parents were not present. She realized immediately that she would need to force herself to stay on track with her plan because no one else would. She demonstrated an incredibly high level of personal responsibility, and she felt she had learned self-control in her first year of college, aided by her plan: "you need to have a plan…I think the plan is the most important thing to me." Her four-year plan was one of the more remarkable things about her, as well as her use of positive self-talk to stay on target with the plan. She felt the plan would keep her from being a "nerd" who only studied. The plan, as she described it in a focus group meeting with other students in the study, went as follows:

> the first-year goal is to get your major and next year, it's like to have, to know a lot of people and have a lot of experience, and the third year is to prepare for GRE and then

> take exam and then …the fourth year is to finally [apply and get accepted to graduate school].

According to the plan, Eve needed to focus on her grades in the first year so that she could apply to the statistics major, which would become a competitive major for the first time. Striving for a competitive major meant that she would have to apply to the major (rather than merely declaring it); however, the department had no prior data on the likelihood of a candidate's acceptance since it was in its first cycle of taking applications. Eve was apprehensive about this uncertainty, and felt the best approach would be to focus on the things she had control over, such as her work and her grades. She set 3.8 out of 4.0 as the minimum grade she could acceptably get in her math classes, and 3.7 as the minimum threshold in computer science, which was a totally new discipline for her.

She clarified the later phases of her plan during another interview. She planned to participate in clubs or activities to meet people in her second year. In her third year, she wanted to do undergraduate research during the school year, and find an internship over the summer. In the spring quarter of her final year, she thought it would be fun to study abroad in Europe, since she had never been there. This would be possible within the parameters of the statistics major if she was able to complete all of her coursework in five quarters starting in her third year.

In the spring quarter of her first year, Eve intended to take a lighter load of 12 credits so that she could take a part-time job at a food truck and learn more about American culture through food. She took a 300-level math course, a computer science course, a career planning seminar (1 credit) and a General Studies seminar on race (1 credit). The reading demands in the 1 credit seminar on race turned out to be a challenge, so she felt the course was hard in the end.

Eve described herself as having changed a lot from who she had been in high school. She had been very shy in high school, but now "not so much." For instance, she gave the example that she had been too shy and was "afraid to talk" to her teachers in high school. Never once had she gone to ask them a question or to seek out additional help. Being on her own in college meant that she had to convince herself to try difficult things. In the first week of her first quarter, she described the first step that she took to change her behavior. Since she did not understand how to do the homework in a basic statistics class for non-majors, she wanted to ask her TA how to approach it. She had a moment of doubt when it came time to seek help, but she went for it: "When I'm at the office door, I said, 'oh - whether I need to go or not'…but I knocked on the door, and just go in." From that point on, Eve found office hours to be an excellent resource in her STEM classes, and visited her professors weekly.

Throughout my data collection, Eve showed evidence of adhering faithfully to her plan. When we met at the end of her second year, she had gotten into her statistics major, and had plans to minor in math and Japanese. She planned to spend most of the summer in Japan taking the 200-level series Japanese classes. She had secured a research opportunity with a professor she liked whose research focus matched her own career interests. She had informed herself about how to get recruited for an internship following her third year. She had also followed through on her desire to become more engaged in the campus community, as she was an officer for the statistics club, in charge of their web programming. She had joined the Taiwanese organization in which her friends participated and similarly took on a leadership role as activity leader, planning a donation drive at the UW Night Market – an annual celebration of Taiwanese culture – for socks and basic essentials to be distributed at three homeless shelters around Pioneer Square. Perhaps an unexpected consequence in her second year was that the academic work got

harder, so she ended up having to spend even more time on it, but she still managed to achieve her personal goals of meeting more people at the same time. She felt she could not really abandon her focus on her grades because she had graduate school on the horizon. Worried about the vocabulary, reading and writing demands of the GRE, she beamed when I agreed to help her prepare for the test.

4.3 Chloe

Chloe decided to come to campus a month before fall quarter classes started so that she could "get familiar with this environment." During Early Fall Start, she took English 103, a Writing from Sources course for multilingual students, to prepare for the writing demands of college. She selected this course because she thought it would be easy, and she wanted to ease into college slowly. She was also pleased to start off with a 4.0 on her transcript, thinking it might help her grade point average when it came time to apply to the business school. In retrospect, she felt the course was tremendously helpful for understanding how to use and cite sources, a skill she employed in her English 131 class in the fall.

I met Chloe during fall quarter when she took my General Studies 391 class. I still remember the first day of class when she brought her own name card with her name written in Chinese and English. She also provided an English nickname to make it easier for non-Chinese speakers to address her, although she usually introduced herself with her Chinese name first. She was personable, had a good sense of humor, and frequently sought out my help on her writing during office hours. We kept in touch over winter quarter as she prepared her application to the Honors Program and wanted my feedback on her personal statement. She engaged with people easily and was enthusiastic about participating in my study when I proposed it to her.

Chloe had attended a Chinese high school in Shenyang and intended to take the national exam for entrance into Chinese universities. Shortly before the exam deadline, she was diagnosed with an eye disease, which meant that she could not use her eyes to study for 3-4 months. She would have to wait until the following year to take the exam. This sudden change in plans afforded her a new opportunity: study abroad. She felt her English had been poor throughout her schooling in China, and her strengths were more in subjects like biology or geography. She had started in elementary school with learning some vocabulary lists, but the curriculum primarily focused on reading and writing, with limited communication in class.

Even though she liked reading history and writing in Chinese, she did not polish her English skills until she made the decision to study abroad, at which point she only had 3 months to prepare. She enrolled in TOEFL and SAT preparation classes off campus, in an immersion-type program. Her teachers suggested that she look at the University of Washington, and helped her with the application. She liked the university because it has a business school, and she intended to major in accounting. Her mother was an accountant, and Chloe planned to follow in her footsteps. Chloe's parents worried about the decision to go to the US for college; she had been away from home alone before, but never so far away. They thought she would not survive.

Chloe did indeed doubt the sanity of her decision to study abroad upon arrival at Sea-Tac Airport. Armed with resilience and a sense of adventure, she made it through the initial phases of adaptation. She had it clear in her mind that she wanted something different from her previous schooling experiences in China. She felt that discovering a new culture and attending a school where she could prepare for a career in accounting and finance were important reasons to study at the UW: "I have to do something really worth my time." Chloe was a confident student and felt that her schooling in China prepared her well to know how to study, as she had been

developing note-taking and annotation skills and reviewing for tests for 15 years. She felt she had to work as hard in the US in college as she had in high school in China just to survive her first year. She considered this point a trade-off since she would be coasting through college in China, in her opinion, if she had stayed.

Chloe was a person who constantly thought ahead to her next steps. Over spring break, she spent some of the time playing tour guide for her cousin, enjoying Chinese restaurants that he might not find in rural Colorado, where he was studying. Chloe devoted the rest of the time to preparing for her spring quarter classes. She sought out the textbooks and materials she would need, although not all of the courses had posted their requirements. She also worked on her schedule, and came up with several different plans, in case she could not get into the classes she wanted. She selected a few classes she wanted to audit, such as a management class, which an advisor at the business school had recommended to her. She was also able to work ahead in Japanese since she already had the workbook. She completed all the exercises in the final class of the 100-level series prior to the start of the quarter. She also used her free time to seek out a volunteer opportunity with the Red Cross. She learned about the organization when she got certified for CPR and proposed her translation skills to them. They offered her a volunteer position as a translator, which she gladly accepted since the work was fulfilling and the schedule flexible. All of her work was submitted online.

In addition, she used all the resources at her disposal – peers, mentors, advisors, on-campus study and writing centers, online resources, and especially professors. Having an outgoing personality facilitated her interaction with people at all levels of the university, as she developed a rapport with peers – both from her year and upper level undergraduates, the Honors Program advisor, TAs, and professors. She saw the relationship as one of give and take, as she

liked to be helpful. During the spring quarter of my observation, Chloe informed me that she had emailed the Honors class professor to let him know she was a native Chinese speaker and was familiar with the course content from a Chinese perspective. She offered to meet with him and assist him if he wished to draw on her expertise. While I think he did not immediately take up her offer, he did expressly give her the floor in class on several occasions to share her knowledge and experience.

Chloe presented as a responsible student with clear goals. She was taking the 100-level series of Japanese language courses in her first year because she thought Japanese might be useful to her in the business world, or perhaps she might get a job in Japan after her graduation. She also planned to study Korean at the UW, but felt she could not just take one type of class, such as language classes. Likewise, she did not want to take only math classes; she had clearly accepted the premise of having a well-rounded undergraduate education. However, she was careful in her course choices, and could not find just the right science class for her, as computer science or biology would not yield the results she desired. She considered an astronomy class as a potential way to fulfill her science requirement, but decided not to continue after the first lecture. Although she did not directly state this point, she implied that the grade she would get in those classes might compromise her high GPA. She was attuned to keeping her grades up because she knew that she would need near-perfect scores, among other considerations, to get into the UW Foster School of Business. This meant that while she was interested in understanding American culture in interacting with her roommate and classmates, this was not to the exclusion of her focus on grades. In general, Chloe was poised to take advantage of opportunities that presented themselves.

She attributed several of her accomplishments to the connections she made with others who helped her achieve her goals. She described her most rewarding experience in her first year as getting into the Honors Program, something she would not have even known about if it were not for an American friend and classmate who introduced the program to her. This peer had suggested they study together, and even though she was accustomed to studying alone, she decided to give it a try. Although she did not say why his Americanness influenced her decision, I understood that she saw some value in this contact with someone from the host culture. That the peer was American was a positive attribute for her, but even more important were his smarts and ability to do well in class. She later emphasized that he had high scores and grades, which held a high level of appeal for her. She clearly wanted to be around people who succeeded. At his encouragement, she took an Honors class to test it out and applied to the Honors Program in winter quarter of her first year, seeking feedback from several writing instructors (myself included) and tutors on her personal statement. She was excited to get into the program, as it represented a significant challenge, and she wanted to "do something different from other students at UW." It was then through this avenue that one of her Honors professors suggested that she apply to the business school at UW Bothell since she was not accepted to the Foster School in her second year.

At the end of her second year, Chloe was accepted to the business school at UW Bothell, to start the following fall. Once in a major, Chloe felt a sense of relief, and was able to enjoy her life more. Since she had taken 17-18 credits each quarter until that point and satisfied her non-major course requirements for graduation, she felt there were very few classes she could take. The Honors Program classes had filled the gap for her while she waited to get into her major. She had to make some hard choices and give up her progress in the Honors Program in

transferring to the business school at Bothell, as she had already taken about 5 or 6 courses out of the required 9 to complete the program. It came down to the fact that she just preferred accounting over her back-up plan to major in economics and math.

In reflecting on her first two years, Chloe noticed a change in her approach. Initially, she felt she would not stay in the US beyond her graduation, instead preferring to experience another Asian country like Japan or South Korea. Details like Seattleites' propensity to wear sports wear or outdoor clothing (e.g., brands like North Face or Columbia) bothered her in her first year: "I can't wear this!" However, she seemed to have gotten over such fashion faux-pas and focused more on getting to know Americans, especially ones who had already entered the working world. She discovered that she could work off campus in a job related to her major by applying through the university, and that she'd have 15 months to work in the US after her graduation. She was also proud that she had integrated socially in her second year. She felt she had markedly improved in her spoken language skills, and her peers confirmed this impression. As an example of her social integration, she cited a one-time fundraising event that she attended at a Mariners game, in which she solicited donations. The other volunteers brought in some donations, but she raised $600 in 2 hours, just by standing there with a bucket and talking to people. Her ability to make connections with people was put to the test in this activity, and she largely succeeded in "getting more into American culture."

Chloe finished her accounting degree at UW Bothell and went on to get a masters degree in accounting there. At the time of the writing, she was employed as an accountant at a firm in Seattle.

4.4 Cassandra

Cassandra was my student in General Studies 391 during Fall Quarter of her first year at the UW. She had taken a Discovery Seminar during Early Fall Start, and immediately launched into English 131, for which the General Studies studio class served as a support course. Cassandra found out about my study from Chloe, who was in the same section of my course, and jumped at the chance since she felt she had a lot to say about her experience at the UW.

Cassandra's first question about her participation in the study was about whether she should tell the truth about her experience or not, and her second question was about who would listen to the interviews. She wanted to tell her story but was cautious about who would have access to it. To her satisfaction, my responses convinced her of the confidentiality of the project. I later realized that she felt somewhat alone in her politics, her perspectives on social change, and her personal goals. Since we had already established a relationship of trust, in which she had confided numerous conflicts with roommates, she used that stable platform as a springboard for the expressions of her experiences, some of which were joyful and others frustrating.

Cassandra's native language was Chinese, which she spoke with her family, but as she put it, "I am kind of fluent in English." She started learning English in kindergarten as part of the elementary school curriculum in her school in northeast China. Her mom knew that proficiency in English was an important skill to have because she worked in an international setting. Cassandra enjoyed English in school at first since it was taught in a communicative way; her teacher felt speaking and listening were important, having just returned from a few years in the US. However, those early experiences were eclipsed by a lack of English in the continuation of her schooling. Even though they had English class every day in high school, it was mostly just responding to written multiple-choice questions, with class conducted in Chinese. The writing

she did was all based on in-class, timed writing – a test of 120 words. She remembered vividly the time she wrote 140 words and lost 5 points on the assignment. Cassandra felt she "did not really use English before coming to the US."

Cassandra went to a public Chinese high school, and struggled through her education, disillusioned by a system in which teachers did not promote critical thinking. She felt alienated by the education system in China, especially because students could not question their teachers. As she put it, "everything was presented as fact." As a student who loved history, she cared deeply about society but felt that "people in high positions just cared about themselves." Cassandra wanted to be part of a system of "real education" in which students could evaluate ideas, and accept, reject, or modify them.

Her hatred of high school became "really intense right away." Fortunately, her mother was open-minded and helped Cassandra get therapy to manage her feelings about high school. Yet, since she had disengaged as a student in this system, her grades suffered, as did her rank in her school. As her mental health declined, her confidence in academics waned. She abandoned the Chinese high school system half a year early, after two and a half years. She essentially felt that she had wasted her time in high school. She had hope that studying abroad would be a way out of the oppressive atmosphere that she had experienced, but she had few role models to confirm these hopes. In fact, fewer than 10 students in her class of 800 went abroad for college. For Cassandra, the path to college in the US was not a direct one.

While waiting for her family's approval of her plan, she prepared for the TOEFL and the SAT. She seemed pleased with this phase of the plan, as she shared her scores with me proudly. She had gotten more than 100 points on the TOEFL, with 120 as the top score. On the SAT, she started with 1950, and then got over 2000 when she took it the second time. She sought out the

assistance of an agent to facilitate her college application process and inform her about the different schools that might interest her. She took care of the parts of the application that were within her control, but the issue of financial and emotional support from her parents remained unresolved.

This "waiting period" turned into a gap year, in which she stayed on campus at a university in Beijing and prepared her applications. She also attended English Corner each Friday evening, where everyone interested in speaking English "stood around feeling awkward." She practiced her English with people who primarily worked for international companies and needed extra language practice for their jobs. She had an inspiring conversation with the boss of one of those companies – a US citizen as it turns out – about what subject she should study. They both agreed that society needed more people "besides just computer scientists or engineers." She felt that history could be a good option for her major, as it would align well with her desire to enact social change. She felt strongly that "people should band together for social change." Her impression was that "Chinese people don't read so they don't have a sense of what could be." She felt most Chinese people unquestioningly accepted the status quo. Since she felt alone in her approach and perspectives, she hoped that she would find like-minded people in the US.

The underlying theme of Cassandra's gap year was her ongoing argument with her family about whether she could study abroad. In particular, she was at odds with her father, who worried about the financial burden of college in the US. The irony that Cassandra expressed was that her father did not, in reality, know if they could afford it because her mother was in charge of the finances. Instead, he attempted to control her through emotional appeals and convince her not to go through with her plan. She ended up having to assert her independence. Cassandra gave her father an ultimatum and told him that he needed to decide by 6am the next day. He did come

around in the end. She thought that her mother helped change his mind – “my mom was a firefighter, [putting out the fire] between me and my dad.” Regardless, she had already made her decision.

Cassandra was passionate about learning about different historical perspectives, living by her ideals of social justice, and integrating into American culture. One of Cassandra’s defining features was her interest in social and political activism, and another was her strong resolve to balance academics with a robust social life. She enjoyed a sense of spontaneity and adventure with her friends. She was well-aware of the tradeoffs associated with spending time making friends and cultivating friendships over the long term and she was ready to assume responsibility for the choices she made as to how she spent her time. As a person with a strong goal-orientation, she lived her life with purpose, and made sure that everything she did contributed to her goals. Indeed, Cassandra had many goals to attend to; most nights, she only slept five or six hours.

She was strong-willed, by her own admission. She displayed persistence in her first year when she sought out a campus job and was continually turned down or her applications were just ignored. She applied to basic positions such as being a cashier in the campus eateries, but felt frustrated that it took so long to find a job with even the simplest tasks, when as she put it, other international students who did not focus on practicing their English managed to secure a spot. If she saw a student worker in a campus dining hall not perform the required tasks to an appropriate standard, or to her standard, she felt annoyed and irritated in their presence. This feeling led to several minor altercations, which may have seemed, to an outsider, mere misunderstandings, but these situations especially bothered her when she saw someone underperforming in a job she had applied for. Cassandra ultimately did find a couple of different positions; however, she felt they

drew out her negative side. For instance, she worked in the UW Library in the overdue book department and discovered that customer service was not her forte. When others behaved rudely in her eyes, she mirrored their behavior, with perhaps even more intensity. She explained vehemently her dislike of certain rules when she applied through Housing and Food Services to be a Resident Assistant (RA) at a dormitory. When she felt a situation to be unfair or undesirable, she did not hide her distaste. Perhaps this is why, during her first quarter at the UW, she went through several roommates. She was the first to say that she did not get along with everyone, stating she was "not good at people."

Despite the challenges she occasionally faced in relating to others, Cassandra excelled in her studies, participated in recreational sports, kept a close-knit friendship group of Americans, and had many accomplishments in her extracurricular activities at the UW. She ended up developing a good rapport with several of her professors in history and political science, and even agreed to participate in a study abroad program in Vietnam at the invitation of one of her professors. She spent several hours each week working at WashPirg, the UW chapter of the Washington Public Interest Research Group. She focused primarily on the affordable textbook campaign and was nominated by her coordinator to run for the board and join a cohort downtown for people who proved to be heavily invested in the work of the organization. She was attracted to the organization because policy-making really interested her, and she saw its potential to enact change related to the environment, consumer protections and government reform. She was thrilled that this activity could "give her a real life experience – beyond studying." She eventually left WashPirg in her second year because of a time conflict with another activity for which she had to apply in a highly selective process, the Associated Students UW Leaders program. As she put it, a friend alerted her to the application for UW Leaders the night before it

was due, and somehow, she stood out among the 300 candidates, only 48 of which they accepted. She liked UW Leaders since it is a group dedicated to developing leaders in student government. Each leader had a mentor, and then the following year, the leader could apply to be a mentor to another student, which she planned to do. The group held meetings for 3-4 hours each week to work on topics such as failure and resilience, conflict resolution, identity, privilege, and personal goal-setting, to name a few.

During the time of this study, Cassandra was testing out history and political science classes to determine if she could handle either of those as her potential major. She steered away from physics and math even though those subjects came easily to her; Cassandra's real passion lay in law and government. She reported that if she could rise to the challenge and major in history and political science, she would be well-positioned to go to law school. She also planned to minor in economics or consider economics as a back-up major if the reading and writing load proved to be too overwhelming in her first-choice majors. She was mindful that she would need to do well in her major to be in a competitive position for graduate school.

When she exceeded her own expectations during spring quarter by receiving a 3.8 on her history paper, she was enthusiastic about following through with her planned majors. In her political science class, she felt stressed that students were graded on a curve, and many second- and third-year students were in the course. She indicated that the course was set up to detect whether students could handle upper-level courses in the department, and in her mind, having limited previous exposure to the content and limited background knowledge of western and European history in general put her at a disadvantage in comparison to her peers. She assumed the challenge, though, because she felt the rewards would be worth the effort she would need to put in to succeed. She characterized the value of each discipline as follows: "History is more like

critical thinking but Poly Sci makes me more active about what's going on, like...in the world." With her choice of majors, she wanted to both polish her critical thinking skills and be an active and engaged citizen.

Incidentally, Cassandra ended up continuing to do well in both history and political science, and even won a monetary prize for one of her essays. After the time of the study, she received a year-long merit-based scholarship for students in the history major who were paying non-resident tuition. In political science, she also went on to participate in the quarter-long Washington State Legislative Intern program, whose selection criteria included "strong writing and good people skills."

As previously mentioned, Cassandra was goal-oriented and was not shy about expressing her plan to make the most of her experience in the US. She sought to be well-rounded by balancing her time and efforts across multiple domains. As such, she set academic, personal and social goals and did her best to follow through on all aspects of her plan. She wanted to study just enough to keep her grades at or above 3.7, as she considered this a threshold beyond which she would need to sacrifice other activities to work harder for a higher grade. She got involved in activities that stimulated her intellectually and helped her interact with people she respected. She was also an avid tennis player, so she had to squeeze in a match here and there, even if she couldn't play enough to maintain her previous level of play. She was especially concerned about "blending in" socially and keeping in touch with her American friends. When she reflected on the most rewarding parts of her first year, she felt networking and socializing stood out the most to her.

4.5 Arielle

Arielle was another of my students in General Studies 391 during fall quarter of her first year at the UW. She had taken a writing seminar linked to an introductory anthropology class and wanted additional support for her writing in English. When I sent her an email inquiring about her level of interest in participating in the study, I heard nothing back for two weeks. Then she replied at the beginning of spring quarter that she was interested in connecting with me and participating in the study. It turned out that she had been so overwhelmed with the heavy volume of reading- and writing-intensive work in her winter quarter classes that she needed at least a week to recover. She later commented that one week of spring break had been insufficient to regain her energy to start fresh for spring quarter. To say that Arielle was an enthusiastic participant would be a gross understatement. In our interviews, she displayed an almost urgent need to communicate her thoughts and concerns and shared them with an intensity and stamina that I did not witness in most of my other participants. Arielle delighted in discussing the theories she had learned in her courses, or the ideas that she was grappling with related to academics or the world at large. She never tired of elaborating on her responses to my questions and always had clear ideas of her own on what we should discuss. The only time I saw her as quiet was during the forum with Chloe and Cassandra, as she disagreed with their ideas and sought to find a diplomatic way of expressing an alternate viewpoint.

Arielle had grown up in Shanghai and spoke Mandarin with her family. Before I could ask my second question, which dealt with her schooling, we launched into an 8-minute discussion of Arielle's plans for her major and the Comparative History of Ideas (CHID) course she would take in the Netherlands that summer. Arielle entered the UW with enough credits to earn sophomore standing, which led her to express concern about having to choose a major in

September of her second year on campus, as she would have junior standing at that time. During her final year of high school, she knew she would study abroad, so she prepared on her own for AP tests in Calculus, Chemistry, and both Micro- and Macroeconomics, earning a total of 40 credits. We eventually returned to the topic of her schooling; she had attended traditional Chinese schools through high school. She went to a highly ranked Chinese high school, and since she was in a liberal arts track, about one-fourth of the students in her cohort planned to study abroad, but this was only 10% of her entire high school class. She emphasized that many students in her cohort were strong in English. She herself had learned the language from kindergarten on, with English immersion in the early years and more grammar instruction in Chinese in middle school. With her participation in Model United Nations in high school, held at the University of Pennsylvania, she had an opportunity to practice her English in an immersion English setting and discover something beyond her textbooks. In addition to wanting to explore the world, another reason she gave for choosing to study abroad was that it was “unfair” that a high-stakes college entrance exam could determine one’s future. She also suggested that having to choose a major before being able to explore her options seemed stifling. Her mother was a professor of physical education at a university in Shanghai and decided to find an apartment close to Arielle’s school because it became overwhelming for Arielle to live onsite at the school. Arielle recognized and was grateful for this sacrifice, as it meant her mother would have to drive across the city to work each day. She mentioned that her mother was her main source of support as her father was a businessman and was not actively involved in raising Arielle.

In her first year, Arielle was interested in knowing everything about the topics of study that engaged her. On more than one occasion, she indicated that she did not have enough time to go in depth on a given topic to her satisfaction, whether in class or in office hours with

professors. She had a voracious appetite for knowledge and loved learning at the college-level; she expressed that college learning was more fun than she had expected and her learning experience at the UW was a positive one. In our conversations, Arielle consistently made connections among the various humanities subject areas she had studied and tended to transfer her knowledge gained in one class to the new material she was studying, both in course content and in learning strategies. This reflection on her learning served to build her confidence going into each new academic situation. She had an affinity for classes that were discussion-based or that prioritized the discussion of ideas. Likewise, she took full advantage of professors' office hours so that she could extend her knowledge by discussing topics more in depth with them. It was not difficult for Arielle to connect with her professors and other adults, who seemed invested in offering her advice and mentorship about how to proceed along different possible career paths. It comes as no surprise that anyone encountering Arielle would offer her advice; she presented as open-minded and her enthusiasm made one wish to engage with her questions and concerns. She also appreciated life experiences that gave her a unique kind of knowledge that could not be gained in textbooks or course materials. She developed this appreciation more fully in two of her CHID courses: one in Amsterdam on Dutch design and the other in New York studying site-based research on urban change. Another value she developed was self-discovery; as she felt students who studied abroad were interested in introspection.

Much of our time together was spent talking about her personal and intellectual expectations for herself as well as her observations of how people interact with one another socially, including how to make and keep friends and develop an academic or professional network. Arielle had a boyfriend, also a Chinese international student, whom she had met during Early Fall Start at her birthday party; he was a friend of a friend in her English 108 class. I met

him when I observed her in two of her classes that he was also taking. He served as a sort of backdrop to her life as they studied late at night in the library together, but her attention in our conversations was more directed to interactions with friends. Arielle occasionally struggled to negotiate her various friend groups as noted in her characterization of them: career-driven Chinese friends with whom she could not share her thoughts about social justice, mostly because of the background information they were lacking; study abroad Chinese friends who tended to stay in a clique; American friends in CHID who invited everyone to go out and made them feel welcome; and her art class cohort whom she wished to interact with after the quarter ended, but did not know how to make that happen. Arielle noticed some distinct differences in how local students related to one another and how she related to her friends from high school or her Chinese friends here in the US. Small talk was something that fascinated her as a foreign concept whose purpose she grew to understand as a way of fitting in but found somewhat complicated and even boring. Given the chance, she much preferred "a big deep conversation about serious ideas" as she felt it would make her, or anyone, happier. As a self-proclaimed shy person, Arielle eventually felt comfortable with her cohort in her art classes and peers from her study abroad summer program. Yet, based on her observations of outgoing classmates, she had some doubts about whether her American peers related to her as just another person that they were making small talk with or as a true friend. After she had declared her major, she sought out but did not find a club or organization that focused on the creation of art; instead, her art class cohort filled her need for social contacts with a shared passion, whose bonds created a sense of belonging for her. Even if she found people with shared interests to talk to, she felt strongly that she should "solve everything" herself first before turning to others with her problems as she did not want to

burden or bother them. As she put it, “I just have like a relationship with myself.” She wondered who to talk to about her concerns specific to international students, though.

Arielle was preoccupied with the impending moment when she would be selecting a major, in part because she felt she would not have enough time to fully explore all the options that interested her, and in part because she was unclear on exactly what her passions were. Unlike her friends whose families dictated their educational and career paths, and thus they had already planned their course of study, Arielle had the freedom to choose a course of study that interested her, as she had full support from her mother to be creative and discover her passions. In fact, Arielle noted that her parents were not at all worried about how well she did in school since they knew she was personally invested in her own success. She was strict with herself and felt a deep sense of responsibility for informing herself on the steps and end goal of each option, whether it was law or design or something in the social sciences such as psychology. Even if she had the freedom to choose the content of her studies, she had strict notions of the proper process to achieve one’s goals for any given career, which included internships that would lead to a position in the work world, and ultimately graduate training in one’s field. Eventually, she knew her dad would also offer her opportunities for internships when the time came. She cited these expectations for steps to a career path as well-established among Chinese international students, a sort of “routine.” Thinking ahead, she sought out advice from most everyone she met, including representatives from graduate school admissions, about how to proceed and how to prepare for graduate studies in the fields of interest to her.

Arielle cited several major accomplishments in her second year, both in her selection of a double major that matched her interests and in adjustments to her personal approach to knowledge and her mindset towards success and failure. Additionally, she felt she had overcome

a hurdle in interacting with others and felt much more comfortable participating by speaking up in class. In her first year, Arielle had been interested in fine art and had taken sculpture and glass classes, but she was not sure how art would fit into her studies in a formal way. She ultimately discovered the interdisciplinary visual arts major, which she felt complemented her interest in the Comparative History of Ideas (CHID) perfectly. She got accepted to the CHID honors program, which meant she would take 3 quarters to complete an honors thesis. Another notable point related to her major is that she planned to graduate in 3 years. Her personal goals related to grounding her art creations in theory, which provided a way to make her work meaningful in her eyes. She discovered that by focusing her attention on a specialized field, she felt better about "not knowing everything" because she had gained expertise in a specific area. Her priorities had shifted a bit from her first year towards a more balanced approach where she practiced self-care and had fun. She still maintained that her preference was to plan everything as much as possible and not deviate from the plan; spontaneity was not in her nature. However, she learned in her glass working class that trial and error could be an acceptable way to learn from mistakes. Even though these lessons were new to her and perhaps hard to stomach at first, Arielle began to accept failure and view it in a more positive light as a learning experience. When her mindset shifted, she felt a strong sense of relief because she "did not need to worry so much about the outcome," but instead she just did her best and put effort into whatever she was working on.

In addition to CHID honors, Arielle fulfilled the requirements for the Interdisciplinary Visual Arts major with an honors showcase at the end of her third and final undergraduate year. One part of her final project, a multi-sensory and participatory piece of art dedicated to showcasing the voices of eight undergraduate Chinese international students, revealed the challenges they faced in their transnational lives. Arielle's contribution to the university through

this piece and her other public art was remarkable. She displayed other work at the campus undergraduate library and also curated an exhibit at the campus art gallery. Photos of her work continued to be displayed on the School of Art + Art History + Design website long after her graduation.

4.6 Frances

Frances took my General Studies 391 course during fall quarter, and when I sent the recruitment email at the end of winter quarter, she responded promptly. I suspect she had appreciated the small class size of the writing support course she had taken with me and was interested in continuing a relationship with an instructor at the UW. One of the biggest challenges for Frances was getting used to how large the university was, which primarily affected her academics. She had attended an English-medium international school in Bandung, Indonesia with an International Baccalaureate (IB) program and had only 60 students in her grade. She was accustomed to having a close relationship with her teachers, who were from Australia, the US and England. She had extensive practice writing essays in high school and had also practiced reading and annotation skills regularly. She felt comfortable speaking English.

Since she had gone to an international school, in her view, she always knew she would attend college abroad. Her sister (3 years older) and cousins had all gone abroad for college. Her parents sent her to this school to be “more prepared” in the sense that she was better able to socialize with people from different countries over students who went to the local school with Indonesian-medium instruction. She felt more comfortable around a broader range of people than other students would have. With her family, she spoke mostly Indonesian. She could also speak the local languages and had learned some French in school. She participated in the International Baccalaureate program in grades 11-12 and talked to other students at the UW who had done the

IB program, some of whom had also taken Advanced Placement classes and exams, but Frances had not.

She remembered the stress from her sister's college applications and attempted to keep stress levels down for her own college admissions process. She selected some California schools and the UW because she preferred the mild climate of the west coast. She had her teachers look over her personal statements and application essays, but she did not really get help from her parents or sister. She felt that the process was long and difficult to do on top of her regular school work, but she managed it better than her sister had. Once she had graduated from high school, she did not do anything in particular to prepare for college aside from relaxing during the summer.

Frances joined a First-year Interest Group (FIG) during her first quarter and found it easy to make friends through this FIG, in her dorm, and among Indonesians on campus. She was pleased with the friends she had made and was also receptive to making even more friends. She liked her two American roommates and enjoyed traveling with Indonesian friends on weekends and holidays. Frances wanted to try new things in college, and she often mentioned that she would try them if a friend accompanied her. In her first year, she tried yoga and kickboxing with a friend at the campus athletic center. She also volunteered at the Night Market with the Indonesian cultural organization, an experience she enjoyed even though it exhausted her.

Most of her concerns related to academics, as she had not been able to do as well as she had hoped or expected. Her main challenges were in struggling with grades, getting into the classes she wanted, and selecting a major. She felt confused by the grading system in her first year, in part because the curves were hard to understand, and the competition in large classes was something she had not encountered before. She felt she was not living up to her potential on tests

and seemed disappointed in general about her grades. Two of her instructors offered extra credit, which was something she appreciated greatly as it helped her compensate for her low scores on tests. Even though she felt she knew how to study, memorization was not one of her strengths. She often “zoned out” in the large lecture classes and felt a little “lazy to participate” by speaking out in both the larger lectures and the smaller quiz sections. She preferred to let others talk. She also admitted to being distracted when studying in her room, her preferred place to study.

Frances relied on the course structure to help her stay on track with her learning. For instance, she attended review sessions before all her midterms and finals so that she’d be forced to focus on the parts of the course that the professor had identified as being important. One other initiative she took in the quarter of my observations was to use exams from previous quarters that the professors provided so that students could practice the concepts in a test-like format. She also benefited from assignments such as discussion board posts to ensure that she summarized and analyzed the course material. Without these supports, she felt a bit lost. In reflecting on who she was as a learner, Frances determined that she needed people to motivate her, whether professors and TAs or group mates.

Frances did not feel satisfied about academics in her first year until spring quarter, when she took an American ethnic studies course, in which she excelled. It was important for Frances to have a good rapport with her professors, and she connected well with the American ethnic studies professor, who got everyone to interact even if the class was large. He also offered extra credit if students attended an event and wrote a reflection. Frances volunteered at a Boys and Girls Club as a service-learning activity for this class. The organization trained them on how to behave with the kids and to be professional. Students in the course then drew from their service,

as well as their other lived experiences, to respond to posts on the discussion board. She felt she was able to connect the topics to her own life and to the other course topics as well. In this class, she also attended the review sessions. The combination of the course content, the professor's interest in making the class relevant for students, and the supportive structure of the class helped Frances have a learning experience that met her expectations. She still was not sure if she'd want to major in this subject, though.

Frances felt that she was at a slight disadvantage in selecting her classes since she was undecided about her major. Another friend was in the same position as she was, and she contrasted their shared experience with that of students who came into their first year knowing what they wanted to major in, and thus knew which prerequisites to sign up for. Quarter by quarter, Frances first ruled out the sciences, and then ruled out business, having had a difficult time with the introductory microeconomics course. She thought communications sounded like an interesting option for a major, but she had difficulty getting into the introductory communications class. She would just have to wait until her second year to take the first prerequisite to determine whether this major would be a good fit. She had decided to have 15 credits transferred over from high school and questioned whether this was indeed a good idea since it meant she would gain junior status sooner, and thus have pressure to get into her major sooner. The stress of her major seemed omnipresent to Frances.

In her second year, Frances's outlook on academics took a 180 degree turn, mostly because she was "on point in everything." She noted that she had become much better at organizing her study time and engaging in self-directed learning. She knew that she would sometimes need to "go to Starbucks with her roommate to force [her]self to study." In contrast, in her first year, Frances was confused and just wasn't sure why things were not going as well as

she wanted. It had been hard for her to keep on top of grades, which was something she focused on in her second year. She said that as soon as grades were posted, she paid attention to her points so that she did not have any of the unwelcome surprises she had experienced in her first year. She was also stricter with her weekly and daily to-do lists and thrived on checking off the items each day. All of this attention to her studies paid off when she made the Dean's list in winter and spring quarters of her second year.

In her second year, she took the prerequisites to the communications major, and confirmed that she planned to apply to that major. In thinking about how the major might fit into her future career, she indicated that she planned to return to Indonesia, and could help out with social media at the restaurant her sister and cousins started. Otherwise, she could use the major to work in her father's business in construction of infrastructure (roadbuilding). She also enrolled in three English classes, in which she had success. When she received an email from the department about minoring in English, she liked the idea and decided to take advantage of that opportunity since she only needed 3 more English classes for the minor. She also found a job with food services at a campus eatery, working six hours per week and making a new friend or two. She extended herself further by looking for leadership opportunities in two different clubs, but was not accepted to the positions, perhaps because she had limited experience as a member prior to her application.

All in all, Frances loved living in Seattle, taking care of herself, and making many American and Indonesian friends. She felt that being an international student was an advantage because she was exposed to "the culture of going and doing stuff by yourself." For example, when she wanted to travel to Canada, she had to arrange to get a visa herself. Had she been at home in Indonesia, she would have just asked her dad to take care of it, and he would have paid

someone to get the visa. As she summed up, "here you have to take care of yourself. This is an advantage. You get comfortable doing stuff alone." Being outside her comfort zone was something she was getting used to in her first year, and by the second year, she felt better about her capacity to handle daily life. Her academic and personal life had fallen into place for Frances by the time we met for a follow-up interview in the spring of her second year.

4.7 Jae

Jae was a good-natured trilingual student with a fun sense of humor. He was sensitive to adapting to new situations and tried hard to avoid the many awkward moments that comprised the stories he had to tell about his first two years at the UW. He may have been easily embarrassed by social and academic situations that did not go as smoothly as he had hoped, but more importantly, he had a heightened sense of awareness of such moments. Jae grew up in a Korean family in China. His first language was Korean, which he used with his parents and brother. He also spoke and wrote in Chinese as he went through the Chinese educational system from elementary school to high school. When he took English 108 with me during Early Fall Start, he explained some of the challenges of learning Chinese as a second language, including having used embarrassing moments as motivation to integrate into Chinese culture. I was pleased when Jae responded to my call for participants in my study because I felt he would have especially interesting insights since he had already experienced a period of cultural and linguistic adaptation in the Chinese school system. He was also the only male who was interested in joining the study.

Jae's exposure to English was similar to that of other students in China, in which he prepared 100-word paragraphs for a test, with one exception. He participated in "English Corner" in high school, which proved to be a transformative experience for him. English Corner

consisted of meeting to talk with a foreigner, and Jae kept in touch with this conversation partner, who lived in Atlanta and had attended the University of Washington. Every other day, he participated in an additional opportunity outside of high school when he met with college students to talk spontaneously in English.

He made the decision to study in the US on October 1, two years prior. He remembers the date because he heard some news online about people who returned from abroad; they gained skills in communicating with English, met new people, and got better jobs, all of which appealed to Jae. He was the only one in his high school class of 500-600 to go to the US, and one other person went to the UK. He prepared for the TOEFL for three months and took the exam every month. He was surprised to get accepted to a US university since the process happened so quickly. Jae's parents wanted his older brother to go abroad, but his brother refused to go and preferred to take the Chinese entrance exam and attend a university in China. Jae, however, was more receptive to the idea of studying abroad. He looked online to figure out how to apply and sought help from his friend from the US. He just kept speaking in English with his teacher to feel prepared.

Once he arrived at the UW, Early Fall Start and fall quarter went well for him. It was during winter quarter that he encountered a real academic challenge: programming in an introductory computer science class. As the quarter wore on, and the homework assignments got more and more complex, he came to a wall. He "didn't know what [he] didn't know" and thus could not ask intelligent questions to get the help he needed from his TA or the professor. He attempted to get clarification on the concepts he struggled with, and he tried to follow the advice of his TA, which was to backtrack through the class slides until he found something he understood, and work forward from there, but at a certain point, none of it made sense to him and

his brain shut down. He did not feel comfortable asking more questions of peers or his TA since he just felt a general lack of knowledge and disempowerment. He felt the experience was truly an isolated incident with this one course.

He started out very excited about the possibilities of astronomy and read up on the topic during his spring break to prepare for the following quarter. By the end of the quarter, though, he admitted that he had selected the course a bit blindly since it fit in his schedule. What seemed intriguing early on then became unexciting when it became associated with a struggle for grades. In the midst of the quarter, he found some class sessions to be not as exciting as he expected. He found the terminology tricky to memorize and remember, and the textbook to be cryptic. The professor ran a CLUE section on Sunday nights to review the course material, which Jae regularly attended. Jae frequently asked questions, especially since he intuited that everyone wanted to know the answers to the questions he had. The course also had other opportunities for support, such as the TA's office hours, and tutorials. His friend had warned him about how difficult the class was, and Jae realized this was indeed the case. Tempted to drop the course, Jae discovered he had missed the deadline, so he opted for a pass/no-pass grading option. Since his grade met the standard for passing the course prior to the final, the final was optional for him. He had heard about the daunting essays they would have to write on the final, the prompts for which the professor handed out in advance. Out of 12 topics, they'd have to write on 2 topics for three pages each. The thought of writing these timed essays sent Jae running in the opposite direction.

In talking about his earth and space science class, Jae described the professor as someone who spoke quickly and enthusiastically. Once he got excited, he started talking faster and faster, so Jae found that he needed to focus on every sentence. After class, he compared notes with a friend who had invited him to take the class with her. On Wednesdays, the professor ran a review

session and spoke slowly. With fewer people in the session, students asked questions and slowed him down. In the class of 500 or so students, Jae would not feel comfortable asking the professor to slow down so he felt relieved to be able to attend the review sessions. In the lab, Jae felt most comfortable working with group mates who spoke Mandarin, and felt he had trouble working with “English-speaking groups.” In his group, they divided the work and found the answers efficiently, which he felt would not happen in a different group composition. Even though Jae had studied geology in high school in China, he had not studied rocks in such detail, nor did he know about geology outside of China.

In his biopsychology class, he genuinely found the material fascinating. One week, they were studying senses and perception as well as proprioception, and another week they discussed sleep. When I asked about his classes, he enjoyed giving an overview of what he had learned from these class sessions. As part of his study routine, Jae typically focused on concepts from the study guide and relied on the internet to get information about the definitions he needed, since that tended to be faster than working with the textbook. He took the optional quizzes during the quiz section to test his knowledge. He also responded to his peers’ posts on the discussion board, as he was encouraged to do. At first, he felt this class would be boring based on some notions he had from Psych 101; he thought it would be too much in depth neuroscience, whereas he was more interested in studying social psychology. Yet, he really enjoyed the biopsychology class in the end.

At the end of his first year, Jae wanted to get more involved in college life through clubs like the Korean student association. He hoped to meet some Korean Americans and other new friends. He had kept in touch with students from our Early Fall Start English 108 class. He planned to enroll in FIUTS and also do volunteer work restoring the environment, hoping to

grow his leadership and group work skills. He knew he needed to improve his group work skills because he had a group experience in bioengineering class his first quarter at the UW, and he felt like an introvert, which was uncharacteristic for him. In the group task he was asked to complete, Jae had trouble with the course topic because the medical research they had to read was quite challenging, so he did not feel prepared to offer a critique of the research. Two of his group mates were already studying bioengineering, so they helped him. The experience made him want to seek out additional opportunities to hone his skills working in groups.

Up until the moment that he found out about the Jackson School of International Studies (JSIS) major, he thought he would probably major in psychology. Psychology was not a perfect fit for him because he did not necessarily connect with all of the math and statistics, but he was more engaged in the two psychology classes that he had taken than in the other courses to that point. All of this changed when he attended a meeting for prospective majors in JSIS. A friend described the major to him and encouraged him to explore it as an option. Jae was thrilled to encounter this major and knew immediately that it would be an excellent fit for his interests. He settled on a focus on Asian studies and found courses on Korea and Japan that captivated him. He had cultivated an interest in the business world and economics by reading *BusinessWeek*, but he also discovered that politics interested him. He just had to be careful to pay attention to the cultural politics of his professors so that he did not get on their bad side. He was especially interested in the contrast in perspectives on certain historical events as he learned one side of the story in his Chinese education, and the western perspective often proved to differ from his previous knowledge of a topic.

Jae's study skills improved tremendously in his second year when he moved on from survey classes taken for graduation requirements to the more focused classes he took in the JSIS

major. For Jae, doing research and writing papers on topics of interest to him was a better match for his strengths. He quickly adapted his reading strategies in his second year to handle a reading load of 120 pages each week. He also started to figure out which concepts were most important, a skill he struggled with in his first year. Taking notes on his reading was a task that he did not immediately embrace, but he discovered that his study methods were not entirely effective, so that was one of the things he worked to adjust.

In general, Jae took advantage of office hours, attending them regularly in a variety of classes. He thrived on contact with professors, as he genuinely liked talking about the issues of interest to him and them. Or in some cases, he liked interacting with the professor, so he was willing to ask questions to keep the professor engaged. He often sought advice from professors on a range of concerns as broad as his major and as specific as a proposed paper topic. He was also interested in being mentored by a JSIS graduate who had already entered the workforce, as he was curious about the types of job graduates of his major got. He set up a CV and planned to apply for an internship in downtown Seattle where a number of JSIS majors had interned.

Interested in promoting cross-cultural competency, Jae got a summer position through AIESEC teaching English and computer skills to children in Brazil. He was most attracted to the idea of teaching, and the program in Brazil had an opening. He felt that would be a more rewarding summer experience than the one he had had the previous summer taking 3 intensive 5-credit classes in one month in China. He came away from the latter experience with credits in sociology, history and economics, but worked from 9am-7pm straight, even though the organization insisted that the course was not that intense. He laughed about it afterward. The highlight of that program was that he presented a Korean word in a 15-20 minute speech in

English in front of his Chinese peers, something he may have been more reserved about doing in English in the US.

4.8 Conclusion

At the time of the study, the seven focal participants were in the third quarter of their first year at the University of Washington. Except for Frances, who had attended an international school with English-medium instruction, all participants had gone through the traditional public Chinese education system, several of whom attended boarding-style high schools. Of the Chinese students, Emma and Eve were interested in STEM fields, while Chloe maintained an interest in accounting and finance despite the known difficulties in gaining admission to the business school on the Seattle campus. With their humanities double majors, Cassandra and Arielle took many classes with an intense reading and writing workload. Frances had little difficulty assimilating socially to her new surroundings, although she felt the challenges of attending and potentially getting lost in a very large university to be salient. Jae, in his good-natured way, persisted in testing out multiple disciplines and seeking answers to his questions until he found the major he was looking for. The participants' levels of comfort with the academic and social demands of a US university varied at the outset, but all of them expressed increased confidence as they negotiated their place at the university and became socialized to these demands over time.

The participants are remarkable individuals. Each student came to the U.S. with a plan, some more defined than others; this plan for their course of study and their ideal university experience shifted perceptibly or perhaps more subtly as they encountered new opportunities. The chapter that follows examines the ways students adapted to a new school system, tracing their paths to include moments of self-doubt as well as strength and confidence.

Table 3

Focal Students' Profiles

Name	Gender	Nationality	Educational Background	Projected Major
Emma	F	Chinese (Shanghai)	Competitive traditional Chinese high school	Computer Science and Math; Minor in Dance
Eve	F	Chinese (small town near Beijing)	Traditional Chinese high school	Statistics; Minor in Math and Japanese
Chloe	F	Chinese (Shenyang)	Traditional Chinese high school	Business (Accounting and Finance); Honors Program
Cassandra	F	Chinese (town in northeast China)	Traditional Chinese high school	History and Political Science
Arielle	F	Chinese (Shanghai)	Highly competitive traditional Chinese high school	Comparative History of Ideas (Honors) and Interdisciplinary Visual Arts (Honors)
Frances	F	Indonesian (Bandung)	International Baccalaureate program in Bandung, Indonesia	Communications; Minor in English
Jae	M	Korean Chinese (Grew up in China)	Traditional Chinese high school	International Studies (Asian Studies)

Table 3 displays the focal students' profiles.

Table 4

Selected Accomplishments of the Focal Students

Name	Selected Accomplishments
Emma	Presented at conference on Human Computation and Crowdsourcing Attended U of Michigan (her dream school) for graduate school
Eve	Served as President of Stats Association; Earned MS at Duke Employed as algorithm engineer in Singapore
Chloe	Earned MS in Accounting at UWB Employed as accountant in Seattle
Cassandra	Went on to William & Mary Law School
Arielle	Earned Honors in 2 majors; Created public art on display in UW library, on UW website and in campus art gallery - showcased international student voices
Frances	Placed on the Dean's List
Jae	Went on to Law School at University of Hawaii at Manoa

Table 4 displays some of the students' accomplishments after the time of the study.

CHAPTER 5: ACADEMIC TASKS AND STRATEGIES

5.1 Selected Academic Tasks

The focal students identified and discussed the academic tasks that they faced in their classes. The most salient topics that emerged in the data were managing the reading load, navigating class discussion, and studying or working in groups in contrast to their individual work. Interestingly enough, writing tasks were not a focal point. I had known the bulk of my students from a writing class or a support course for a writing class, so I was well aware of their experiences with writing in their first two quarters of their first year. With the exception of Chloe, who wrote papers for her honors class, most of my other students had exam-based assessments in the quarter of the study. During their spring quarter, it is possible that my focal students attempted to take a lighter course load with few extended writing assignments. The challenges they faced are generalizable but the ways they met these challenges varied from person to person.

This section focuses on three tasks I have selected for their salience for the focal students: course readings, class discussion and study groups vs. independent work. The students spoke extensively of these areas in part because they were pivotal to their academic performance in the US education system, and in part because they were areas in which students had to select their approach.

5.1.1 Course Readings

The readings assigned in students' courses were substantial and served to prepare them for lectures, class discussions and exams. Student success, therefore, hinged on making meaning from the course readings, managing the reading load, and preparing for exams. The issue of

managing the reading load was salient in all cases; the ways in which the issue appeared varied across students. The focal students identified challenges related to their prior reading experiences in English, the texts themselves, and external factors; they tailored their strategies to meet the demands of each difficulty.

5.1.1.1 Prior Experiences with Reading in English

Students' previous training in reading English language texts varied widely. Frances had had years of reading practice in English-medium instruction and did not express that she was having issues with her course readings. In high school, Emma had worked with many texts in English since she intended to study abroad and had had the time to develop her own reading techniques and gain confidence in her reading skills. Cassandra and Arielle also had fairly extensive exposure to English texts in their high schools, although the reading load they encountered in college was far above that which they had experienced. That combined with a lack of prior knowledge of context caused difficulties in classes like art history or political science. For example, Cassandra wanted to major in political science, and for that, she felt she needed more background knowledge of history to fully grasp political science concepts: "political science is, I cannot read them. I'm not familiar with [the political science context]." She noted that political science texts rely on "history as a tool to explain things so I need to know history first, like what is going on in Germany, in Britain to think about different systems and policies. I'll be like, 'I have no idea what's going on there. Yeah, that's hard for me and the readings are complicated." Cassandra's expression of frustration largely resulted from her lack of background knowledge of historical events needed to understand the political science concepts in her readings.

Chloe and Eve, on the other hand, had had limited experience with texts in English. In essence, Chloe relied heavily on translation to Chinese to make sense of texts in her first quarters at college. Likewise, Eve discovered that reading skills in English were a weakness of hers, summing up her situation as follows: “This is the first year I read so much English and my practice is not enough to read so much English in such a short time. It will waste a lot of time. Although it’s only one credit, I think my general studies class is hard because my reading skill is not so good.” In Eve’s case, her reading skills may have been linked to the limited time she had spent on developing her English proficiency. She felt that her 1-credit general studies seminar on race would be an easy class if she had stronger English reading skills: “I think it should be an easy class if my English is good enough because you have to do a lot of readings. In Chinese I can read very fast, but it’s English so I need to look up the words and I need to understand the sentences.” Eve found the readings to be difficult because of her lack of background information on the topic as well as the new vocabulary she encountered, which echoes the experience that Cassandra had with her political science readings and Arielle had in art history. Cassandra confirmed this sentiment: “the language is kind of hard for me. They try to use some fancy words...Probably I won’t see that word again in my life!” Lack of familiarity with specialized vocabulary was one component of the missing contextual information. Finally, while Jae had some prior exposure to English through listening, speaking and learning about English-speaking cultures, he still struggled with his reading and writing skills in English.

Notably, several students compared their reading skills to those of first language English speakers, or to their perceptions of their peers’ reading proficiency in English. Cassandra, Chloe and Eve felt that their peers had an easier time with reading in English, which contrasted with their own discomfort for lack of background knowledge and experience reading in English.

Aside from the concern with contextual knowledge, Cassandra explained another reason why the readings were complicated. She attributed her difficulty in part to not being a "native speaker" of English: "Maybe I'm not a native speaker is one of the problems." Chloe determined that her peers found the readings less challenging than she did because they could read and remember what they had read without doing extra work. She compared herself to American students in the amount of time she spent on the course readings: "For the reading, [American students] just need to read and they can remember, but I need to take some notes." She observed that her American roommate, a STEM major with a light reading load in her science classes, read the material fast or sometimes not at all. For the three who felt pressure to perform to the level of the students whose first language was English, they turned to strategies to improve their reading performance.

The strategies that emerged in response to limited prior exposure to reading in English were to practice more, to build background knowledge and vocabulary, and to ask others for advice. Eve's can-do attitude was reflected in her matter-of-fact conclusion: "you have to do a lot of reading practice to improve your reading skills." All of the focal students understood that their reading skills would improve with practice. As part of their practice, Chloe, Eve and Cassandra mentioned that they looked up words they were unfamiliar with as a way to build both background information and vocabulary. Eve described her situation related to vocabulary-building: "In just one sentence, I have two words I don't know, I never met before. I need to look in the dictionary." Her solution was to "just recite words, pick up the words and try to be familiar with them." While Eve tended to try to gain familiarity with the English vocabulary in her readings on her own, two of her peers sought out help from others. Cassandra did not hesitate to use the quiz section associated with her political science class to get her vocabulary and content questions answered in an attempt to fill in the gaps in her background knowledge. For instance,

she used her quiz section to review the material for exams and ask questions to help her distinguish between key concepts such as Leninism and Marxism. Chloe was also not shy in asking questions of her instructors when she wanted clarification on concepts.

Both Chloe and Cassandra had access to first language English speakers and asked how they managed the readings in their courses. At an interview near the end of the quarter, Cassandra summed up her impression of her peers' sense of the reading load in her political science class when she explained, "I heard some classmates talking about the readings. They were like, 'It's too much.' They basically cannot finish it." Cassandra recounted the gist of her peers' comments: "They were like 'just try to skim it or just not read it." She had also talked to political science majors in her service organization to get some advice about how to manage the readings. They also suggested that she do some skimming. She agreed that for some readings, she'd need to read them three times to be prepared for an exam, but for other less important readings, skimming might be enough. In much the same way that Cassandra listened to her friends' advice and then applied it to her specific case, Chloe liked to observe her friends' habits and then evaluated whether those active reading strategies might work well for her. These students were aware that their peers from the US education system engaged in active reading strategies such as skimming and seriously considered such techniques as a way to manage the heavy reading load that they faced. The focal students observed the differences between their reading expectations and those of their American counterparts and adapted to these techniques.

5.1.1.2 Active Reading Techniques

The students faced difficulties in the content, length, and accessibility of texts, and thus adopted active reading strategies to improve their reading efficiency, comprehension, and retention. The persistence that Cassandra needed to succeed in managing the readings for her

political science class was evidenced to a greater or lesser extent in most of the focal students' reading habits. While Frances, Emma and Arielle may have practiced active reading techniques in English prior to attending the university, the other four students honed their skills through extensive practice in their college courses. Aside from Frances, who mentioned "it was pretty easy" to summarize and analyze a text, everyone sought to improve their reading skills in English.

As part of their time management, most of them previewed a given text to understand how long it might take them to complete the reading assignment and what approach they might take. Chloe, in particular, previewed each reading to detect which ones were important to a paper she was writing or to an exam she would be taking. With this step, she set priorities for her time and did not spend extra effort on material she deemed less important. As Jae's reading load increased, he also embraced active reading strategies so that he could feel prepared for the lectures, which included previewing his texts as a first step. Skimming texts was a practice that most of the focal students mentioned as well. Skimming allowed students to read for main ideas and "know the basic concept of [the text]," according to Jae. For Arielle, skimming helped her set her approach to reading in her psychology class, since she might use margin notes for a reading with a social science focus, but shift her approach to create a more developed study guide for a biology-based text in that class. Chloe's honors program professor had commented on reading techniques to me in an interview, and perhaps he had also talked to his class about skimming, for instance, because she seemed to have assimilated this information.

Annotations, however, were what the students identified as the fundamental active reading strategy. Whether they took notes to maintain their focus or interest in the content, to commit the ideas to memory, or to use the readings for a class activity such as a discussion or

written assignment, the focal students, for the most part, saw the value in annotating texts. Emma described her reading strategies for tackling challenging texts with confidence, stating the benefit for her of annotations: “Academic paper requires seriousness and concentration. I do annotations and highlights while reading. Materials like research papers sometimes get boring and making notes definitely helps me keep focused and fully understand what I’m reading. I think so far my reading is pretty effective.” To manage challenging texts, both Arielle and Cassandra used active reading strategies to digest the information. After reading 60 pages at a time of the 200 pages of dense political science texts assigned each week, Cassandra admitted that she sometimes lost track of some of the key points and the structure of the reading. She used annotations to guide her reading process: “basically I highlight some sentences and write notes in the margins. This will help me a little bit, but it’s still a lot of work.” Each of them recognized the time it took to put in the extra work of annotation, as well as its benefit to retaining the content. In studying for her psychology exams, Arielle discerned that she should shift her reading techniques when the material changed from a focus on social science to one on the biological aspects of psychology. For the biology topics, she wrote a study guide and sought out the mechanism for the phenomenon under investigation. If she did not understand the mechanism, she’d seek out clarification at her professor’s office hours. She knew it would take her longer to read and understand the biology-based chapter in comparison to the social science-based chapters. On the chapters about the brain, Arielle stated, “I didn’t feel like I would remember much if I just highlighted, so I felt like writing things down would amplify my memory.” She took notes and reviewed her annotations before the exam.

Likewise, Eve demonstrated an awareness of annotation as a tool to clarify ideas: “I’ve tried taking notes when I’m reading – annotation. I think this method is so helpful, because it’s

very likely that I am confused about some points in the article, and if I don't take notes, probably I'll forget after reading. Thus I couldn't get the idea completely." Like Eve, Chloe felt that annotations helped her not only understand the text, but remember it during class time: "If I don't make notes for my reading, I will forget. I just make notes to make sure that they can remind me what the reading was about in the lecture. I think that's the biggest challenge." Five of the seven students talked extensively about how annotations helped them. Both Chloe and Arielle reviewed their notes prior to their lectures on a regular basis and continued to use them to study for exams.

In contrast to the other students, Jae was resistant to active reading strategies and notes of any sort in his first year. He struggled to identify important concepts that he should focus on in his textbooks and also did not make notes on his readings at all. In reflecting on his first two years, though, Jae found a real need to adjust his thinking about annotations and his approach to reading. With an increased reading load in the courses in his international studies classes, he had to read efficiently. When he was first assigned 100 pages of reading in a week for one class, he read "every single word of it," which meant that he did not finish the reading. He then adjusted his strategy to read enough to prepare for the lecture.

5.1.1.3 External Factors Influencing Reading Skills and Practices

The approach to the course readings in a given class had to be evaluated within the bigger picture of a student's total workload. Balancing one's reading load was an important component of handling the overall workload. Arielle commented on a strategy she had learned the hard way when she was overwhelmed with reading and writing assignments in her classes the previous quarter. That strategy was to plan her classes by seeking out a balanced reading load across

classes. In lieu of reducing the time spent on each reading through techniques such as skimming, she balanced the load across her classes, for instance, by taking fewer reading-intensive classes and some with textbook reading with fewer pages of reading overall. Arielle was a student who loved reading in depth and pushing herself to critically analyze texts; she thus was not comfortable with what she perceived as taking shortcuts and preferred to lighten her reading load altogether.

Managing the course readings proved to be linked to other academic tasks, such as taking exams. The stress from exams based on course readings was something Cassandra commented on. At one of our mid-quarter meetings, she talked extensively about the content from her reading as it applied to her midterm exam. Cassandra went on for 5-6 minutes about her feeling of stress towards the exam, her plan to prepare for the essays by using the reading questions and previous exams, and the role of the quiz section in her preparation. The quiz section helped her identify and define key concepts, and was thus a useful review of the readings. Cassandra summed up her impression that the readings were the main challenge in her political science course: “The course is extremely demanding, a lot of readings. You just cannot stop.” The need for relentless and continued persistence towards the readings certainly affected her experience of the course.

As students navigated their reading tasks, they often took stock of their skills, expressing confidence or lack thereof. Chloe was pleased that her reading skills had improved over the course of her first year, making her more efficient in doing her assignments, which was something that she identified as being proud of. Jae’s resistance to note-taking stemmed from a lack of confidence and experience in taking notes of any kind, not just on the readings. He indicated he had difficulty in identifying key concepts or understanding how to prioritize his time

on a reading. Even Emma, who displayed confidence in her reading skills, was not entirely satisfied with them. Despite the value of annotations in combating boredom, Emma found the process to be slow-going: “Notation leaves me with one problem. My reading speed is far from adequate. College reading has a much larger quantity than high school reading. So I really wish I could find some way to accelerate my speed.” Most of the focal students found that over time, with additional practice, they felt more certainty about their reading habits and skills. In her second year, Cassandra especially talked more about skimming texts and felt more proficient at this skill as a way to get more done in a limited time frame.

5.1.1.4 Conclusions on the Course Readings

This section has highlighted the challenges students faced in managing course readings, the adaptive strategies they employed, and the role of language proficiency and cultural background in shaping their experiences.

Each student had a plan for managing the reading load. Chloe had been exposed to the idea of skimming the readings to prepare for discussion in her honors class. Likewise, Cassandra gleaned from her older peers that she should skim the readings, but should make sure to keep doing the reading assignments at all costs. Arielle determined that she should tailor her reading techniques to the subject matter at hand and shift her strategy when the discipline or sub-discipline changed. Emma had a strong foundation in making annotations, even if she was dissatisfied with how long a reading took while taking notes. Eve, despite her lack of practice in reading English, understood how to approach a text. Jae was perhaps an outlier, as he was resistant at first to annotations, but ultimately became more flexible, and read for main ideas.

Frances had assimilated active reading strategies in high school, an international school whose classes were conducted in English, and did not mention any problems with reading.

Finally, three students discussed language use as an influencing factor in their reading in English. Cassandra felt that not being a native speaker of English affected her reading ability. Chloe, who initially had taken notes on the readings in Mandarin, made great gains when she felt confident enough to switch to English for her annotations. Eve similarly raised the issue of struggling with vocabulary in English as a factor in the success of her reading techniques.

It is fair to say that the students' confidence in their reading skills evolved over time, perhaps with the exception of Frances who entered college with a high level of confidence in her reading skills in English. By employing active reading and workload management strategies, the other six students became more proficient and more confident in their ability to handle their reading tasks.

Having confidence in one's reading skills proved to be important for the focal students as the expectation in US classrooms is that students will actively participate in class discussions of the course material, notably the course readings.

5.1.2 Class Discussion

Class discussions were a major challenge for the international students in my study for a range of reasons. They recognized the pedagogical function of class discussions as a way for students to push their understanding of the readings further and demonstrate their knowledge and their efforts. When the focal students explained their thoughts on class discussions, they often noted that, in comparison to lectures, the relatively freer form of the class led to a disorganization of ideas, which influenced their learning experience in negative ways. Yet, they felt pressure to

conform to the expectations for active participation in US classrooms. According to interviews with the focal students, participation in class discussions involved multiple skills, including preparation outside the classroom, time to gather one's thoughts and impeccable timing to deliver them, and a certain level of confidence in one's ideas. Having a general buy-in to the value of class discussions to advance their learning also contributed to their willingness to participate actively in class discussions. Preparation proved to be a key to overcoming challenges, but even being prepared did not always yield active participation or allow opportunities for participation to the focal students' satisfaction.

5.1.2.1 Challenges of Class Participation

Several challenges that the focal students described in class discussions were related to the impromptu nature of the session, while other factors influencing their participation in class discussions were the size of the class, the students' confidence, and their perceived knowledge of the material.

5.1.2.1.1 Direction, Structure and Pace of the Discussion. Jae, Chloe, and Cassandra all commented on the sense of uncertainty they felt in the direction any given discussion might take. Jae noted that the format of discussion-based classes lent itself to disorganization, so the course content was not always clear to him. Jae felt people were "talking and talking and talking" without giving a clear structure to the information. Similarly, Chloe observed the propensity for the discussion to lose focus and go off topic. Students lost track of the thread of the discussion and thus, their ideas were not always connected. Chloe noticed this problem in herself and others: "sometimes when you answer someone's question, you start to talk but after a few moments, you find that you have already forgotten what the question is." When students were

thinking about the point they wanted to make, they may not have been listening as closely to the direction of the discussion and thus lacked the means to connect their point to the broader theme.

Part of the issue with the direction and structure of the discussion was that students needed to process the thread of the discussion and respond quickly, which may have led to cognitive overload. Cassandra concurred on the challenges of thinking and talking at once. In her quiz section for political science, the TA initiated the class with a question related to the reading: "So you kind of think about that if you've done the reading... sometimes I get nervous, so when I get nervous I tend to make more mistakes and especially in the quiz section, you have to think when you are talking. So it's kind of hard, especially in the area that you are not familiar with." Even if she had done the reading, being nervous for Cassandra meant that she experienced a cognitive overload and did not express herself as well as she wanted.

Oftentimes, the students found themselves in a situation in which they were prepared to share their thoughts but others participated more quickly. Jae, Chloe and Cassandra explained the predicament of having the same comment as another student in various ways. Jae found the idea of repeating a thought just for the sake of participating unappealing. He described the situation in one of his most challenging discussion-based classes, a seminar-style class with 14 students: "I never had [a discussion-based class] before and you have to talk about [the course material] and the thing is kind of complicated. You try to find the words to describe it but the others are saying it and the others are saying what I wanted to say and when it [was my] turn to say something, I was like, 'I agree with him.'" When students did repeat the same points, Jae noticed a look of boredom on people's faces: "I found that many people are quite bored. I know their faces, so I guess this was challenging for me." Jae would have preferred more time to process the conversation before jumping in so that he could extend the discussion topic or engage others.

Similarly, Chloe participated in class discussions if she had time to collect her thoughts and add something to the discussion. She indicated that she would respond to her professor's questions directly if she was invited to speak, and sometimes she spoke up of her own accord: "If I have some opinion in my mind about those questions or I have comments, I will answer the question." However, she may not have a response right away: "sometimes I need to think about those questions so I just stay there and listen to them." Lack of time to process the questions proved to be a barrier to speaking up in class discussions.

Even for Cassandra, who had set a personal goal to be more active in discussions on subjects that interested her, she stressed that achieving this goal was not easy, as sometimes she'd want to contribute and then someone spoke up and said the exact thing she wanted to say. At that point, she would typically choose not to "repeat [what someone else had said] because that would be like I don't have my opinion or something...Sometimes it's hard." Like Jae and Chloe, Cassandra would not share her opinion if it coincided too closely with something another student had said; all three preferred silence to redundancy.

5.1.2.1.2 Class Size. For Cassandra, her reticence in part was related to the large size of the class, accompanied by cultural differences in class participation. She explained that she felt overwhelmed to speak up in a large lecture class: "Big lectures are like, do you have a shot at all? So sometimes, I don't do that. Maybe because of a different culture background. Like people maybe from Asia tend to be shy, especially in bigger classes." Cassandra noticed these differences in social settings, which she felt carried over into academic settings, too: " I noticed this from social activities with my friends. They are really active about talking, even if they are not sure about it. And well for me, I will be like, 'well, I'm not sure about it, but I think it's like this.'" Cassandra was surprised about the level of confidence her friends displayed, even when

they had little authority on a given subject: “They will be so confident about the answer, even if it's wrong.” Over time, she became accustomed to the American style of participation and grew more willing to test it out: “So there is still a difference here. Just... I got used to it, that sometimes [I have to] be courageous.” Cassandra found it easier to be courageous with a small group of friends than with a class full of strangers. The group size and setting also had an effect on Frances, who admitted that she did not speak up in class as a general rule unless they were doing small group work.

5.1.2.1.3 Confidence and Perceived Knowledge of the Material. Even in smaller classes, if the focal students felt they did not understand the course material fully, they did not participate. Jae described a situation in which students were called upon to summarize and present on readings they did not truly understand. Then the professor would reframe the important points and the class had to share their opinions. The professor would ask students: “And what do you think? ‘What do I think? I don’t know.’” Jae’s lack of understanding of the material made it impossible to share his thoughts. Jae did not always feel confident about his contributions in class and felt “you should know more about that stuff before you say it.” Since his personal approach was to “think a lot before saying that thing,” he was surprised when students would contribute to the conversation with points that were “not relevant to the topic at all.” He did not want his contributions to be redundant, irrelevant or uninspiring. His situation was exacerbated by the effect of having more advanced students in the class because “they know [the information] better or they know more about [the topic].” Jae’s perception was that he could not compete with students who were comfortable with the material when he was not.

In much the same way, Eve found herself limited to a listening role in one of her smaller-sized seminars as she navigated her lack of familiarity with cultural knowledge and vocabulary related to race in the US. Compared to other students, she lacked important cultural context to understand the course material: "They're Americans. They know the culture and the traditions and it's a living country with many races of people and they know the words in the articles." Since she did not have experience living in the US or studying issues of race in American culture, she had trouble participating in class discussion. In short, she said, "When they discuss something, I couldn't understand. I don't know what they are talking about." When I tried to ascertain whether it was the content or the speed at which other students spoke, Eve wasn't sure of the exact source of difficulty: "They speak like we are speaking but I don't know why I can't understand." She did not give up hope, as she felt that she would grow to understand the class discussions over time: "I will try my best to read the articles and listen to their discussions." At the very least, if Eve could not actively offer her opinion, she could listen and try to capture the gist of the conversation. Emma also found that a barrier to participation was a combined lack of familiarity with a topic of discussion and lack of confidence in her language skills. For instance, if she had a question on a topic she was confused about and worried about her language skills at the same time, this uncertainty and vulnerability proved to be too much for her. In such cases, she remained silent.

Jae, Chloe, and Cassandra all drew attention to the uncertainties they faced during class discussions, struggling with the impromptu nature of discussions and a lack of clarity in direction. The pace of the discussions, coupled with linguistic and cultural differences, presented challenges. Cassandra and Frances also mentioned the size of the class as a factor in their

contributions. For everyone, especially Eve and Emma, their confidence levels in their knowledge of the material was an important factor in whether they participated or not.

5.1.2.2 Conditions for Successful Participation in Class Discussion

The focal students agreed that they would participate in class discussions under certain conditions. Having confidence in one's ideas or conjuring up the courage to share them proved to be an important component of speaking up in class. In some cases, instructors invited students to participate or students found ways to participate in writing.

5.1.2.2.1 Preparing the Readings. One way to develop confidence in their ideas was to prepare the readings carefully. Chloe talked about the need for careful preparation in advance of class discussions. She knew the foundation of the discussion was the assigned course reading, so she started there in preparing for each class: "We need to do the readings and then in class we need to talk about those readings together, so that's the part I worry about sometimes. I don't know...it's just, I'm thinking about something but I'm not really sure what I'm thinking about. It's kind of hard to say, so that's why I need to do those readings carefully." When I prompted her to talk more about what she does concretely to read carefully, she mentioned her annotations and that she likes to "write down what I think, some notes before the lecture, so that in the lecture, I could say, 'Oh, that's my idea. I already have this idea." Here, Chloe means that she clarifies her ideas in her own mind so that when she hears the professor or peers bringing up the ideas, she will be able to connect what she had been thinking with the thread of the discussion. Since she doesn't know in advance the direction the discussion will take, she has to prepare as much as she can and be flexible during the class itself.

Like Chloe, Jae identified that his participation was "heavily dependent on [his] reading." He attempted to take elaborate notes on the readings, only to find that a small portion of his notes would come up in class. He was visibly dismayed that he had written "really long pages of notes and the thing is, the thing we talked about in class is only this [tiny part]." His difficulty identifying what was important and what was less so made him feel "awkward." When he approached his professor, the advice he got was to "read more about this and about this." Somehow he had expected a different response as he was trying to figure out how to prioritize key points rather than going into more detail on the topics at hand. At that moment, Jae felt the key to participation was in his approach to the reading.

5.1.2.2.2 Sharing Strong Opinions in Class. Chloe, Emma and Cassandra all talked about their willingness to circumvent linguistic discomfort and cultural differences if their opinions were strong enough. Chloe stated: "Sometimes I would say my opinion; I mean, it depends [whether] I see that my opinion is strong enough." When Chloe suggested that she would participate if her opinion were "strong enough," in part she meant that her conviction was strong enough, but she also implied that she wanted her contribution to the discussion to be noteworthy. She wanted to make sure her point would be the right thing to say at that moment. Chloe explained in depth a comment she wanted to make in class, but did not because the discussion had shifted and her point was no longer timely.

Emma mentioned she will speak up in class if she is confident in her ideas, despite the lack of confidence in her language skills: "And if I know that question that I'm confident about and I know I've got something to say and I know I'm sort of right even if I know my language is not okay, I know my idea is right so I probably would have the confidence sometimes to say that. It is really hard to explain that." From Emma's explanation, I understood that her underlying

confidence in her ideas would not get in the way of her willingness to speak up, but she would not take what she saw as unnecessary risks without a strong conviction about her ideas.

5.1.2.2.3 Courage in the Face of Adversity. Three of the students expressed that they planned to continue to challenge themselves to participate more. Cassandra confirmed her interest in being more vocal, "Sometimes I do want to push myself a little more, a little bit further, a little bit more to be more active in the discussion." She implied that she would need to gather up the courage to do so, and she preferred to practice this skill in classes in which she was invested and confident in her knowledge. Jae also had hope that he could improve his contributions to his seminar class. In that course, the professor sometimes interrupted students when they went too far afield from the topic at hand, which happened to Jae early in the quarter. He felt silenced after being interrupted by his professor: "That happened to me before and I was like, 'Okay, I am not going to say anything at all.'" After his initial inclination not to participate, Jae did rebound from the experience, saying "I will try again and hope for the best." Confidence in his ideas and perceived knowledge of the material were crucial factors for satisfactory participation in Jae's mind. Likewise, when Eve felt lost in a class of 10 students, she chose not to interrupt to ask them to speak more slowly because it would disrupt the flow of the discussion. She agreed that she could talk to the professor to try to come up with strategies to understand the material and participate more actively. Even though she didn't "know how to answer their questions or ask them questions," Eve was not one to shy away from a challenge: "It's a challenge, of course. But actually, I like this class...it helps me. After all, I am in America so I need to try my best to be involved in America." Exhibiting patience with herself, she valued the opportunity to learn about US culture from her professor and peers.

5.1.2.2.4 Intellectual Inquiry and Motivation. One condition for successful participation for Arielle was her motivation to strive for greater intellectual rigor through class discussions. Arielle was a student who always had a lot to say, yet she was often quiet during whole group discussions. She expressed disappointment that she sometimes did not have a chance to fully discuss challenging readings: “It would be better if we had more time to really dig into it...sometimes you feel that this class is not that rewarding because you have devoted a lot of time to reading before class, but you didn’t fully discuss it in the seminar, so it’s not quite encouraging for me.” She benefited most from classes where her motivation mirrored that of other students and the professors could bring students “to a higher level of understanding” through in-class discussion. Arielle had spent countless hours reading the material thoroughly and had hoped the discussion would foster her intellectual development. If the conditions were favorable to achieving her academic goals, she indicated that she would be motivated to engage in class discussion.

5.1.2.2.5 Small Group Work. In small group work I observed that Frances was a talkative and active participant. She clearly enjoyed small group interactions and had no trouble forming a group when students were left to form them on their own. In the lab for her earth and space science class, forming her group “just happened...we were sitting in the same spot and we’re like, ‘let’s make a group together’.” Her group members easily assigned roles to decide who would take notes and report out to the whole class. Frances observed that “we work together pretty well” and explained her group’s process as one in which someone would ask the questions they had to answer and if someone didn’t understand something, the group would explain it in more detail.

5.1.2.2.6 Other Forms of Participation. The focal students indicated several other ways that they had participated in their courses, whether by responding to their professors' direct questions or through written avenues.

5.1.2.2.6.1 Written Participation. In one of my observations of Chloe's honors class, I saw her write down some notes in response to the professor's question. When I inquired as to what she had written down, she indicated that she would use her thoughts to guide the paper she had to write that week as she wanted her "paper to follow the class [trajectory and theme]." Thus, even if she did not voice her ideas to her peers, those ideas appeared in her writing for the course. Chloe was also a proponent of online writing that her peers would read. She felt that the online discussion board could solve issues with lack of direction and timing in face-to-face class discussions since students could engage in active "listening" more easily in an online forum of written responses. She found value in the discussion board as a way of taking the time she needed to process the information and make a solid contribution to the discussion: "In classes sometimes we talk about questions and people address their opinions and actually I think that not all their responses are connected to each other. Sometimes they focus too much on their own idea and they don't really listen to other's opinions, you know. But in the discussion board we can really check other's opinions carefully and have time to think about, 'okay, well I can answer these questions.' So you have time to really think about those things, [which is] better than to try to understand other's opinions and just participate in the lecture." Having plenty of time and a written record as a point of reference in crafting her response certainly helped Chloe feel she could make valuable points and stay on topic for a better overall discussion. Chloe added that responses to her peers on the discussion boards were not always required, but she felt that responding to others' posts was preferable to just reading them. In her view, online discussion

boards could offer an alternative platform for participation. Chloe believed this format would allow for more thoughtful engagement, active listening, and careful consideration of others' opinions without the constraints of impromptu speaking.

5.1.2.2.6.2 Direct Questions or Invitations to Participate. Two of the focal students were invited to participate through direct questions. During my observation of Chloe’s honors class on Chinese writing systems and Western views on them, the professor called on her at one point, drawing on her language expertise as a native Mandarin speaker. She responded enthusiastically to the invitation and shared her perspective. In Jae’s seminar, students acted as group leaders and were tasked with making room for everyone to participate, which sometimes involved explicit invitations to hold the floor. At other times, his professor invited Jae to participate: “I did it when the professor asked me to do it.” He did not always feel comfortable participating if he was not confident in his thoughts on the subject, though.

5.1.2.3 Conclusions on Challenges and Successes in Class Discussion

Class discussions emerged as a significant challenge for the study participants, yet the students felt compelled to attempt to actively participate in U.S. classrooms. Navigating the impromptu nature of discussions and overcoming language and cultural differences were recurring themes. The students recognized the importance of preparation, but even well-prepared students did not always find opportunities for active participation. Confidence in one's ideas and the ability to express them under pressure played a crucial role, influencing the students' willingness to contribute. Despite the challenges, the students outlined conditions for successful participation, including careful preparation, sharing strong opinions, summoning courage and motivation, engaging in small group work, and using alternative participation methods.

Of all the focal students, Chloe had the most in-depth commentary on the challenges and benefits of class discussion as a learning tool and as a skill to be practiced. Both Chloe and Jae commented extensively on the correlation between preparing the reading and feeling capable of participating actively by speaking up in class. Yet they both also felt that no matter how well they knew the material, if students presented their ideas without a clear structure or the discussion was overly free-form, clarity was sacrificed, and along with it their understanding of the conversation. Likewise, Emma had some reservations about speaking up in class discussion if her confidence in her ideas was not high. Cassandra was invested in improving her class discussion skills and recognized the cognitive challenges of thinking while talking. Eve's willingness to listen to other students in her class was a first step in her participation in class discussions. Frances, as a habit, only participated in small group discussions rather than whole class discussions. Taken as a whole, the focal students' experiences with class discussions reflect the multifaceted challenges of participation in academic discussions.

5.1.3 Independent vs. Collaborative Work

The focal students explained their perspectives on working independently and completing assigned collaborative work. Several of the study participants commented directly on their preferences for and experiences with individual or group work. Two students preferred individual work for the most part while others had positive experiences with collaboration with peers in required assignments. Self-selected study groups will be discussed in the following section on study strategies.

5.1.3.1 Independent Learning

Emma and Eve both expressed a preference for working alone. Emma emphasized the isolated and personal nature of academics, especially in STEM classes, while Eve highlighted the importance of individual problem-solving, most notably in her math and computer science courses. Emma emphasized that she is more of an independent learner. It's not that she would never interact with her peers, but such interaction would more likely take the form of a minor concern rather than a major one: "sure I can ask questions to my peers or instructors but it's not that comfortable for me to ask my classmates about that. Or maybe one or two but [I would not ask them about] a huge problem or a huge topic." She cites her "language barrier" as one reason for not asking more questions: "...my language barrier because if I've got a question I'm not sure, if I've got a problem in my academics, like in my subject, I'm not sure if I can communicate effectively." Asking questions may have also suggested that she was falling behind in the class, a position Emma was unwilling to adopt or one she found uncomfortable: "if you have a question that is unanswered or you are confused, it's sort of like you're a little bit behind the class." However, she did ask questions of her professors if she had them during office hours.

Similarly, Eve seemed to prefer talking to her professors and TAs to get answers to her questions over interacting with her peers. She emphasized that in her computer science class, she worked alone: "If you want to finish your homework, it's better your idea and you solve the problem." She had taken her professor's message seriously that students were to work independently on their programs. In general, Eve suggested that students do not talk about the homework unless they have problems with it: "If we have problems, we will ask, but if not, we don't [talk about it with TAs or peers]." In one of my observations, I accompanied Eve when she

asked questions of her professor, demonstrating that she was not averse to seeking help, but she preferred making use of office hours over collaborating with peers.

5.1.3.2 Group Work

The students commented on various forms of group work they engaged in as part of the required class activities. Both Emma and Cassandra brought up class activities that involved collaboration. Everyone but Eve joined or formed study groups outside of class and felt that the experiences contributed to their learning. Please see section 5.2.1.1 for a discussion of the students' experiences with study groups.

Even though Emma considered herself an independent learner, in her quiz section for physics, group work was built into the class. She took advantage of the opportunities afforded to members of a group: "Quiz section is more like group work with five people gathering together. We work the same problem sets and this is really helpful. You can check your calculation or if your answer is different from anybody else." The way each group approached the task varied from group to group, based on the preferences of the group's members. Emma indicated that she liked to work individually and then she checked in with her group afterward: "I do prefer to work by ourselves first and then, if anyone has any problem with the answer, we work on that." Emma had no problem with collaborating; it was just that she wanted to solve the problem on her own before discussing it with the group. One pitfall to group work was that people in her classes tended to be shy: "I think people in my group are kind of shy, which is not really surprising because as far as I know, science people are kind of shy." Her TA often tried to facilitate group cohesion through icebreaker activities, but Emma just thought all of that was awkward. Since she knew someone from her previous classes, they sat together and were part of the same group.

As much as Cassandra valued interacting with others to practice her English, when it came time to engage in group work in class for a grade, she was all business. After the geology lab that I had observed, we discussed how her group work was going. She felt it was a challenge to make everyone contribute and compared her group's progress to that of other groups who came into the class knowing one another well. Those groups were seemingly more efficient in their work. In her case, she worked with one other person to complete 75% of the work, while the other two group members barely got to the other 25%. She was dissatisfied with the situation as they would get one grade per group on each assignment. Since they were likely to lose points, the way she thought of it was that she would have to recoup her points by going on the field trips and attending review sessions. In subsequent weeks, Cassandra felt her group work had improved and noted that the group worked well when people were motivated to get the task done and when they knew the course content better: "it should get better especially when people get more familiar with the geology stuff. It's better than last week when people were like, 'I'm so confused' and now they are making more comments on the materials. So I think it will get better." Cassandra noted the group's improvement and felt more comfortable with their productivity over time.

While Chloe did not talk much about required group work in class activities, she did explain how she relied on help from her peers to understand some of her assignments. When professors assigned work by talking through the assignment without a written explanation and did not offer a prompt in writing, Chloe would have to connect with her peers to find out what the professor had said: "For papers, they would just say the requirements in class, but not in writing. Other students hear the requirements in class, in all of my classes. It's a problem for international students and I have to ask my classmates [about the requirements]." She described

the situation as common to international students in cases where the requirements are not handed out in written form. If she was not 100% focused, she might have missed important information: “Some professors are really random and just assign presentations and papers in class. You may not really pay attention and so I have to ask my classmates what to do.” While Chloe did not say that she had a problem talking to her classmates, she implied that a written assignment sheet would be helpful to her understanding of the assignment. Barring that, she relied on peer support to fill in the gaps in her understanding of the assignment.

5.1.3.3 Conclusions on Group Work

The focal students have displayed a diverse range of perspectives, preferences, and experiences regarding collaboration and group work. The two STEM students tended towards individual work in their first year. Notably, Emma and Eve preferred to work alone in keeping with their views on expectations in computer science classes. Emma was hesitant to ask peers for help due to language barriers and discomfort, although she found group work in her physics quiz section beneficial for checking answers. Cassandra’s perspective on group work evolved as she initially navigated challenges in graded group work but observed the group dynamic improve over time, highlighting the potential for shifts in students’ attitudes towards collaborative learning.

In sum, the students’ experiences with group work depended on the nature and instructor’s framing of the tasks, their familiarity with their group mates and the motivation of each group member. Addressing potential obstacles like language concerns and individual preferences for independent learning can help create a conducive environment and open mindedness towards collaborative learning and shared academic endeavors.

5.2 Skills, Strategies and Metacognitive Awareness

The study participants had varying levels of comfort with reflecting on their thinking processes and study strategies. Most of them had practice in developing metacognitive awareness from their courses at the college level, notably in their writing and composition courses in the English department, and in other classes in which they were called upon to produce a portfolio of work or reflect on their work's strengths and weaknesses. Several students transferred their knowledge of course material or strategies from one course to the next and talked about their observations in this regard. Highly developed metacognitive skills had a strong correlation with their success in their classes.

5.2.1 Study Strategies

The focal students embraced several types of strategies to accomplish academic goals, whether in preparing for exams or writing papers. Forming study groups proved to be important to six of the seven study participants. All of them discussed the details of their process and the steps they took to succeed academically.

5.2.1.1 Study Groups

The study participants' perspectives on study groups and study buddies revealed changing attitudes towards collaborative learning. Emma and Chloe, in particular, started college with a predisposition towards individual work, but kept their options open for possible benefits of studying with peers. Chloe, Frances, Cassandra and Arielle all had a friend or two with whom they studied regularly, while Jae joined a study group.

Coming into college, Emma studied alone and worked alone by preference: "I mean I don't really get involved like in study group or study buddy...The thing for me is that academics

are sort of more isolated and personal. I have to figure all these things out by myself or it does not belong to me." She felt a strong sense of ownership of her work if she completed it on her own, and this feeling was important to Emma in her first year.

However, she had a change of heart in her second year. When she had already entered the computer science major, Emma's views on group work and collaboration shifted. Notably, Emma's view of group work was affected by the group members' contributions and their active roles. She enjoyed her interactions with other students in her major, in part because she felt like a valued member of her group: "I sort of feel that I can also contribute to my study group, and it's ok for me to ask questions." Emma was aware of the dynamics of her study group and embraced the challenge of being a contributor and a leader: "It's new for me this year. In a study group, if you want to keep everyone on track, you have to do a lot of work to make sure no one is falling behind, no one is bored." Emma had built confidence in discovering how to make the group work well.

In contrast, Chloe discovered the benefits of having a study partner in her first quarter at the university. She met her study partner one day in class when he noticed she was recording the lecture in her economics class and requested that she send him the recording. He then asked if she wanted to study together, and she agreed, after a moment of reflection: "I thought about this for a little moment, 'Do I want to do this?' because actually I'm the kind of person who prefers to study alone." She decided to give the study partner a chance since it might "work better." An added bonus was that "this guy was an American" so she would have a chance to practice her English. As she put it, "I want to improve my English." He also gave her some insights into the American economy to fill in the background information of which she had little knowledge. It

turned out that the partner was “a really nice guy” and got high grades, so he met her criteria to ensure a successful experience.

Arielle talked about her collaboration with her boyfriend, also a Chinese international student, in their everyday life. She studied for exams with him in their shared classes, and she talked through her course material with him even in classes they did not share. In classes that they did not have in common, he was willing to provide a listening ear or a sounding board, for instance, by having her explain what she understood about the different paintings she was studying in art history class. They often reviewed concepts together, especially those that applied to their daily life. Arielle gave the example of sunlight streaming in the window early on the weekend because they had learned about melatonin and the biological clock and how those processes work to “release the waking up hormone and suppress the want to sleep hormone.” She explained: “I would complain about how I woke up earlier than expected and my boyfriend would be like, ‘oh, wait a minute, I learned this’ so it would help him review it and help me remember it, too.”

In her art history class, Arielle teamed up with a friend in her second year. They each took notes on things that interested them. For Arielle, it was the social, cultural and historical context while for her friend, it was the details and elements of fashion. They also set up study sessions at least once or twice a week. Arielle detailed some of their memorization strategies, which included creating stories as a mnemonic device. They periodically texted each other the key elements of the paintings they would need to review for their upcoming exams.

Like Arielle, Frances enjoyed studying with her friend in reviewing concepts for exams. Frances had set up a system with a friend in her American ethnic studies class whereby she would test herself by explaining concepts to her friend before exams. So did Cassandra in her

geology class, the one class where she did have friends. Cassandra's process was less one of quizzing and more one of review: she described their study process as one of "going over the [lecture] slides and reading the textbook." She felt relaxed about studying in her geology class since she had a cushion from all the bonus points she had received.

Jae signed up for two classes, biopsychology and geology, with a Chinese friend so that he would have a peer to study with. They compared answers on the sample problems through WeChat and met in person to study. He would typically sit with his friend in class, which helped him since he found it hard to capture all of the content from the lectures. She was the one who had asked Jae to take classes with her, and was amenable to sharing her class notes with him after class when they met. This collaboration served Jae well because he preferred not to take notes during class unless absolutely necessary.

Jae also collaborated with peers to work through ideas for his essays. He joined an existing study group that talked about the essays they would have to write: "We'd create a goal and write down whatever we know when we meet. We talk briefly about it and about the importance of the terms for the essay and what kind of evidence you can use." They offered each other valuable support in the planning process before writing their essays.

When asked what else he could think of that affected his school life, Jae summed up what he had discovered in his second year: "School life? Talk to professors, be nice to your classmates and talk to your classmates." Jae especially appreciated students in his international studies cohort because they could discuss the course content and how to approach their assignments.

In sum, Chloe's narrative illustrated a shift from a preference for individual study to an acknowledgment of the advantages of collaboration. Her positive experience with a study partner not only enhanced her academic performance but also provided cultural insights and

opportunities to improve her English language skills. Arielle, Frances and Cassandra also found value in studying with friends or study partners, as their study buddies contributed to a supportive learning environment. Both Arielle and Frances taught their friends things that they had learned both as a test of their knowledge and a way to remember it. Finally, Jae emphasized the significance of effective communication and interaction with professors and classmates, underscoring the broader social dimension of academic success.

5.2.1.2 Note-taking

Eve felt note-taking was a crucial factor in her success in STEM classes. She described her notion of how to succeed specifically in her math classes, “you have to listen to what the teacher says carefully and take notes. Notes are important, and read books.” For the math classes she had taken in her first year, the instructors wrote notes on the board from memory that she needed to copy down and learn. She confirmed that she was comfortable taking notes.

Emma also used note-taking strategically. She felt that her physics textbook was not as useful to her success as the work on the course website, and especially the professor’s lectures: “It’s more important to listen to your professor in the lecture [than to focus on the textbook].” Through taking notes on the lectures, Emma found that she could focus well on the material and retain it: “I do take notes a lot because there are some concepts I’m not really sure about or that I’d like to emphasize a little bit to remind myself, ‘Don’t forget about that part.’ Some details, I would write it down to stay concentrated and get involved in the class.” Not only would Emma return to her notes to remember key concepts, but the act of note-taking was one that she felt helped her be active and participatory in the class.

Frances found it difficult to keep up with the pace of the lecture when taking notes by hand so she used her computer to take notes, unless her battery had died, as was the case on one of the days that I observed her classes. She discovered the battery was low during her first class and knew that she'd need it for her next class, a discussion section in which she was supposed to share an artifact with her group.

Cassandra talked about note-taking in her political science class, in which she took "three pages of notes every single lecture." In one class, a student asked the question that she also had, but she was not clear on the response and planned to take it up with her TA in the quiz section. In that case, she drew an arrow in her notes to indicate that she wanted to follow up with the topic.

Several students stressed the value of actively engaging with the lectures by taking comprehensive notes. Emma found lectures more crucial than textbooks, Eve relied on notes and careful listening to lectures, and Cassandra used her notes as a reminder of future conversations she wanted to have with her TA.

5.2.1.3 Preparation for Exams

The students used various strategies to prepare for their exams. In STEM courses, doing practice problems was a shared habit among the focal students. Many of them expressed an opinion on how to discern and prioritize the important material for the test, whether it was from the class notes or a textbook. Eve, Chloe and Emma all talked about analyzing their notes as part of their review process for exams, whereas Jae struggled in knowing what to prioritize and sought help from his TAs to prepare for exams.

To prepare for her math quizzes, Eve reviewed the textbook sections (in a print format, which she prefers over e-books) and three to five days before the quiz, would review her notes:

"Notes are helpful when you review for the exam...I will summarize the sections by myself and write another paper from my own words and my own thoughts. This helps me check how completely I know each section." Self-assessment was important to Eve's study strategy.

When it came time to take her exams for CSE, Eve followed a procedure in which she treated each homework assignment like a practice exam question: "I need to read the PPT first and think about the program because in the exam, you don't have the PPT so you need to remember. The homework's just like [an] exercise [to help prepare for the exam]." Relying on her memory of the content of the PowerPoint slides proved to be a good exercise to prepare her for the exams. At one of our mid-quarter check-ins, Eve was in the process of studying for her midterm. She felt she needed more practice and planned to complete 9 or 10 more practice midterms, which took an hour each to complete. For half of them, she did an exam simulation and pretended she was taking the test. The main issue was related to style: "You aren't allowed to have any redundancy so you have to think about a better way to solve the problem. For internal correctness, about 50% of the grade, you can't have any redundancy." She had done well according to the answer key, but not all the sample problems had an answer key. Clearly, with such extensive practice, she had familiarized herself with the guidelines and processes to write programs successfully.

In much the same way, Emma was keenly aware of how to prepare for her STEM courses. She felt that doing exercises was a key component to her success: "It's just practice, because physics, math, like science subjects are more like you know the concept. All you have to do is practice it. Like you know the equations and you have to learn how to use them and the only way to learn is to solve problems." Most of her math and science professors provided

homework problems and sample test problems, encouraging students to solve problems as a way to test their knowledge and gain understanding of how to apply the concepts.

Like several of the focal students, Frances also used practice tests to prepare for exams. She found several sets of practice problems that were available to students in her economics and earth and space science classes to simulate problems on the exams, although she noted that the practice problems “seemed easier than the midterm.”

When it came time to study for her exams, Chloe would typically review her class notes and reading notes rather than looking back at the textbook. She felt the process of reviewing her notes “gave [her] more intuition” about the material since she had already identified the key concepts and important material. She would transpose her notes before an exam to aid in her preparation and processing of the information: “If I write it down again, it helps me to memorize it and understand it. I am not just copying it. I read the notes and think a bit [before writing things down]...to help go over things again.” In essence, Chloe analyzed her notes as part of her review process. Chloe also commented on the slides and notes that some professors provided while others did not. In some cases, she had recorded her classes or had access to the professor’s materials, which she also found useful: “some professors just say it and you need to make notes so I try to record those lectures. Some give you little notes from the class and some don’t - you can’t ask for that.” If professors did not provide the notes, she felt she could not ask for them although they really helped her make meaning from the lectures.

In contrast to the ease with which Chloe analyzed what she should prioritize in her studying, Jae felt a bit lost in this arena, despite his extensive experience with memorization. In his first year, Jae revealed many details about his process for studying for exams and retaining information. He used a variety of methods and demonstrated a heightened awareness of what

worked for him and what did not. He kept track of the memorization demands of each class, as he identified memorization as one of his strengths, as long as he knew what to focus on: “I kind of have a difficult time finding out the points I should remember. I really need somebody to guide us to those points but after [that], I can just memorize all of it.” Once he had some direction, he felt confident in his skills for retaining information: “Yeah, I know how to do it. I was taught how to do it. I can kind of direct those things but before that, I was so confused.”

5.2.1.4 Students’ Notions of How to Succeed

The students demonstrated flexibility and adaptability in their study strategies as they gained more knowledge about how to succeed in a given course. Note-taking in class and annotating the readings, prioritizing key information for review and preparing for each class were some common themes in the students’ explanations of what they did to learn the course material.

Eve expressed confidence in her ability to succeed in her classes, especially her math classes. For each class, she had a strategy dependent on the materials available for the course. Most of her math courses had textbooks by default, so she needed to read those as they presented the material in a methodical way: “the books are more organized and they can lead you; we did the first, then we did the second and now it’s the third.” She identified the part of her math class that bothered her: proving definitions rather than applying them. As she put it, “To be honest, I don’t like it. I like to use the definitions to solve some problems, but I don’t like to remember the definitions....It’s not hard but it’s just a little bit annoying” since she prefers the application rather than the theory. Eve explained more about why students learn theorems: “The content is totally new. I never saw it before, and the way I think. I don’t like the theorem but I have to

focus on the theorem because it's a basic thing. It can help you understand the knowledge completely." She suggested that her instructor made students prove the theorems since they might otherwise try to avoid this exercise and admitted, "it's a good exercise for me."

In her computer science class, Eve watched the videos that the professor posted on the course website prior to class and then she reviewed her notes in combination with the PowerPoint slides from the lecture to understand the material and do the homework. On one of the days that I observed her computer science engineering (CSE) class, the professor had not posted a video, so Eve did not know what the lecture would be about: "Before CSE class, we always have a brief video. We can see a summary of the class, but today I didn't see a video on the website, so I'm kind of, you know…" She was disappointed not to prepare in advance for the lecture, as was her habit. After class, she would follow up on the day's work: "In every lecture I need to check the PPT [slides] and read it again." She needed the information from the slides to guide her steps to writing a program for homework. When she did the homework, she had to first write the program, and then reduce its redundancy. She used pseudo-code so that she would not forget the steps. In class, the professor showed the working through of the problem, step by step, so it was important to be in class. When I asked why some students skipped class, Eve thought maybe they already knew the material. We joked that if not, maybe their grades on the exams would fall on the lower part of the curve.

On the whole, Eve's assessment of her CSE class was that "it's not that hard, but it's a little bit annoying because of the homework. The homework is 45% of the grade and the TAs are really strict with the homework." Eve had figured out that the key to learning how to write the homework programs was to learn about external and internal correctness, both function and style: "External correctness is the same as the expected output, but for internal correctness, you

need to make your program easier and faster." Making the program function was not that difficult, but the next step was to polish the program's style for internal correctness, which she learned during the lectures as well as in her textbook: "We need to read the book many times. The PPT is so important and the exercise is pretty important." Eve confirmed that "you need to think of a lot of things to finish one thing." She had to fulfill many requirements for each program; it was, thus, the numerous steps and components to consider in writing a program that posed a challenge for students. She elaborated on the process: "Every time I start my homework, I need to read the PPT from every lecture and review the specs, the expectations, instructions to show you how to do it. And you need to satisfy every request of the specs."

As in Eve's computer science class, Cassandra also had to deal with the competition of being graded on a curve in her humanities courses. Cassandra knew she would be faced with several challenges in her international studies class since the class was a prerequisite for the political science major and the grades were curved, with an average grade of 2.8, which was incredibly low in her estimation. In her political science class, Cassandra elaborated on what she could do to succeed, in essence, competing with the second- and third-year political science students. When asked what she would do to keep up with the others in that class, she mentioned her process of working through the readings and planning her essays on the exams: "I think definitely do all the readings, [attend] the lectures, take good notes. When I have things that are not clear, that I'm not sure about, just ask questions. And be a good writer, a good and fast writer because we have three exams, two midterms and one final, which will be six essays." In addition to the basics, she also mentioned that she had past exams, which would "be a good resource." We went on to discuss other ways to engage with her professor and TA, and she felt the TA

section would be a good place to ask her questions and push her thinking because “fewer people are there.”

In most of her third quarter classes, Cassandra took exams rather than writing papers. Her early childhood development class did have several papers, though. A lesson Cassandra learned was to use the rubrics to ensure she had included all the key components of an assignment. She recounted a time when she had failed to read the rubric carefully and only received 48 out of 50 points for the assignment: “I realized I didn’t pay attention to the rubrics. After that I would check my rubrics to see if I had everything. Then I had everything and I submitted and got 50 out of 50.” This relatively minor adjustment on Cassandra’s part achieved the result she desired.

Frances, on the other hand, was less confident than Cassandra and Eve, and expressed some frustration with the results of her study process. Since her earth and space science class “did not have homework” but included lots of memorization, that meant that Frances had to devise a system to study the material on her own. An area of struggle for Frances was in memorization as she often worried about memorizing concepts in this class, claiming, “I’m not good at it.” In our first interview, Frances expressed dissatisfaction with her grades: “If I get that mark, I feel like it’s ok, but it is actually really low in a way. Yeah, I just realized that I haven’t been, I feel like I am not doing my best so far.” When I prompted her to explain a bit more about what it meant that wasn’t doing her best, she “wasn’t sure” about what was going on: “I feel like I should put in more effort, I guess, and like my test scores aren’t as great as I expected so I feel like I need to work harder.” At our mid-quarter interview, Frances confirmed that she still needed “to work harder,” both in economics and in earth and space science. In her economics class, the assignment prompts were clear so she understood the required tasks, but she felt she “should work more.”

Arielle had strong intuitions about how to handle the academic tasks she faced in her first year. Yet this is not to say that Arielle walked into her college life with all the answers about how to succeed. On the contrary, she indicated that she was not always happy with her strategy and it often took her half of the quarter to explore the best strategy for a given class, and she procrastinated sometimes: “It’s just like all the things pile up, so then later I will have an awakening and I’ll find an appropriate learning strategy to apply for the rest of the quarter.” She determined that there was not a standard way to learn in each class since “different classes, they have different learning strategies.” She summed up her experience by saying that learning in college is “to learn how to learn” and how to study for the different subjects she is interested in.

Arielle commented on her process of studying, in contrast to that of her boyfriend, who was also a Chinese international student. She felt that it was important to emphasize the preparation phase because that would alleviate the pressure when it came time to take an exam: “If I prepare well, the result won't be too bad.” On the other hand, her boyfriend was much more relaxed about how to achieve the end result and could help her feel better when she was stressed out. She felt their approaches and their interests in the course content complemented each other. She could get help from him in music appreciation class, which she was much less interested in, but she could share her knowledge with him in the other classes they had in common. Arielle also took notes for her boyfriend if he did not go to the lecture in their shared classes, even if it upset her that he would miss class because she found it lonely. She noticed his absence because they would usually sit together; she expressed the benefit of having him there: "it's always good to have someone beside you in lecture and maybe you can talk about this, about what we're learning and have more common topics to discuss."

The downside of Arielle's study process was that she tended to over prepare for exams, by her estimation. Even if she had secured more than enough extra credit, she still made sure to plan ahead as leaving plenty of time to prepare could alleviate stress. For example, she would start preparing on Friday for a psychology exam the following Wednesday.

Chloe brought study skills from her high school experience that she could apply to her college courses, mainly in note-taking and review of course content for exams. She had no trouble spending the time needed to study the material thoroughly. She summed up her previous study strategies: "I have some skills I learned from school [in China]. I know how to write down notes and I know how to do the review. It doesn't mean that I study harder than others or I am smarter. I just have the skills I learned in my high school." She concluded that once students know how to study on their own, they could do well. In a mid-quarter meeting, she returned to the topic of note-taking: "Chinese students just listen to the professor and make notes. You learn how to make notes. Since we were in primary school we were taught how to do so." After 13-14 years of note-taking, Chloe kept up her habit of taking handwritten notes: "Some students use their computers or their tablets to make notes, but I prefer to write those notes." She elaborated on the benefits of writing her notes by hand: "I am the kind of person who, if I want to remember something, I have to write it again and again. I don't know why, but I just feel better when I write those things down. If I write it down, I already have a process of memorizing it. It just helps me; I'd just say it's helpful." Chloe tapped into the value of writing to support memory and cognition since she found that typing her notes did not anchor the content in her brain in any substantive way.

However, her previous skills could only take her so far in the US system since so many aspects of her college experience were new to her: "In a totally different environment, you have

no idea what will happen. You have no idea what [the American system] is like. Now I need to pay more attention in class." Paying attention in class meant that she would not only record the lectures, but take extensive notes as a reference point. Chloe noticed a positive change in her note-taking from the beginning of her first year to the end.

One of Jae's strategies for success was to keep in constant contact with his professors to get feedback on what content he should focus on and what he should be doing to succeed in his classes. In fact, he determined that in one class, he should focus on the slides, not the textbook because all of the information he would be tested on came from the slides. Rather than taking notes on the lecture material, Jae used the slides to trigger memories of the answers: "I'm just taking notes on the answers on those questions which…I mean, if I can remember the answer, I don't take the notes, because I think it's just more convenient if I go back to the slide. If I just come up with an answer, I don't need to do all those notes." Jae preferred not to feel rushed taking notes in class, although he did write things down "if there were confusing [slides]" and he annotated the readings in advance of the lectures. He did not use his laptop to take notes as he did not know how to do that. He later described the issue in more detail: "I think there's a language problem with my notes...In Chinese, I can describe certain things in detail, but in English I kind of know what this means. When I try to write those...I don't know. Sometimes I use my, I use Korean and Chinese and English." He knew someone from South America who took notes in Spanish, her home language, to save time, but note-taking just didn't work that well for Jae.

Having to take notes in class created some challenges for Jae as he found the fast pace of the lecture to be overwhelming, an observation Jae made twice over the course of the quarter. Even if he wanted to ask a question, it seemed that the lecture had already moved on to a new

topic. In another of his classes, in contrast, the professor indicated that students should use the textbook more than the lecture slides. Jae sought further clarification from his teaching assistant about the "strategy for this class" as well as more information about a specific concept he found confusing. The TA responded with "some professor-y thing," which he did not fully understand, and thus, he continued his search for answers in the textbook and online in a Google search. He also found the review session where they worked on sample problems to be "really helpful...the best way to review those textbooks."

At our end of quarter meeting, the subject of Jae's note-taking came up again when he reviewed the advice he'd gotten from his instructors about "how to do well in those classes." He had gotten "advice which was related to the reading, reading the textbook" so he tried to focus on that. His instructors had told him that he "should write down those important points, just to make a note." He admitted, "I never make a note so I don't know…I don't know how to make a note so after I make a note, I don't look at it. I just prefer to [read] the textbook instead of [my] notes." When I asked for clarification about why he preferred to refer to the textbook over his own notes, he explained: "My own note is not that detailed so there are certain points that are missing. I have to go back to the textbook [anyway]." He traced his uncertainty about note-taking to his high school experiences in which he merely copied the notes that his teacher provided: "our teachers used to write their note on the blackboard so I just have to just take those into my note and it's already covered all of the material." From his previous experiences copying notes and memorizing them, he did not feel confident evaluating information in the textbook for its relevance and deciding which information to focus on in his note-taking.

The final mention of Jae's note-taking was in our second year meeting when he was talking about his most challenging, discussion-based course. The challenge in this style of course

presented itself when the professor did not use slides, but instead expected students to participate in and by extension, take notes on the conversation. In moments when Jae had trouble knowing what to take notes on in his first year, he just didn't take any notes; however, in his second year, aside from participating in the conversation, "it was just taking notes." He preferred a lecture-style format in his classes over discussions, perhaps in part because he was "used to the format" and in part because the notes were easier to take as the structure of the presentation of information was clearer to him. He may also have not felt comfortable participating, given his other comments on the trouble with disorganization in class discussions.

5.2.2 Transfer

Several students demonstrated the ability to apply concepts from one discipline to another. Cassandra linked concepts from her psychology class to her work in early childhood development including in real-life experiences. Arielle found connections between philosophy, anthropology, and psychology of gender, fostering an interdisciplinary approach. Chloe traced her knowledge of writing systems and linguistics from an honors course to her experiences learning Japanese. Eve, Jae and Emma talked about the continuity of concepts across disciplines, between math and statistics or chemistry and geology, or within a discipline such as physics. Aside from transferring course content, the study participants also showcased the transfer of procedural knowledge and skills across different classes. Frances was the only focal student who did not make explicit connections of this sort.

Cassandra was highly motivated to hone her critical thinking skills and thus applied them to academic situations that engaged her, most notably in the fields of history and political science. She also applied concepts she had learned in her psychology class to her real life. On

several occasions, she referred to concepts she had learned in previous quarters in psychology to explain her observations. At one point in our interview, we veered off topic when someone passed by with a bowl of piping hot noodles. She reflected on the concept of nostalgia and olfactory senses as she had learned that smelling something had a direct connection to the brain: "it's like interacting. The smell is linked directly to part of the brain." We then talked about memories of grandparents and older relatives that such smells evoked. She also drew a connection between her current course in early childhood development and her previous psychology class in talking about her observations at her service-learning site: "what we talk about [in the early childhood class] is really similar to what I learned in psychology class, basically like insecure attachment. Attachment is something really familiar to me." She went on to elaborate on how she would analyze parenting and attachment in the context of her work at the Boys & Girls Club.

Similarly, Arielle described her experience of making interdisciplinary connections and observing real-world relevance. She noticed that "a lot of post-modern and modernist thinking is based on some philosophical thinking, so I found what I learned from philosophy class and also from anthropology and psychology of gender interact with each other in my current class." She felt a certain excitement that she was familiar with key terms and concepts through her work in previous classes. This motivated her to learn "as much as possible in each discipline for when I have my concentration [in my major], I can put knowledge from each discipline together." In this case, Arielle was learning about interdisciplinarity through this self-directed experience, which worked well for her since she had been having trouble narrowing down her choices for a major. Additionally, Arielle applied the lens from her anthropology and psychology classes to daily life.

She also discovered interdisciplinarity as she applied knowledge from one discipline to another and thought about the boundaries between disciplines.

Chloe transferred both procedural skills and content from one class to the next. The skills that Chloe learned early on in her time at the university were ones that she continued to polish, so she continually transferred procedural knowledge about academic tasks from one class to the next. These skills included honing her reading techniques and writing papers in English. Most of the time Chloe did not make direct connections across the content in different classes or disciplines, yet one exception was when she traced her knowledge of writing systems and linguistics, the content of the honors course, to her previous experience learning English, and then to her current experiences learning the Japanese language. She felt that the honors course helped with her Japanese language learning because a chapter in her text talked about the difference between Japanese and Chinese grammar: “It’s not that hard to apply this...one chapter talks about the difference between Japanese and Chinese. It said that Chinese grammar is much easier than Japanese grammar so I feel it’s really hard to apply those grammar rules. I’m good at writing Japanese, not speaking or listening. When I read Japanese, I have time to think about the grammar part, but if I really talk to someone, I may stop and think about if I am saying it right. I am still not that familiar with Japanese grammar.” Chloe felt a need to monitor her grammar because the language was still new to her and was reassured that Japanese grammar was indeed more complex and complicated than the Chinese grammar she was most familiar with.

Jae made connections from what he had learned in high school chemistry class on molecular bonding with the bonds that geologists study to differentiate rock types. However, Jae encountered a situation in his astronomy class in which his teaching assistant suggested that

material on chemical bonds they might have learned worked differently for planet formation and the transformation of stars.

Eve also had clarity on how her two main academic interests intersected with one another. Statistics majors were called upon to draw from math knowledge to examine data. When I asked her how the learning in her math classes related to her major, Eve went on to explain the relationship between math and statistics. She described statistics as "a subjective glance towards math. It's not math but it's related to math. The basis is math so you need to learn math knowledge to process data, to know the regularities in the data." Having a strong foundational knowledge of math helps a student perform stats; the statistician thus uses math to find the relationships in the data. For that reason, Eve surmised that students were required to take two years of math before entering the statistics major.

When I asked Eve what she liked about math, she contrasted the work of math with that of humanities courses. She appreciated math because of its inherent logic and its application to solving problems: "I think it's a kind of logic, and what I like is you know this knowledge and you use this knowledge to solve other problems." The example she gave was a straightforward one to represent how you could break down a problem in different ways: "If you already know 1+1=2, you can use it in another computation like 1+1+1 = 2+1." Her impression of the use of evidence in humanities courses, which she called "arts classes" as in "arts and sciences" provided a contrast in her mind: "I think the arts classes tell you, they throw you some facts and you need to remember the facts and you can't use this fact to prove something." I did not press her further for examples of how she had used evidence in her humanities courses.

Emma described the continuity of knowledge from one physics class to another in the series she was taking. At the end of the previous course, the professors used the same

demonstration. Upon seeing it for the second time, Emma felt that it was familiar and must have been a foundational concept.

The focal students' observations underscore their abilities to transfer knowledge and skills across disciplines, apply academic concepts to real-world scenarios, and recognize the interconnectedness of their academic pursuits and disciplinary knowledge.

5.2.3 General Knowledge of one's Strengths and Challenges

The study participants showed they were receptive to learning by maintaining a positive attitude towards challenges. Admittedly, they all had preferences or affinities for certain subjects or even course attributes, such as a small class size. For the most part, they understood what their academic strengths were and where they could improve, which meant that they tended to seek out resources and set smaller goals to achieve larger ones.

Emma had some preconceived notions about her own strengths and weaknesses in academics and what those meant for her role as a student. Speaking of her general experience in the Chinese schooling system, Emma stated, "we are really good at preparing for exams, so that's what we do." The teachers expected students to figure many things out, such as difficult physics problems using calculus, even if they had not officially learned calculus. In the Chinese high school system, students studied the equivalent of the introductory college level 3-course physics series. In college, she had been doing well in physics, which represented a change from her impressions in the past: "In high school, I really felt uncomfortable about physics. Like physics is one of the hardest subjects ever and it sort of decides who the smart person is." Emma noted that each physics problem in high school had 5 or 6 smaller parts that comprised the larger question and for that reason, physics was an indicator of someone's cognitive capacities, rather

than math, which some people may have thought. She implied that she wasn't as smart as other students since physics did not come as easily to her as math did. She added that students were left to their own devices to figure out the problems in high school so they did not get help breaking them down into more manageable parts. Then she went on to compare math and physics and explain why physics is more complex or complicated than math: "In math you have a problem and you have to use geometry or calculus or something to solve it, but in physics, it involves so many details, like you have no idea which math you would use in that [physics] problem and sometimes you just get lost because there's so many data inside, like so many numbers, you have no idea which numbers you should use right now." Emma's description points to a deeper understanding of the foundation of physics, which is something that helped her learn the subject, even if she was sometimes at a loss as to which "numbers to use."

Since Emma felt physics to be harder than math, her impressions of those courses in her spring quarter come as no surprise. She asserted that she had not had to learn new concepts in math to that point: "Math is probably a little bit easier than physics, but it's really boring." In this case, being "easier" was a negative from Emma's perspective. She had a good feeling about physics because the class fostered a high level of engagement: "Physics is pretty good. The difficulty level is sort of what I expected but the "interesting" level is not what I expected. I didn't expect there would be so many experiments and demonstrations and jokes." She concluded that all of these elements made the class better than she had expected indeed.

As a student focused on STEM, Eve felt her biggest academic challenge in her first year was her English composition class. The volume of writing came as a bit of a shock to her even though she had had "a lot of practice" writing shorter pieces in preparation for the SAT. In her composition class, students had to write short papers of 400-500 words and a longer one of over

1000 words. The difficulty as she saw it was that "you need to pay so much attention" in contrast to her other classes in math, which she found more intuitive. In various other courses, her English skills affected her ability to understand the lectures and the readings. She found her introductory computer science course on Java, a prerequisite for the statistics major, to be hard because she had trouble following the lectures: "I didn't even get my professor's points." Similarly, she struggled with a previous course on music appreciation, which was considered an "easy" class but was one she struggled with in her first quarter at the university. In her third quarter, Eve also indicated that a 1-credit ungraded seminar on race was harder than she thought owing to the class discussion format and its challenging readings. Courses that fell on the "arts" side of the "arts and sciences" curriculum proved to be challenging for Eve, compared to STEM classes: "I prefer 'science,' and this class [on race] prefers 'art' and it's a little bit hard to follow." She identified her relative strengths in math classes in her first and second years, and also felt an affinity for Japanese language learning in her second year.

At the end of her first year, I asked Eve to recall her most rewarding moment. She felt it was when she could demonstrate her knowledge in math or computer science by explaining concepts to her peers. When her peers reached out to her for help and asked her questions, she was able to answer them. Eve thrived on helping her friends understand the course content and solve problems: "It's very exciting and I can help [them] understand it." The difference between her understanding of the course material and that of her friends was that she engaged in deeper learning than they did: "When I study something, I need to study it completely. Some of my friends don't understand deeply. What counts is you know this 10 out of 10 points. Like to learn something you need to grab it totally, not just the half." She clarified that having a deeper understanding allowed her to move beyond rote learning: "If you just grab half of it, you can

solve some of the questions, but you couldn't handle it when this question is changed." Eve pushed herself to achieve a full understanding of how to solve problems in both math and computer science, as learning something part way was not good enough. She summed up her attitude: "I need to learn and I have to learn and I can force myself to learn." She had confidence and a positive attitude that served as a backdrop to her willingness to learn new concepts.

Chloe felt she was strong in subjects related to math, biology, geography, languages, economics, and business. She identified relative weaknesses in the sciences, mostly for lack of interest, and in the fine arts, mostly for lack of talent. She shied away from courses from which she could not derive anything interesting or useful: "I just don't want to take too many different courses on art, music or dance. I tried that class. I cannot really learn something useful to me. I'm not really interested in music or dance. I cannot dance; I can't." She did, however, enjoy making things with her hands and created artistic handbags out of other articles of clothing as a hobby.

Japanese language emerged as one of Chloe's strengths in her first year. With no previous background in the language, Chloe started learning Japanese at the university and found it easy to learn. She felt that as a Chinese student she was familiar with the Japanese writing system, kanji, as it uses Chinese characters. She had an affinity for this language.

A weakness Chloe dealt with was English grammar, and in general, she did not mind receiving grammar feedback on her writing. Chloe received grammar feedback on her paper in the honors class. While she felt it was helpful to track patterns of error to prepare for the writing test that she planned to take over the summer, she was still a little annoyed that she would have to respond to all the grammar feedback. She was unaware of how to accept tracked changes in a Word doc so she made every change by hand in her original document. This meant that she

would have to expend quite a bit of effort in editing her paper. By her second year, Chloe had found an online service for grammar help. Instead of having to leave her apartment, she could get editing help online in an expedient way: “In my honors classes, I need someone to help me revise my papers for grammar errors. I found online tutoring for $30/month to edit my papers. This is good when you don’t want to go out at night. I don’t have to be [at a writing center].” She liked the convenience of online tutoring, but felt that if she wanted to have a full dialogue about her writing, going to the writing center was preferable. Online editing is “not that helpful because you can’t really talk with the person but if you are really in a hurry, that’s a good way.” Chloe had discovered the benefits of the writing center as well as other options for polishing her papers.

One challenge that Chloe discussed at least five times over the course of our interviews was when instructors mixed assignment types, such as papers with quizzes and exams. She explained: “I just feel it should be all quizzes or all papers. I just don’t like to combine quizzes and papers together.” Each time she raised the topic, I tried to get more clarity on why she found this combination to be problematic. In her honors class, she might have homework and a quiz on the same day, so that bothered her: “I just feel it’s hard for me.” While she came into the university feeling comfortable with preparing for quizzes and exams, Chloe did not expect to find that she also excelled in writing papers. In her honors class the previous quarter, she had the experience of only writing papers: “Last quarter I got a 4.0 and that was from only writing papers. I just needed to do about 3 papers. The first two were 2-3 pages and the last one was about 7-8 pages.” She found that she appreciated the chance to “just come up with some really creative ideas” which helped her to “do well.” Chloe’s use of the word “just” suggests that mixing assignment types was somehow more challenging, complex or confusing. The issue was that she found a “mix and match” approach to demonstrating her learning to be unsettling,

perhaps because of the volume of work and constant flow or wider range of academic tasks. For her subsequent classes, she indicated her preference: “I just hope that the class just has papers or just has quizzes.” Perhaps having to conceptualize her course preparation in multiple ways was overwhelming to her.

Like Chloe, Cassandra was very aware of her strengths in academic subjects, even if she occasionally expressed doubts in her abilities. Cassandra asserted, “I think I had pretty strong skills before college. Then I just brought them here and improved my English. Also this is a place that I discovered my real interest, like what my real interest is and now I can follow that.” Her real interests turned out to be in history and political science. At the end of the quarter, she summed up her assessment: “I discovered I totally love history and I totally love poli sci rather than what I used to do, like statistics and chemistry.” Yet, Cassandra acknowledged the challenges inherent in studying political science for her: “Poli sci is pretty hard. I am totally interested in history but my background is not strong enough to support me [in political science]. They use history as a tool to interpret different theories that would be pretty hard because I don’t know the history. That would be the challenge.” She attributed her weaknesses to lack of exposure to a given discipline, such as political science and background knowledge, rather than a lack of ability to master a subject. This was also true for her in the natural sciences. In talking about her geology lab, she contrasted it with research that motivated her in the social sciences: “If I wanted to do research, I would do research with people, like psychology and sociology stuff or human rights...I’m just not really into looking at rocks and identifying what kind of rock is that.” She went on to say twice that she was not a science person: “I can get a high grade but I’m not a science person. I’m taking this class because people said it’s a relatively easy class.” In this case, she attributed her ability to succeed in part to the difficulty level of the course. In further

reflecting on her interests, she asked herself "what do I like? Well, I'm trying to figure this out." She cited history and political science and "things like that" as among her favorites and added biology to the list among the natural sciences: "I think biology is the only science that I like." For the subjects that motivated her, she had a high level of confidence in her abilities. She also noted that having a good professor was helpful to her progress and to her learning, regardless of grades. She sought to challenge herself and did not plan to take an easy path to graduate.

Something that stood out about Cassandra was that she was constantly calculating how to balance all the factors in her life by setting goals. Sometimes the goals were specific to a grade she wanted to get in a course and other times the goals pertained more to experiences she wished to have: "College is college; it's not about academics only. Colleges like this one have a lot of resources that you have to explore for yourself. Nobody will tell you what it is...Studying abroad is one of the resources and all the activities like clubs, they are one of the resources." She sought to maximize her opportunities and use all available resources: "my concern will be how to distribute my time by all these activities that I want to do."

Frances observed that several factors influenced her ability to succeed in her academics: her ability to focus, her connection to peers and the teaching team, and her motivation for the topic. In two of her classes during the time of the study, Frances expressed her concern for staying focused in class, especially in her 8:30am class, as she found that to be early. In lecture classes, she described her tendency to "zone out, or like I don't know, I just don't pay attention." Taking notes helped her concentrate on what the professor was saying, "but like he talks so fast and then so it's like, what did he say? So it's just hard to follow sometimes." Even if the professor spoke too quickly, Frances felt confident she could get a recap of the content from her TA and figure it all out in her quiz section: "I feel like if I zone out in [lecture], my econ TA

explains it and I get it, yeah." She noted that even with clicker questions in two of her classes, with the large rooms and large class sizes, it was hard for her to focus on capturing all of the content. At our end-of-quarter interview, Frances recognized that class size was a key factor in her success, in part because she was not as easily distracted when the room was physically smaller, and also because she could connect more readily with her professors, TAs and classmates. Over time, she discovered she needed people to motivate her, both peers and her professors, and that successful interactions correlated with class size. Despite its large class size, France attributed her success in her American ethnic studies class to her appreciation for the subject matter, her perception of the level of difficulty of the course and the personality of her TA and professor: "I liked it better and then it was easier, too. The TAs and teachers are pretty nice so it allowed me to do better. It was my best class, for sure." In our interview in her second year, she expressed that she was "more confident knowing what I'm good at." Knowing her strengths included the subjects in which she excelled as well as the ways she held herself accountable for accomplishing academic goals, whether through active participation in class activities or through keeping her homework assignments organized.

At the end of the quarter, Jae summed up his strengths as being good at memorization, but only when he had guidance about prioritizing concepts to study. He repeatedly sought out advice from his professors and teaching assistants about strategies to succeed in their classes, since it was not always self-evident to him. Among the strategies that he found most effective were attending lectures, quiz sections, and review sessions; visiting office hours before his midterms to help focus on important points he'd need to know on the exam; and using the study guides professors provided. In our meeting in his second year, Jae characterized his first year as "messy." Given that Jae spent a fair amount of time ruling out potential majors, perhaps Jae's

delays in finding a subject that attracted him influenced his view of his strengths, weaknesses and interests.

5.2.4 Time and Workload Management

The focal students adopted various strategies to manage their time and balance their academic workload with their other activities. Despite busy schedules, Cassandra and Emma each acknowledged that they had their workload mostly under control, although Cassandra sometimes skipped class for advocacy meetings. As in the case of Eve, who used a well-thought-out approach to managing academic demands, the students sometimes adjusted their credit load or the workload across classes to budget time for part-time jobs, advocacy, exercise and other pursuits. Proactive planning was something that helped several students get a head start on the quarter's work. Both Chloe and Jae communicated with professors and TAs to clarify the requirements of their assignments, but sometimes felt a bit pressed for time on assignments with a tight-turnaround. Frances stayed organized by mapping out her assignments on the learning management platform. A bit of an outlier, Arielle took precautions to protect her time, and opted not to participate in clubs until declaring a major, recognizing the potential stress of time-consuming activities.

Managing her workload was always at the forefront of Cassandra's mind as she frequently talked about balancing her studies, social life, outside activities, and up to 20 hours of work per week. Cassandra planned extensively for all the different ways she wanted to spend her time, and ultimately, if others did not respect her schedule or schedule conflicts, she stopped that activity. This was the case with her advocacy work when ultimately the organization could not work around one of her schedule conflicts. She fit her schedule together like a well-oiled

machine, but occasionally something like nice weather would entice her to go play tennis outside rather than study. She also occasionally missed a class session or quiz session for a meeting with her advocacy organization. Cassandra frequently talked about missing sleep or being busy, but she still confirmed that the workload was manageable, and the pacing of the work she had to do was “okay.” In her second year, Cassandra made a plan not to study on weekends, so this meant she would have to tighten down her workload management during the week.

. Emma generally kept a busy schedule between her campus job as a tour guide and her full schedule. She became accustomed to managing stress and fitting all of the pieces of the puzzle together: “I am just kind of stressed out right now ‘cause I got a really full working schedule.” She had to fit in a couple of hours at the Office of Admissions several times a week in between classes. As far as the workload in her classes went, she recognized the load but did not seem overwhelmed by it in and of itself. In her physics class alone, students had to keep track of many different components: “We got a lot of work actually, ‘cause we got lab, we got quiz section and both of them have their pre-test and homework and also the lecture has its own work and pre-test, so…” On the whole, though, she felt some relief from a heavy workload in the third quarter of her first year: “I think physics and math are just fine, dancing is only for two credits so we don't really have credits on that.” Taking 12 credits proved to be quite reasonable when paired with her other responsibilities and activities. In the previous quarter, she had had an introductory computer science class as well as a writing intensive composition class: “I think I definitely have a little bit more time off this quarter because last quarter I took CSE 143 with English 131, which is not a good idea. I was like ‘I'm so stressed out’ like I have to write and then every week I'm sort of like, I want to perfect it so I would go to the writing center, 3 or 4 times basically it's 3 times a week.” Emma admitted that her tendency towards perfectionism

caused her to work harder and harder. Even though she had benefited from campus resources like the writing center, these visits still demanded time and energy and made her feel that her work was never quite done. Taking 100- or 200-level math and physics classes proved to be a good combination and a reasonable challenge for her in her first year.

Just as Emma strategized how to combine classes for a manageable load, Eve sought out a comfortable workload during spring quarter. For the first two quarters, she had taken 15 credits, but she intended for spring quarter to have a lighter workload, and thus only took 12 credits, 10 of which were graded and counted towards her GPA.

As a general rule, prior to the start of each quarter, Chloe made a point of finding her textbooks and required materials so she could gauge the prospective difficulty of each course and map out her workload. At our forum discussion, she agreed with Cassandra that college was not only about academics, so knowing what the workload would be helped her plan for it in advance and achieve a sense of balance in her life. She typically previewed and read ahead in her textbooks. Before her third quarter, she even completed the entire Japanese workbook during the break because it was fun and easy for her. Plus, then she would not have to worry about it when she had work in other classes during the quarter. On the whole, Chloe was very aware of how much time she spent on each class prior to the class session and on her homework. Although it sounded like she did quite a bit of work outside of class, she found the load manageable. By the end of the quarter, Chloe felt that she had become more efficient at doing her homework and did not have to spend as much time on it: “I know how to deal with the homework, and how I can handle my schedule.” She reiterated that she figured out how much time she should spend on each class, how much sleep she would need, and how much time she would have for other activities. Improving her skills in reading and annotation speed was a major component of her

increase in efficiency of her academic tasks, as was an improved writing process. While she used to take all day to write a paper, by the end of her first year, she was much more efficient: "It doesn't take that long to finish a paper [now]. For a 3-4 page paper, I think it will take about 5 hours to finish it. But during my first quarter in English 131, it would take me all day, really seriously, all day." Not only had she streamlined the process, but she had also gained proficiency in citation format to avoid plagiarism: "At first, I didn't know how to write anything. And MLA format — I definitely had no idea about what that was; now I'm totally fine with it." Even though she wrote papers more quickly at the end of the year, she still left plenty of time to revise her work. In general, she found that she would need to finish a draft 3-4 days before the due date to leave sufficient time to "revise it again and again." Becoming more familiar with the academic tasks required in her classes helped her streamline her workload and feel that she had made progress on time management.

Jae rarely expressed a deep concern for time management in his classes during the third quarter of his first year. Since his three courses offered a survey of topics in which students would demonstrate their understanding of the material in exam format, he structured his time around the scheduled exams and did not express much stress over his workload. In one instance, Jae avoided the stress of a final exam in astronomy in which students had to write two 3-page timed essays by choosing pass/fail grading. Since his grade was above the threshold for passing, the exam was optional and he opted out of it.

Frances used the predictability of assignments in her classes to her advantage in structuring her time. With weekly due dates on certain days in each of her classes, she knew what to expect in all three classes. She kept track of when the discussion boards would open and

close for a given assignment and knew that she'd have short papers due each Monday in her economics quiz section.

As part of Arielle's time management strategy, she decided not to participate in clubs until she had declared her major. Even though she recognized the long-term benefits of being part of larger groups, she expressed the following concern: "it's like there are so many things going on in my life and you know the activities will take a big part of my time and that can be really stressful for time management."

Even as most of the focal students figured out how to balance their schedules, both Chloe and Jae discussed an issue they had faced with time management. An issue that Chloe never resolved was the timing of assignments in her statistics class. The homework was not available well enough in advance, in Chloe's mind, because students had to wait for the introduction of new concepts in the lecture. The homework was based on the lecture alone and not the textbook, so she could not rely on information from the textbook to help her. Because of the tight turn around on the homework, students were frequently working until the last minute of the deadline at the study center, hoping not to be late. Chloe did feel she could rely on the TA to answer all her questions at the study center, but she would have preferred three or four days advance notice on the homework. Even if the notes were posted online for her to preview, the professor would make changes to the notes based on each lecture. With the help of the Chinese TAs in the statistics study center, Chloe managed to submit her homework each week, but she saw on the grade distributions on Canvas that not everyone completed their homework on a regular basis.

Jae did express concern in courses with heavy reading and writing demands, such as in his comparative literature class and in the courses in his major in his second year. At our meeting in his second year, Jae had encountered a situation in which he was writing a research paper and

sought feedback from his instructor after he had written a couple of pages. She had told him that his topic was “too broad” and he should change it, proposing what Jae felt to be “an obvious topic.” At that moment, Jae felt a time crunch because it was a bit late to start over on a more rigorous topic. He opted for the topic his professor had proposed, even though it “was covered in the lecture” and all of his classmates already knew something about it. When he presented on his topic, he felt a bit uncomfortable because the topic was familiar to everyone and he imagined they were all wondering why he was presenting on a topic they had already studied. The lesson he learned from this experience was to talk to his professor early on about his topic to make sure he is on the right track, especially in cases like this one where the topic was constrained by the course content.

Despite these moments as well as some struggles with perfectionism on Emma’s part and an interest in maintaining an active social life while taking on multiple activities on Cassandra’s part, the focal students found ways to assess their workload in advance of the quarter’s start and map out a plan to get everything done. Chloe also found ways to improve her efficiency in academic tasks, including faster paper writing and proficiency in citation formats. With a streamlined drafting process, Chloe had sufficient time left for revisions to her work, alleviating the potential stress of a tight timeline.

5.2.5 Conclusion

The study participants' ability to reflect on their learning processes, adapt study strategies, and manage their time efficiently was fundamental to their academic achievement and overall well-being. The students displayed highly developed metacognitive skills, honed through reflective practices in college courses—especially within the English department—where they

reflected on their strategies, processes and learning and were encouraged to assess their work's strengths and weaknesses. Most of the students were familiar with and actively engaged in metacognitive practices. They reflected on their learning strategies, made adjustments based on these reflections, and understood the importance of adapting their approaches to maximize their academic success. Furthermore, many of the focal students demonstrated that their learning was not just to acquire knowledge in isolation but to apply and integrate this knowledge across different academic disciplines and real-life contexts.

The focal students employed various strategies to balance their academic workload with other commitments, such as proactive planning and adjusting their credit loads. Their ability to anticipate and strategically manage academic demands was crucial for maintaining balance in their lives and ensuring academic success. Sometimes the students limited their activities and made a conscious effort to manage time effectively so as to reduce potential stress.

CHAPTER 6: OTHER FACTORS INFLUENCING ACADEMIC SOCIALIZATION

Five other factors influenced the study participants' academic socialization, namely their academic predispositions, evidence of their self-efficacy, the process of selecting a major, their inclination to seek help from the teaching team and the role their friends played in discovering and navigating academic and leadership opportunities. The students entered college with distinct academic predispositions: some demonstrated meticulous planning, balancing academic and personal goals, while others showcased adaptability and flexibility in the direction their coursework took. The students' self-efficacy, strategic decision-making in selecting a major, help-seeking behavior, and use of friend networks played crucial roles in their academic success.

6.1 Academic Predispositions: Course planning and long-term academic plans

The students' academic predispositions and long-term plans varied. Taking a heavy course load or taking classes all four quarters of the year formed part of several of the focal students' plans. Three of them, Eve, Chloe, and Arielle shared a commitment to strategic planning, including the pursuit of continuous learning. Jae, Chloe and Arielle showed an interest in more international experience and Emma, Cassandra and Frances proved to have a common thread in their adaptability and flexibility in the direction of their coursework. For Eve, meticulous attention to credit management was essential as she aimed to enter her major and graduate within four years. She strategically balanced academic and personal goals, envisioning research, internships, and graduate school. Chloe, distinct from many international students, consistently took 17-18 credits each quarter and audited classes before committing to them. Her long-term plan involved a potential double major, graduation in 2.5 years, and a career in accounting, possibly in Japan. Arielle aimed to graduate in three years, necessitating an early

declaration of her major and active participation in summer classes to continue her learning. Jae, after a summer intensive in China, sought internships for more international experience. Frances reflected on her course load preferences after having 6 quarters under her belt and would have preferred more time to explore possible majors.

Eve paid careful attention to her credits as she had to find the right number to enter her major and graduate at the appropriate moment, after 4 years at the university. Since she had come in with 40 credits, she occasionally had to slow down her accumulation of credits to stay on track. More importantly, though, was Eve's plan for how she would approach each year with specific academic and personal goals, keeping in mind her long-term plans to do research, get an internship and attend graduate school.

Also paying close attention to her quarterly course load, Chloe was cognizant that many international students took no more than the required 12 credits each quarter; she differentiated herself from others by taking 17-18 credits each quarter. In addition to the courses she was taking for credit, Chloe liked to audit classes before she committed to them. She took this route with classes in the business school for two reasons: on the one hand, it helped her feel comfortable with the workload, type of assignments, course content, and professor's style of teaching, and on the other, she discovered new areas of study without the pressure to achieve a certain grade. Learning the course content was helpful in her process of discovering the particularities of each discipline. She talked about auditing a management class: "It's really good to audit your class before you take it so you already know what the professor is going to talk about, you already know the lecture's subject, you already know how many quizzes you will have and things like this. You don't need to worry about your grades. You just learn those things

and that is cool." Chloe had found auditing to be an excellent way to learn the content of the prerequisites for her major. The other focal students did not talk about exercising this option.

Chloe mapped out that if she were to take courses straight through the summers it would take her 2.5 years to graduate, but since she intended to double major, it might take longer. An alternative plan would be to transfer to another institution, if she wanted to stay in the US for 4 years. She had this option in the back of her mind in case she could not get into the business school because she was set on studying accounting rather than having to change her major to stay at this university. She had also heard about study abroad opportunities in Japan with the honors program, which interested her greatly. Her long-term plan was to work as an accountant in a different Asian country, such as Japan or Korea. Whether she went to Japan as part of a study abroad program, transferred there while still an undergraduate, or moved there after her undergraduate work, Chloe frequently mentioned her interest in going to Japan. Thinking ahead, she did not picture her parents coming to the US because they did not speak English, but she felt they would join her in Japan or Korea.

Just as Eve and Chloe were attentive to the pace of their studies and their options for completing them, Arielle had a plan for graduation: she intended to graduate in 3 years, which meant that she'd have to declare a major in her second year. She also took summer classes to continue her learning; one reason for doing so was to make the most of her time since she had "too many credits" and not enough time to explore all the classes she wanted to take. She did not want to have a long break in her progress and felt it was important to take classes in summer to foster "a continuous learning experience." Arielle was the one who had just been overwhelmed with a heavy reading and writing workload the previous quarter, so her interest in keeping up with her own vision of her path through college was particularly salient. Arielle was excited

about summer classes because she could "already get ahead," which essentially meant that she could stay on track for her own plans.

Similar in mindset to the two other focal students who took summer classes, Jae took a one-month summer intensive in China to gain credit for three courses in sociology, economics and communications. He was pleased with the experience but it was not one he would repeat because he felt working from 9am to 7pm during the summer was too intensive: “they expected that you will be used to very long days as in Chinese high school.” When he had signed up, they told him it would not be that intense: “not intense at all. You’ll really enjoy it.” Jae summed up the experience: “I got credits. I met people.” He identified a public speech he gave on a career path related to his international studies major as one of the highlights of the experience. He felt less nervous speaking for 15-20 minutes to a Chinese audience in English than he would have to an audience in the US.

Another of Jae’s goals was to get an internship during the summer after his second year at the university. He wanted to gain more experience abroad, so that was his focus at the time. For the future, he looked forward to a potential internship in downtown Seattle that many students in the international studies program participated in. Through his summer program and his pursuit of an internship, Jae sought out diverse opportunities for international exposure.

Frances highlighted the value of understanding the ideal course load. In our second year interview, she indicated that she had learned some lessons from having had more experience at the university. After 6 quarters of courses, Frances felt the ideal course load was 15 credits. She wished she had not transferred her 15 credits from high school because she would have had more time and thus less pressure to figure out her major. She felt she knew how to choose her classes

better at the end of her second year, too. These realizations revealed her learning curve in making informed academic decisions.

The students' academic predispositions revealed diverse approaches and considerations in managing their educational journeys. Eve’s strategic planning reflected her long-term vision. Chloe took a proactive approach to learning course material by auditing courses, which helped her understand course content and manage workload expectations. Arielle sought to maintain momentum in her academic journey by taking classes through the summer. For all the planning that Emma did prior to attending the university, she ended up changing her major and being flexible with her plans. Similarly, Cassandra had clear ideas about where she wanted to go with her plan of studies, but she wanted to see how her academic progress shaped up before finalizing her plans. Each student's approach aligned with their goals and challenges, and they all demonstrated adaptability in navigating their academic paths.

6.2 Evidence of Self-efficacy

All of the focal students came into college with a baseline level of confidence that they could accomplish the tasks necessary to their success as a student. Most of them demonstrated self-efficacy through habits they had developed in high school, and several of them adapted their pre-existing routines and habits of mind to suit the college environment. The students’ goal-oriented behavior and strategic decision-making were both contributors to and a reflection of their self-efficacy.

Emma displayed a high degree of self-efficacy as she liked to seek out challenges to prove to herself that she could succeed, whether through taking elective computer science classes while waiting to apply to the major or through figuring out homework problems while waiting for the CSE tutoring center to take her question. She was patient enough with herself to

methodically work through academic challenges that she faced. Her childhood visions demonstrated her early will to succeed: “When I was a little kid, I always imagined myself to rule the world, like be the President or something, but not anymore.” Even if she had scaled back her political aspirations, Emma still had high expectations, looking to push herself to the next level. She likened herself to her dad: “We always want more. We are never satisfied. I feel that if I can get into a better graduate school, I can meet people who are smarter and I can have a better career path.” The first step towards this goal, in Emma’s mind, was to keep her grades high. Her next steps were to constantly reflect on the best course of action to achieve her goals, which was to code: “I just want to code. I want to make something.” In contrast to most jobs that computer science students get in the industry as program managers, who explain to clients what the code does, Emma wanted to produce something by writing the code herself.

In her second year, Emma changed her habits a bit, started thinking like a computer scientist, and became more engaged in her classes, according to her assessment. One way she achieved this was to start her work early to avoid delays “out of fear” but she still occasionally had to stay up late to finish a program: “I do stay up a little bit longer than I used to. Once you start coding, you feel that ‘if I don’t fix it I just can’t sleep.’ I always start as soon as I can.” Taking control of her schedule was important to Emma as she did not like to feel tired the next day. She summed up her take-away from her experience: “Confidence is built through success.” Her academic goal in computer science was to feel comfortable and meet her own expectations.

Just as Emma sought to take control of her schedule, she also found that sitting in the front row in lectures furthered her progress towards academic success. Emma chose to sit in the front row to learn better but she occasionally ran into difficulties based on her schedule and the location of her classes. For instance, during her spring quarter, she has to run from one lecture

hall to another because of the tight turnaround between classes: “there is a really interesting part. Because I have to go to [one campus building] for math, and I have [another building about 9 minutes away, walking] for CSE and I only have 10 minutes. Both of them are huge lectures. I want to sit in the front row so I can probably learn as fast as possible.” Learning “fast” to Emma entailed the possibility of having a closer contact to the professor and the slides, and a more focused learning environment: “I just really like the interaction with the professor because I can see their facial expression and probably sometimes I can't really see that clear from the back because my vision is not that good honestly and I sometimes would tend to sleep so…” Emma felt the conditions were more optimal for her in the front row, which is where she met up with a friend of hers who also liked the front row. Not only could she see better up front and engage with the course material, but she also did not risk dozing off, which would have been a great embarrassment to her. Luckily, her friend saved her a seat in the front row, as that row was often not crowded: “I think the front row is not the most popular. People like the second or third or fourth or fifth rows ... I certainly do understand why people don't want to sit in the front row, because sometimes they can't help it and they fall asleep. Sometimes this does happen to them and they don't want the professor to see that.” Emma felt being in the front row would keep her awake, although she indicated that other students might not choose the front row because it left them too exposed. She then discussed embarrassing moments that she had witnessed in large lecture classes, such as the instructor asking students to wake up a sleeping student or an annoyed professor sending a student to the balcony because the student did not silence their phone and it interrupted class three different times. Even if one’s seat in the lecture may seem to be a minor concern, for Emma, her position in the classroom was one way she maximized both her learning and her confidence in her approach.

Like Emma, Eve demonstrated motivation and persistence in achieving her learning goals, which proved to be tied to her self-efficacy. Eve noted that she had learned how to force herself to get things done and overcome laziness in her first year at college. She exhibited a strong sense of "self-control" as she put it, and took on many personal responsibilities. Eve was self-motivated since her parents were not present, and she used her four-year plan to guide and drive her actions: "I know how to force myself to do something worthy. I think laziness is kind of a natural instinct for people and this year, nobody forced me to do something but I have to finish my plan. I have to force myself to do something." Both her goals and her plan propelled her forward: "I think the goal and the plan is the most useful thing to force you to finish something and achieve something." Indeed, Eve was confident that her plan would take her where she wanted to go academically and personally.

Eve demonstrated a high degree of motivation and belief in her ability to succeed in her STEM classes in particular. Even after she missed a few points on her computer science midterm, she did not let the grade discourage her. The stakes were high as a strong grade in her computer science prerequisite would translate into a higher likelihood of getting into the statistics major. Rather than panicking, Eve cheered herself on and made sure to have confidence in her ability to reach her goal: "Maybe I will tell myself, 'Oh, I can get 100 points in the final'." She and her roommate, a prospective CSE major, did their projections about Eve's future grade as a strategy to get over her "bad" grade on the midterm and come up with a game plan for the final. Having done her calculations, she felt that she could get a 3.7 or above in the end. All she would have to do was to not lose more than 4 points on the homework and score a 90% or above on the final exam, which she felt was within her reach. She sought to complete more and more practice tests and intended to change her routine so that she would be prepared to take the exam

at the hour it was scheduled. She reflected that she had felt distracted during her midterm because it took place at 5pm, during her usual dinner hour, whereas her class sessions took place at 11am. For the final, she would find out the time it was held and do the practice exams at that hour. Eve wanted to take all the steps that were within her control to succeed. In the end, she met her own expectations with the grade that she desired for the course.

Eve celebrated small achievements as much as larger ones, as these moments all formed a part of the puzzle that was her four-year plan. At the end of her second year, she reflected on the most rewarding moments in her first two years. What came to mind was her process of adaptation in the first two weeks of class each quarter. She noticed a pattern that the homework was so hard in the first week, and then it got easier and easier: “For this and the last class, I think, in the first two weeks, it was really, really hard. I asked a lot of questions of the TA and professors to finish the first homework. For the second homework, I thought, ‘oh, it should be okay. And for the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th, also okay.” By the end of each quarter, she felt a sense of accomplishment at making it through each subsequent task. At first she wanted to drop her computer science class, but she thought carefully about her four-year plan and knew she could not get an internship abroad in the spring quarter of her 4th year if she were to drop the class in her first year. Thus, she kept the big picture in mind: “Yeah, I think it’s pretty cool because I persevered. For the first year, I even wanted to drop this class, but I thought, ‘if I drop this class, I couldn’t go away in spring quarter, my last quarter.” She had figured out that she needed to stick with the challenging class if she wanted to stay on track for her four-year plan.

Another notable accomplishment offering evidence of Eve’s level of focus and direction was her adherence to the plan for her third year: finding a research opportunity. She had asked one of her professors if she could work with him the following year. When I asked how she had

selected the professor she wanted to work with, she gave two reasons: “the first one is I really like him. The second one is I think his research may be related to my graduate program or something...The main one is I really like him.” Eve wanted to study data analysis in graduate school, so she saw this opportunity as a solid first step in that direction.

Like Eve, Chloe embraced academic challenges and saw them as opportunities, and she quickly figured out how to achieve her goals. From her demeanor, Chloe stood out to me as a confident student. It was only through her recounting of her early memories in arriving in the US that I learned of her initial fears. She reflected: “I have to remember how I felt when I first got off the plane. I saw people with different hair colors - I was so scared! How am I going to go talk with them? I was just so scared.” When I first met Chloe during my fall quarter course, I witnessed absolutely no evidence of fear or shyness. On the contrary, Chloe presented as outgoing and self-assured. Her ability to take charge of her academics may be attributed in part to her winning personality and poise. In her first course at the university during Early Fall Start, she stayed after class to ask the professor questions about the reading and her assignments. As a first year student who was perhaps a year or two older than her cohort, Chloe connected well with her peers, teaching assistants and professors. Her social skills and openness to feedback certainly helped her navigate interpersonal tasks such as group work and improve her writing, listening and speaking skills over time. Although she had some major doubts about her time in the US the moment she set foot on American soil, Chloe got up to speed by finding out what she needed to do to succeed academically. When I first asked what Chloe would need to do to succeed in her classes, she responded with humor, saying "try to survive." She devoted her first year to her academics and well exceeded mere survival. By her second year, she already felt a

substantial improvement in her social and academic life: “Now I have a better idea of how I’m going to be out here, to get along with others, and how I’m going to do my studies.”

Chloe’s application to the honors program at the university offered evidence of her self-efficacy. She had learned that taking an honors class before her application would not affect her admission to the program directly because of equity concerns; the admissions office could not favor a candidate based on their having taken a course in the honors program. However, she figured out how to use her experience in the class to her advantage in her application essays: “The point is that you can’t just say you took this class before and therefore you know how to do it. You have to say how you enjoyed the class and how you got something really [out of it].” She was able to highlight how the course changed her thinking and helped her develop as a student. Chloe talked favorably about the honors program; she appreciated the smaller cohort and the academic rigor of the courses and valued the advice of her advisor and professors in the program. She indicated that her involvement in the program might not directly help her application to the business school, but her rationale for entering the program was that it was “fun because it’s challenging, you know, and I like a challenge.” In her second year, when she reflected on her most rewarding experiences from her first year, she indicated that getting into the honors program was “still the most exciting. It’s really challenging and I’m doing something different from other students at the university.” She added that only a few international students were in the program with her, suggesting that it was something special that not everyone had access to. She was proud of this accomplishment. During the forum discussion, when she was asked how things were going, Chloe rated her year at 75 out of 100: "It's not so bad but there is something still that I want to achieve." When I pressed her for clarification she raised her score to 95 out of 100.

In her second year, Chloe continued to display a strong sense of self-efficacy when she made the choice to transfer to UW Bothell. She was set on double majoring in accounting and finance, and this program proved to be the best opportunity for her to achieve this goal. Even though she still intended to apply once more to the Foster School of Business, Chloe moved forward decisively with Plan B, the transfer to another program for which she would still receive a UW diploma. She was aware that if she re-applied to the Foster School, she could transfer her credits from UW Bothell back to the Foster School. When I asked whether she had shared the news with her parents, she confirmed that she was in charge of her education: “I haven’t told my parents about the plan. I don’t think they will worry about it too much. They will think I know what I am doing.” Chloe did indeed have a clear vision of her end goals and felt that her parents would trust her to move forward in the best way possible. Chloe’s positive and resilient approach to challenges served as evidence for how confidence, adaptability, and a proactive mindset contributed to a successful educational experience.

Cassandra, like Emma, Eve and Chloe, was primarily confident in the academic tasks needed to succeed in her courses. Unlike the other three students, though, she had some lingering doubts about her abilities from her struggles in high school. Yet Cassandra still found ways to motivate herself, demonstrating her self-efficacy. A testament to her academic abilities, Cassandra would accomplish academic tasks even in subjects that she was not passionate about. In general, she relied on past habits and set up “a kind of routine” in which she would draw from her personal standard to push herself. She discussed the struggles she experienced in trying to motivate herself: “even if you don’t like it, it is still school work and you have to do relatively well on it.” Cassandra was not intrinsically motivated to assimilate the content in her geology class, for instance, so she focused on what she would gain from it: “I would just think about my

GPA, because if you are not really interested, it's sort of hard to get involved. But I think that the questions from the lab will be on the exam somehow, so I just do it." However, she sometimes doubted herself since her high school experience was an ongoing personal challenge for her: "I really hated high school, and I still hate it now. I didn't really pay attention, like not paying attention in class at all. I was like really almost at the bottom of my class rank and stuff. And even though it's because I was not paying attention, I still questioned myself, 'why is this happening?' Just questioning yourself on that." Cassandra was referring to her disengagement from high school academics in the Chinese education system and the toll that experience had taken on subsequent academic situations. She went on to say: "After high school, you graduate with a high grade, and you still question yourself [even when] you are in college."

Although she did not use the term, what Cassandra described sounded like a case of imposter syndrome in which she wondered if higher education was right for her. She acknowledged the negative impact her high school experiences had had on her: "It's just like the experience has had an influence on you; that's kind of annoying." As much as she wished to put high school out of her mind for the toll it had taken on her mental health and well-being, negative thoughts and doubts about her abilities still lingered:

> it's really hard to eliminate [feelings of self-doubt]. Especially since my high school experience somehow, not defeated but influenced my confidence about academic work. It's really hard to get rid of. You think you get rid of it? But no sometimes, it's still there. Yeah, sometimes you question yourself, 'can I do this? Why can't I do this? I can do this, I got this.' But the experience is telling you that maybe you are not good at it.

After all of the negative feedback she had received in high school, Cassandra felt it was hard to retrain her thinking and would "need time" to do so.

Nevertheless, Cassandra was not afraid to take action and approach her goals assertively in all aspects of academics, including seeking out study partners or advice for success in a given course. During her first quarter at the university, Cassandra approached a prospective friend in her class and invited her to study. She asked her: “Can we study together? And she was like, ‘yeah’ and after that, she told me how she felt at that moment, which was like ‘yeah, I guess.’” From Cassandra’s tone, I understood that the student felt underwhelmed by the offer to study together and almost declined. Luckily, since they were both in their first quarter, her peer was receptive to making friends. She went forward with her social life in much the same way, working hard to achieve the goal she had set. She made a point to stress that she had gained confidence in her second year, which may have been due in part to feeling well-integrated in both academics and her social life. In her first year, she was clearly frustrated that she could not get a campus job during the first three quarters. It was not until she secured a full-time summer position in housing that she felt a bit more relaxed about her work situation. In her second year, she held a year-long position in the library handling overdue books, fines, and other cashier operations.

While Cassandra typically navigated academic situations adeptly, there was one moment in her first year in which she was unaware of one of her rights as a student, and therefore did not exercise it. In her English 131 class, she had repeatedly sought out help from her instructor to understand the purpose and goals of her assignments, but felt the instructor would not reveal whether what she was writing should be an argument or some other genre of paper. When it came time to receive her grade on her final portfolio she was dissatisfied with the 3.4 grade she received, and felt her work merited at least a 3.6. In the syllabus, she did not see a clear path to making an appeal or a grade complaint, and because she had already talked extensively to her

instructor earlier in the quarter, felt that she had exhausted her options. This moment underscores the importance of students being informed about their rights and avenues for addressing concerns within the academic context. While Cassandra's overall competence in navigating academic situations was evident, this instance serves as a reminder of the potential impact of procedural clarity on a student's ability to advocate for their academic interests.

Even students with a high degree of self-efficacy can benefit from a chance to refine their academic and interpersonal skills, which was the case for Arielle. In general, Arielle presented as a responsible student and handled academic tasks skillfully. Her parents knew she was strict with herself and therefore, they did not need to micromanage her academic progress. I don't remember a moment in which Arielle indicated that she did not know how to proceed with an assignment or how to study for an exam. On the contrary, she faced most tasks with confidence. Where she struggled was in getting all of her questions answered on a given reading, or in knowing how appropriate it would be to talk to professors about her interest in going more in-depth in discussing the readings. Developing a proactive approach to seeking guidance and mentorship from professors and TAs could contribute to her academic and personal growth. Her approach to reading involved her insistence on finishing a given reading, regardless of how much time it took, sometimes compromising her ability to get enough rest. Arielle was willing to make this sacrifice because of her commitment to academic success. Another moment where she displayed self-efficacy was in her exam preparation. If Arielle prepared well for her exam, she felt confident. When professors gave out the prompts, from which they would typically choose one or two questions, Arielle prepared all of the questions so that she would be confident of her responses on the exam. While this approach was time consuming, Arielle did not question its value for her academic success.

In Frances's case, the evidence of her self-efficacy (or lack thereof) stood out as she contrasted her experience as a first year college student with that of her second year. She cited several academic behaviors that she honed in her second year as representing her growth as a student and maturity as a person, namely setting strict guidelines on her study time and becoming more organized, self-motivated and independent. In relation to help-seeking in her second year, she felt more comfortable emailing her professors and TAs with questions, and sought out feedback on her writing for English literature classes both from peers and from consultants at the writing center. Her observation of an improvement in these behaviors suggests that she lacked confidence in her first year in these areas, even if she had the foundation in place to develop these skills. On several occasions in our interviews in her first year, Frances expressed fear: she was afraid of her upcoming midterms because she worried about low grades, she was afraid to do extra activities like joining a club that would demand an on-going and potentially long-term commitment because they made her tired and would take her focus away from her schoolwork. Those moments of fear reflected an initial lack of self-efficacy.

Yet Frances did demonstrate self-efficacy in the quarter of my observations in a number of ways. In our end-of-quarter interview, she expressed that she had sought to study more between classes during the gaps in her schedule; she was pleased because she felt she had done well in that regard. She also used experiential learning activities to earn extra credit or substitute for other course work, when permitted. She went on the maximum number of field trips in her earth and space science class to earn extra points and she volunteered at the Boys and Girls Club for service-learning credits in lieu of quizzes in her American ethnic studies class. She enjoyed these activities and felt that the extra credit alleviated her worries about grades. The other

participants in the study, Jae, Arielle and Cassandra, also took advantage of extra-credit opportunities for this same reason.

At our forum discussion, Jae described an area of growth for him in terms of taking control of his learning. He developed a sense of independence early on when he met challenges in his first quarter at the university, which he characterized as a sort of "self-control." He confirmed: "Yeah, the first quarter, I definitely grew some self-control because the course is really tough." What Jae meant was that he took responsibility for his learning. After each lecture, he would return to his textbook and "try to figure it out myself, what kind of questions I have." His conclusion was that "the fact that I'm doing it is just kind like self-control."

One of Jae's main challenges was to understand that he needed to use different strategies for different classes even if all his courses during the third quarter of his first year were exam-based, survey courses. The majority of academic tasks for Jae involved figuring out what to prioritize among the materials and memorizing and applying key concepts. Jae noted on the first day I observed him that he was still figuring out how best to study for exams in each of his classes. He generally took advantage of the resources available to him, such as study guides generated by the professor, quiz sections led by teaching assistants and internet resources that he discovered on his own. He often found the language in textbooks to be too dense, so unless the professor specifically stated that the exams would be based on the textbook material, as was the case in his biopsychology class, he preferred to work with information from the class slides and quiz or lab section materials. In his geology class, he talked to the professor about what he should study since he determined that he had been studying the wrong thing: "Reading is just…helps you to understand more about the lecture. It's not the quiz, I mean…the exam is more about the lecture slides, so if I can know what is in those slides, I'm gonna be okay." He

felt a sense of relief once he had a clear sense of the approach he should take to studying for the exams. At the end of the quarter, Jae cited his happiest moment as the one after he had finished his geology exam; he was "really excited" that his "strategy [had] worked." His sense of relief after mastering his exam strategy underscores the importance of self-efficacy in academic success.

The focal students entered college with a fundamental confidence in their ability to tackle academic challenges. This self-efficacy, for the most part rooted in habits developed during high school, laid the foundation for their subsequent experiences. Adapting pre-existing routines to the college environment was thus a common theme, demonstrating the students' flexibility and resilience. In essence, self-efficacy emerged as a dynamic aspect of students' academic experiences as evidenced by their insights and reflections on their responses to challenges and their varying approaches to seeking support. Through their traits of motivation and resilience, the focal students revealed their growth and self-discovery in their pursuit of success in higher education.

6.3 Selecting a Major

One concern that recurred with frequency was the idea that students would soon need to select a major. For my focal students, it did not matter whether they had come into the UW with zero credits or 40 credits, all of them were preoccupied with finding the right major for them. Several of them signed up for classes to gauge their level of interest in those fields, while others had clear ideas about their plans before starting at the university. Both Frances and Jae approached the process of selecting a major as one of ruling out undesirable subjects, while Arielle's was truly a process of intellectual discovery to figure out what subject areas in the humanities interested her most. Cassandra was considering her interests in history and politics and above all, was curious as to whether her work would meet the standards for those majors.

Eve had a high degree of certainty that she would study statistics at the UW, a plan she had designed prior to starting college. Chloe came to the university with clear ideas about going into accounting and finance, and she did not waver in her resolve to pursue entrance to the business school. Emma was an outlier because she came to the university with the intention to study accounting but switched gears when she took her first computer science class and decided she would go into computer science.

Choosing a major was a goal fraught with anxiety for Frances, who talked about selecting her major more than once in our interactions. The first time she brought the topic up was in the first interview. During her first two quarters at the university, Frances had ruled out several different majors based on her limited success in prerequisite courses in economics and the sciences, stating:, “I am still confused. At the beginning, I wanted to do something like science, but then I changed my mind and then [I thought about] business. I have thought about econ or communications, but then last quarter I did Econ 200 and I didn’t do so well so I really wish I could get into comm.” She had heard good things about the communications major and was curious to try out a class. However, she had been unsuccessful in getting into the entry level communications courses, as they were apparently very popular. In her focus group discussion with three other participants, Frances shared her experience of figuring out what major interested her, casting her experience more as one of indecision followed by bad luck rather than lack of academic success: “When I first came here, I wasn’t really sure what major I wanted to be, and then I decided business and I tried econ, but I didn’t really like it, so I’m trying communications but it’s hard to get that class...it’s so hard. I keep on trying, I can’t...I don’t know, I always don’t get it, it’s bad luck, but that’s what I’ve been trying to do.” She clearly found the process stressful and continued that she wanted the “first year to explore, to know what I really want, but

then one of the scary things is that by junior credits, you have to declare a major, and now I don't really have the comm credits, so that's what I'm stressing out about." She cited the process of figuring out her major as one of her personal goals for the year. Frances ultimately did take the prerequisites for the communication major in her second year, declared that major, and also set herself on the path to minoring in English.

In his first year, Jae also took courses in many different areas, from astronomy, geology and computer science to comparative literature and psychology. Among the seven focal students, I felt Jae to be the most adventuresome in his choice of courses spanning a wide variety of arts and sciences courses. With each course, he felt he was one step closer to deciding what his major should be: "I'm exploring every course...to see if I'm interested in those fields." The academic advisors had encouraged him to take things he was sure he could do well in, not just classes that interested him. Yet, many of the courses he ended up taking were in completely new fields, so he was not sure about much, especially what to do about his grades that suffered as a result of his exploration process. He characterized the dilemma as such: "I'm exploring everything, but the thing is the GPA thing. I'm really concerned about my GPA. The courses I take I have never imagined taking before I came here so it's a completely new thing and I had a hard time dealing with those new concepts." The course in which he struggled the most was computer science engineering (CSE), which he immediately ruled out: "I found that CSE is not my thing." Economics was "helpful for your real life" but somehow it did not attract him as a major. Astronomy was "confusing" and turned out not to engage him as much as he thought it would, and while his experience in the geology class interested him for its experiential aspects in the labs and field trips, he had always viewed it as a way to get his required natural science credits out of the way. He had had some success in his comparative literature class on the subject of film

studies in a previous quarter, but felt the writing demands to be overwhelming for him as a first-year student.

Biopsychology was the closest to what he felt he would like to study in the future with some modifications, more along the lines of social psychology. At our first interview, Jae stated his thinking about his potential major: “The first thing…at first I thought I’m interested in personality research, and then I found there’s a field called social psychology maybe, and it’s more about how people interact with each other that interested me.” In three other interviews, he continued to talk about his choice of a major and the upcoming deadline for declaring and applying to his major. At one of our check-ins, he stated that he was “thinking about really seriously regarding psychology as my intended major.” He elaborated on why behavioral psychology captivated his interest: “I don’t know why, but it’s really interesting. Why certain people behave this way, why others don’t behave this way. Maybe there is a…like human nature thing, I’m really interested in those things.” Jae noted that Chinese students do not often study psychology; he had gone to a major fair, an event associated with one of the Chinese student groups, and the majors represented were engineering, computer science, art and history: “Actually yesterday I went to the [Chinese] club [meeting] and they had an advising event, a major thing… [but there was] no psychology at all. Yesterday I kind of thought that psychology is not so popular.” Jae was disappointed that his desired major was not represented at the event, and drew the conclusion that Chinese international students might not typically choose it. When I put Jae in touch with one of my second-year students who was a psychology major and also Chinese, he was excited to connect with that person and get his questions answered: “I really want to ask those psychology major students what they think about psychology, what made them

apply for psychology and what is their application for the future." Thrilled, Jae later informed me that the student had replied to him and had answered his questions.

At the end of his first year, Jae had settled on psychology as his most likely choice of major since he had taken several courses in the field and had not found anything he liked better. He was interested in a course on racism and minority groups offered in psychology for the upcoming quarter. However, when we met in his second year, Jae revealed that through an interesting turn of events, he had changed his intentions for his major. In his first year, he had attended the first day of an international studies course, but had difficulties understanding the professor and had dropped the course, even though the topic on Korean international relations was of interest to him. Fortunately, when he was introduced to the international studies program the second time around, it piqued his interest and something clicked. When I asked how he figured out this would be his major, he told of his friend's influence on him: "Like my friend, he was graduating. He graduated last year. He was in the [international studies] major and we talked before, like what the major was like, and we talked a lot about his major. I was like, 'that's so interesting' and I went to the convocation thing and I was like, 'this is it!'" Jae clearly had had an inspirational moment in which he felt that this program would be a perfect fit for his interests, with its focus on geopolitics overlapping with sociology and economics. The program is interdisciplinary, with politics as its basis. As he stated, most students followed a general course of international studies, but he chose to specialize in Asian studies.

In his reflection in his second year, Jae mentioned that even though he had taken many psychology classes, that major was not as good of a match for him. He explained: "I am interested but I am not good at it probably. I don't know." He contrasted the crux of what he imagined psychologists did with what he would be doing in his selected major: "You have to

come up with an experiment and memorize, I think… Most of it is memorizing, not like you are exploring [ideas].” In the introductory courses in his international studies program, he wrote papers in which he would go in-depth on a topic to really “know something about it.” Even though he was still working on writing efficiently, he thrived on this sort of work. As he put it, “I know how to write [papers for this program].” Furthermore, he opened his mind to politics, a field which at first he thought would be boring, but it was “kind of fun” as they examined “why certain countries [acted] not because of their own problems, but others.” He was referring to diplomacy and hegemony. When asked what stood out to him in his second year, Jae asserted that finding his major was a big deal as it offered him many opportunities to pursue both intellectual and social interests. An academic goal that he had achieved in his second year was to “get a really good grade in his introductory international studies class,” making him happy and relieved that he had found a major in which he could be successful.

Like Jae, Arielle sought to take her time figuring out the best fit for her interests and skills. Arielle indicated at our first interview, “I think I need at least one quarter to continue to explore and if I decide then I need at least one or two quarters, due to prerequisites of the major.”

In her exploration process, Arielle consulted many different people from 3rd year undergraduate students to professors to find out how they approached their jobs and careers. She was interested in their stories, especially ones she felt deviated from the mainstream notion of “a perfect life,” as they helped her conceptualize her choice of major and make sense of the options available to people as they navigated their studies and early careers. She kept their stories in mind as she formulated her own ideas for how she should proceed. Arielle’s solution to the problem of choosing from so many options was to test some of the options and keep an open mind along the way: “The best thing is to just experience it to the full extent so you can tell

whether you like it or not. If you like it, go deeper to determine whether you would like to continue to learn it. If you still have the interest, just go for it." At the time of the mid-quarter and end-of-quarter check in interviews, Arielle was interested in the range of academic interests among the students in her CHID seminar as she felt these different academic backgrounds lent themselves to interdisciplinary conversations in class. In some measure, hearing these different perspectives helped her with the decision-making process of selecting a major. Another factor seemed to be that she was interested in the social sciences because they "focus more on human beings themselves instead of production"; she saw a need in society, especially Chinese society, to focus on people's well-being and mental health.

Later in the quarter, Arielle emphasized: "My priority is just to find my major." She brought up this point in relation to joining a club or organization. While she enjoyed doing volunteer work associated with individual classes in the form of service-learning, she preferred to wait to join a club until she had settled on a major as she wanted to "do something that is related to my major." She acknowledged that the benefits of joining a club would be "a stable connection with the people in the organization" in a long-term way, but at that moment, she preferred to explore many organizations in a short-term way rather than limiting herself to one. She asserted: "I really want to join a club after I have decided my major and declared it."

Arielle characterized the tension inherent in starting out with credits gained in high school when she was undecided on her major: "Maybe I can graduate sooner than my peers, but the negative is that I haven't really made up my mind of my majors." Arielle knew that she would double-major but was uncertain of which combination of disciplines she would pursue at that time. Each of the focal students felt the pressure to select a major or gain access to their desired major, but those who had come to the university with credits and were undecided in their

first year felt additional stress. Frances did not intend to graduate early, but she still felt the time constraint since she would have to declare her major one quarter early.

During Cassandra's second quarter of her first year, she had written a research paper in her history class as a test run to see if she felt confident to go into history as her major. She received a 3.8 on the paper and felt that this was a green light for her to proceed with the history major. In the third quarter of her first year she was testing out political science because she took an international relations class with second- and third-year students, many of whom were in the major. Although she alluded to her hopes once or twice, she did not fully reveal her intentions or her plans to minor or major in political science at the time because she was not 100% confident that she could meet her own standard in that subject. Instead, she imagined she would double major in economics and history, as she found economics concepts to be fairly straightforward and easy to grasp and apply. When Cassandra spoke of her prospective majors, she usually contextualized her choice as a prelude to law school, since she wanted to prepare herself effectively for her graduate schooling. She kept the big picture of her plan to attend law school in mind as she selected classes and her major. In her second year, she declared the political science minor and had decided against economics as a major. History would be her major. In contrast to Arielle, Jae, and Frances, Cassandra was not too preoccupied with selecting a major, perhaps because she saw a clear path into the history major even if she was uncertain about the other discipline she would pair with that subject. As a future law school student, she felt history and political science would make an excellent combination, but she did not fully flesh out this idea until our interview in her second year.

Eve was cognizant of the steps she needed to take to gain entry into the statistics major and this awareness permeated her plans, both short and longer term, during her first year. She

could only apply to the major in September before her second year, and the application period opened only once each year. To further complicate matters, the Statistics Department did not have data available on thresholds for entry since Eve would be in the first cohort applying to the major in a "competitive" format. This meant that students could not simply declare the major after having completed the prerequisites, but that they would submit an application with their grades and a personal statement to compete for a limited number of spots in the program. As Eve put it, "It's a competitive major, so they will look at your GPA."

The stakes were high for Eve: if she did not succeed in getting into the program on the first try, her whole plan would be thrown off and she'd have to graduate a year later than expected, after 5 years instead of 4. However, she also had to monitor her credits so that she did not "take too many credits because [she had] to take 4 years" based on the timeline of the major. With these guidelines in mind, Eve did everything she could to maximize her chances of success in gaining entry to the major on the first try. For instance, she retook one of her high school calculus classes in college to make sure the information was fresh in her mind and to bolster her GPA from the start. Her intention to delay joining clubs and other extracurricular activities until her second year was part of her elaborate plan. She also set a personal standard for her grades in the prerequisite courses to ensure she would be competitive as a candidate for statistics: 3.7 and above in computer science was acceptable, but for her math classes, she maintained a 3.8 and above. She took some general studies and other seminars that did not have grades so that she could explore subjects that interested her without the pressure of having this work count towards her GPA for the statistics major application. Eve also kept an ear out for information about related majors such as applied mathematics. One of her friends attempted to get into the applied mathematics major and did not get accepted. This information stuck with Eve: "You know what?

One of my friends applied to the applied math major and her GPA is 3.7 and she got rejected." The news was still fresh and she understood her friend's disappointment, but did not know what her friend's backup plan might be. Eve's point in sharing it with me was probably to express her concern that someone with a relatively high grade point average did not get accepted into a related STEM major. She did mention that not as many people apply to statistics, but that they will only let in 20 people a year.

Most importantly, Eve monitored the information she could get from the department advisor about the statistics major: "I talked to my major advisor and she told me that she doesn't know which GPA you need to get into the major since it's the first year to become competitive. It's based on the applicants' GPA." Eve indicated that she thought the department focused mostly on the grades in the statistics, math and computer science prerequisite courses, but they also might consider grades in other courses if the applicants had the same grades in the prerequisites. The advisor encouraged Eve to keep taking math classes: "The more classes you take, you have more possibility to get in." Eve took up this advice and continued taking math classes in the 300-level sequence. Since she had so many math classes, she even decided to minor in math: "It's not a prerequisite of the statistics major but I've already taken a lot of math classes so I want to minor in math." Given the close relationship between math knowledge and statistics and Eve's apparent enjoyment of math, it made sense for her to continue with just a few more math classes for the minor in math. By the end of her first year, Eve was confident she could get into the statistics major. She had already finished her prerequisites and felt her GPA was strong enough to gain admission. When we met at the end of her second year, she was "so happy" about getting into her major. She felt a sense of purpose with the statistics major: "my major is already what I want to do in a job."

Perhaps because it was fresh in their minds as my participants had registered just the week before we met for our forum discussions, selecting the right classes and creating an appropriate schedule were key concerns. Students with sophomore standing had priority for registration, which meant they were more likely to get into their desired courses and more likely to be on their way to selecting their major.

Snafus during the registration process not only frustrated my participants but also kept them from moving forward with their plans and goals. As previously mentioned, Frances had difficulties registering for the prerequisite courses for the communications major because of the popularity of the courses in this field. Jae often ended up taking classes that fit his time schedule even though the classes were not his preference. On one occasion, he had to drop a class he had wanted to take because it conflicted with the only quiz section remaining for him to take. Like Frances, he had difficulty getting into communications classes, as well as other introductory-level courses such as anthropology.

Emma also had difficulties each quarter with her registration. The latest struggle involved taking a course in the physics 100-level sequence during the summer. Since registration for the fall happened in the spring, she would need to have completed the prior course in the sequence in spring in order to register for fall. Since she was taking that course during the summer, she would have to wait until she had gained those credits in order to register for the next course in the sequence during fall quarter. This meant she would have to wait until the end of summer term and try her best to get a spot when someone dropped the course. The four focal students at the second forum meeting were all aware of how to get alerts on their phone when an opening for a desired course became available.

During the registration process, the study participants found that creating the ideal workload was the number one priority as they selected their classes. Chloe deemed it important to find balance in the amount of time she spent on school work and her other pursuits, and Arielle agreed that the workload was key. Her concern was that she could not always ascertain whether a given course was exam-based or paper-based and what the reading load would be if the syllabus was not posted online. Arielle felt students would need information about the type of work expected such as papers versus tests to make an informed decision about taking a class. Chloe also mentioned she wanted to know about the textbooks and could usually find additional information in the course posting online about one month before the start of the quarter. Typically they would talk to friends and more advanced students who had taken the class with the same instructor.

Another consideration during registration was getting the required courses out of the way. For Chloe and Cassandra, who were not intending to major in the sciences, figuring out how to meet the science requirements without compromising one's grade point average was a challenge. Chloe did not hesitate to say (twice) that she was "totally not interested in the sciences" needed for the "natural world" course requirement. She asserted that she would not take chemistry and would have to pick something and "just do it." She was leaning towards taking more math classes to fulfill the requirement. Cassandra noted, "Some courses interest me, like econ, because I can do well. And kind of like linguistics, maybe history, things like that. I can do well without spending a lot of time. But earth and space science, well, I have to take some field trips and it will take a whole day, a whole weekend." It wasn't that the science classes scared Cassandra, but she knew they would take more effort than she perhaps wanted to expend. Additionally, Cassandra did not want to waste her time or money: "I don't want to lose my tuition on a random

class." At the end of Cassandra's first year, she had difficulty finding suitable classes to fulfill the university requirements. She implied that it was important to select her courses wisely to avoid unexpected demands on her time. Arielle heard from older students that first-year students should try to complete the requirements early on, but her inclination was to push back against that idea: "Even if we have interesting VLPA [required] classes, sometimes you don't really know what kind of GPA you will get. I think it's, like, safer for you to get into your major first than to take those fun classes." As Arielle was still uncertain of the direction she would take for her major, she took a cautious stance on the required classes. She went on to suggest that it might be worth it to take a class for fun if that class did not "affect how you're getting into your major."

Chloe's main issue with registration was that she had taken so many credits, 17-18 each quarter in her first year, that she had run out of classes to take. She said of her academics in her first year: "I took too many credits my first year. I did not have a major and I had all these credits. When I finished all the requirements, there really were not any classes I could take. It's kind of a problem." Even though Chloe benefited from registering before others because of the credits she had already taken, she ended up having trouble finding classes to take in her second year. While waiting to get into her major, she continued taking classes in the honors program.

From the beginning of her college career, Chloe had set her sights on accounting. Her mother worked as an accountant and that was the direction Chloe intended to take, too. Her priority was to find a major that interested her: "I just want to try to find what I'm interested in the most." To that end, she audited courses and attended lectures in the business school. She audited an international business class, which interested her, and she also intended to complete a double major in accounting and finance. She enjoyed this process of discovering the various

disciplines in business: “I’ll just try to attend more lectures and figure out what else I want to do.” Chloe started to understand the difficulty she would face in getting into the Foster School of Business when she started preparing for the writing exam. At the time of the study, I had known myriad international students wishing to gain access to this prestigious program, but I was only familiar with two success stories of international students gaining admission. Likewise, Chloe knew a lot about how difficult the process was; she had attended events for prospective business majors and talked with advisors as well as students going through the application process. She was aware of the importance of the writing exam. In her mind, high grades were the most important determining factor in admissions, although she found the magic formula for admission somewhat puzzling: “I don’t know if I can get into the business school. You know, it’s too competitive here and they admit only 3 or 4 Chinese students. It can be really hard to get in.”

In her second year, Chloe applied and was not accepted to the business school. She had resigned herself to declaring economics or math as a major when she discovered the option to transfer to UW Bothell, where she could do accounting. At the time, she was taking an honors program class with a professor from Foster; this was the person who suggested she apply to the program at Bothell. Even though she had missed the application deadline by a couple weeks, the business school at the Bothell campus still had space. She rushed to prepare and submit her application: “When I applied to Bothell, it was after the deadline so I had to do the application in a hurry, without much time to revise it.” She was accepted and planned to start this program after completing her second year. In our meeting during her second year, Chloe was ecstatic in recounting her success: “I got a major! That’s something I want to do - accounting! Even though it’s not Foster, it’s still accounting.” She spoke in an animated tone and was clearly excited about this major. Furthermore, she was confident that the major was a good fit for her: “I already

did 2 accounting courses and I did well, so I don't worry about it. My friend [an American who graduated from UW Bothell] has already started an internship at Amazon. He's doing marketing and cost benefit analysis. If you graduate from UWB, you can get a good job." While she saw getting into the Foster School as her biggest challenge, she circumvented this barrier by taking an alternate route to her goal. At the time of this writing, Chloe is gainfully employed in Seattle as an accountant.

Emma never talked about the challenges that international students had in getting into the Foster Business School. Instead, she focused on the joy and excitement she felt in her computer science class her first quarter at the university. She recounted her thinking process as follows: "In the first quarter I took math and CSE because accounting also requires CSE and so I took CSE and economics. It's sort of like I'm heading towards accounting, business school, Foster...but I suddenly realized that I'm pretty into computers." This shift in her choice of major was, as she called it, a "huge change." She had previously taken a one-credit seminar on women in computer science with a professor who was an admissions counselor in computer science engineering. Emma met with this counselor in her third quarter, showed her her scores and profile: "so I basically just put my scores on her desk [and asked] do you think I can get into CSE?" The counselor's response was favorable, so with this admissions "pre-read," Emma felt confident to proceed with her new plan to major in computer science.

Emma described her fascination with computer science in great detail: "You always face new knowledge. They throw it at you and you were like, 'oh my gosh, I couldn't catch it' and finally you grab it. It's challenging and I guess that's the reason why the major is competitive and prestigious. They only want the best of the best. I think it is pretty interesting because if I imagine myself studying math, in the future it's going to be boring. Calculate, no it's not what I

want to do. I guess what I want to do is make something that is real that I can see and that people can use, too." Although she also valued dance, music and social sciences, she felt those majors would not be sustainable in the future. Emma appreciated the practical applications of computer programming: "I have to really learn a technique, a skill that belongs to me, that I can always depend on so that I can feel comfortable and safe here. Basically I have no relatives and no relationship and no support here." "Safety" for Emma included the tools for success in her future work life. Even though she felt that computer science would offer her a promising career, she felt that it was hard to build a network in computer science in her first year, despite the department's stated value on collaboration. Since most people worked on their own, she did not feel as connected to other computer science students as much as in other classes like tango. Perhaps for that reason, she decided to minor in dance, to have the best of both worlds.

Emma also noted that selecting a major was different at this university from other ones in that students needed to apply to the major, which in many cases was a competitive process. At the group forum, she noted: "The major selection thing is sort of different from other colleges, which is a bad thing and a good thing at the same time." While she did not explain her thinking at that moment, I understand from what the other participants were saying that the stress of choosing a major might be a shared experience among students at any university, but taking the prerequisites for the major and getting accepted into the department created a level of anxiety among students at the UW in particular. I surmise that the positive aspect of this experience was that students had to work hard to prove themselves and demonstrate that they would act as a contributing member of the cohort and the specific community built around each major. As a university tour guide, Emma may have known about other officially sanctioned arguments for this institutional approach.

The process of selecting a major was heavily influenced by challenges during the registration process, such as limited class availability and the need to balance workload, which proved frustrating to the students. Chloe faced difficulties due to an excess of credits, while Arielle emphasized the importance of workload balance and information about course expectations. The participants also highlighted the challenge of meeting science requirements for non-science majors.

Selecting a major and in some cases, applying to the major, turned out to be a main preoccupation for my study participants. Frances experienced anxiety about selecting a major, dealing with indecision and difficulty accessing desired classes. Despite her initial plan to explore different majors, the impending deadline for declaring a major added stress. In contrast, Jae embraced an adventurous approach, exploring various courses and settling on psychology before unexpectedly shifting to international studies due to an inspiring encounter that led to further connections in the major. Similarly, Arielle took a thoughtful and exploratory approach, seeking advice and valuing interdisciplinary conversations. Her priority to find a major before committing to clubs reflected a desire for alignment between extracurricular activities and academic pursuits. Cassandra tested her options for majors with her results on a research paper in history. Initially considering a double major, she later declared a political science minor, aligning her choices with her law school goal. Eve strategically planned for the competitive statistics major by setting GPA standards for herself and taking extra math classes. Chloe aimed for the Foster School of Business but happened to discover an alternative and transferred to UW Bothell for accounting, demonstrating flexibility and determination. Emma developed a passion for computer science and thus shifted from accounting, navigating the competitive admission process with assurance from an admissions counselor.

In short, the process of gaining admission to a major was complex, with influencing factors ranging from students' individual interests to the competitive landscape of certain programs in business and STEM fields. Prior to students' declaration of a major, their lack of academic socialization was salient when they took required classes that were in no way related to their intended major or their interests. With more time at the university and a move into the pre-requisites or courses in their major, my focal students demonstrated evidence that they had indeed figured out how to navigate academic tasks in their future disciplines.

6.4 Help Seeking Behaviors

The focal students demonstrated help seeking behaviors by reaching out to their professors and TAs in office hours and by attending review sessions. They benefited from this type of targeted instruction or review in smaller group settings.

6.4.1 Professor's Office Hours

Seeking help from professors and teaching assistants was an academic behavior that all of the participants engaged in to a greater or lesser extent. Whether their purpose was to seek clarification of course concepts or mentorship, Eve, Chloe, Cassandra, Arielle, Frances, Jae, and Emma all had experience interacting with professors and TAs. The nuances of each student's approach and the impact of these interactions on their learning and adaptation to the academic environment highlight the importance of help-seeking behaviors to student success.

Eve's approach to interacting with professors demonstrated a transformation from her high school days. Eve explained that she had been shy in high school, which meant that she rarely talked to her teachers. Here in the US, one of her goals was to interact with professors on a regular basis. In fact, she signed up for a 1-credit course on career planning and preparation

because she noticed that the class only had 10 students, and at the time she registered, she was the only one signed up: "Why I chose this class first is because no one is registered. If I register for this, I will be the only one so I can talk to my professor." The class did fill to capacity, but she still got many opportunities to talk to her instructor. Similarly, each week, Eve visited her math instructor's office hours prior to submitting her homework so she could get her last questions answered. She felt that she might have been taking too much advantage of her very kind instructor: "It's a little bit weird because every week I go to the office hours. It's like, you know, too frequently." Although Eve worried that she visited her instructor too often, her instructor did not seem to mind. Instead, her visits demonstrated her interest and engagement in the course. Eve returned to the topic of office hours when we met in her second year, and felt that she was making "good use of this resource." She felt office hours were valuable since the professor is the one who assigns the homework and knows what is required to complete it. Eve continued her weekly visits to office hours in her second year; even if she did not have questions about a specific homework assignment, she would still visit to ask questions about the class. Frequently, one or two other students would attend office hours so they would have a group meeting.

While Eve had no problem visiting office hours in her math and computer science classes, she felt a little more reticent about asking questions in humanities classes in her first year. In math, for example, she would ask how to solve a problem, but she felt it would be odd to ask the professor to interpret a particular paragraph. The main problem was that she did not even understand the literal meaning of the text, much less its figurative meaning: "What I don't know is what this paragraph talks about. I want to discover the deep meaning. The problem is I don't even know the surface meaning." Eve suspected that she could ask about the deep meaning, the

interpretation of something, but she would feel silly asking what the literal meaning was. Eve's experience reflected the complexities students encountered in their approaches to professor-student interactions depending on their comfort level with the disciplinary material.

Regardless of the discipline, Chloe was comfortable interacting with and seeking help from her professors during office hours or even over lunch. This resource was one that Chloe did not hesitate to use from day one of her college career. She traced her office hour visits back to her first week of Early Fall Start: “I started to do this when I just came here during Early Fall Start. I just went there and talked to the professor because I just felt so confused. I just didn’t have an idea about how to do the assignment or how to study in that class.” She felt that connecting with her professor was immensely helpful, a sort of lifeline to manage a difficult start to her life as an international student with limited exposure to English: “He was really helpful. I mean maybe [talking to the professor] is a kind of question about resources.” Chloe clearly saw her instructor’s guidance as a resource that moved her closer to understanding the demands of a college class, whether in his assistance on reading strategies or on writing assignments. In one of her classes during her second quarter, Chloe’s professor invited the students to bring their lunch to the student center and meet more informally than during traditional office hours. Usually about 4 or 5 students would attend these lunch meetings, and Chloe participated in them every two weeks or so since she saw the value in having a conversation in English with her professor and peers: “It’s actually not just that you can learn more about the course but also ask your professor to learn more about other things, more about you. I really wanted...to try to get something from the professor.” She mentioned another time she visited her honors class professor during office hours to review her midterm since she had had a few difficulties with the questions: “I lost points because I had some problems understanding the questions. To me, the

questions are all the same, you know." Chloe meant that she could not discern what each question was exactly asking, so she could not differentiate her responses. On another occasion, she met with this professor to discuss an upcoming paper she had to write. It turned out that they discussed material that she could use as evidence in her paper, which she would not have known about had she not visited her professor and sought his advice.

Cassandra typically sought out assistance from her instructors when she had a specific concern or question about the content of the course. She felt her visits to office hours to be one of the most helpful resources she had at her disposal, in part because it was easy for her to approach her professors: "Sometimes I had some questions. Then I don't know, I just feel comfortable [talking to them]." She regularly talked to her TA and occasionally her professor in her most challenging class: political science. She felt comfortable asking questions in the small group setting of her quiz section or during office hours. In her economics class, she also explained a situation with a quiz in which she was unclear on why she had lost points on questions she felt were correct. She was able to get the quiz re-graded and although she did not get as many points as she had hoped for, she did get clarification on how best to approach the short answer questions where she had lost points. The TA instructed her to be more direct in her responses for the sake of clarity: "I went to her office hour and she said something like "explanations are right but it can be more direct, so I was like, 'well, it's right!' and she was like, 'you need to put it in a more direct and simple way.'" Cassandra's grade on that quiz went up to a 90%: "it's not super great, but it's good." Considering that she had scored a 29 out of 30 and 30 out of 30 on the previous quizzes, I understood her dissatisfaction. Her willingness to request clarification of concepts or discuss grading intricacies reflected a strategic use of available resources to address academic hurdles.

Cassandra's comfort in seeking help, particularly during office hours, was rooted in a targeted and specific approach. She capitalized on the connections she had made with professors in her second year, when she sought a recommendation from a professor for a scholarship in the history department. She clearly had a good relationship with this person as, at one of the office hour visits, the professor proceeded to recruit her for a 6-week study abroad course in Vietnam. They had talked on a Tuesday and the deadline for submission of the application was that Friday. Cassandra wanted to take advantage of this opportunity so she had to move quickly, which she did.

Similar to the other focal students, Arielle sought help on many occasions in her classes that quarter. Whether it was to clarify her understanding of a given biological mechanism in the development of the brain in her psychology class or to understand the background and context for sexuality in the paintings in her art history class, Arielle did not hesitate to contact her instructors and fill in the gaps in her knowledge: “I found out that context really matters so I have to ask about it so I can understand it.” In her art history class, she found it helpful to understand the cultural and historical context so that she could make sense of the bigger picture, even if students were only tested on the significance of a single painting. When Arielle discovered that some of the peers in her quiz section were familiar with other time periods in art history, she paid attention to the comments they made in class so she, too, could learn relevant background information. She also reached out to her TA to get affirmation of her ideas for an essay required in the course, in terms of both the content and the format of the essay. Arielle understood the purpose of the assignment from what the professor had mentioned in the lecture, but she gained confidence from her specific discussion with her TA. Arielle chose to discuss her ideas without showing her TA her draft as she preferred to “keep this as a surprise to my TA.”

On these occasions, Arielle actively engaged with instructors and demonstrated a willingness to go beyond mere clarification in her search for a thorough grasp of the subjects.

Frances cited her relationship with teachers as a defining feature of her high school experience, one that she found integral to her academic success. In her International Baccalaureate program, she had had the same teachers for two years so they helped guide her and keep her on track. She missed this same level of engagement in her college academic life, even if she had an active social life outside of class. Near the end of the quarter, Frances talked at length about the importance of her engagement with instructors: “I feel like I need people to motivate me, I guess. Maybe the relationship between the TA and us or the teacher. I feel like I do better with a small class where it’s more like one-on-one rather than a really big class. I went to a small, really small high school...the relationship is really close. I had my IB teacher for two years, so the relationship is also important, that’s what I learned I guess.”

This is not to say that Frances avoided interacting with her professors. While she initially felt a lack of such engagement in college, she recognized the value of connecting with professors and TAs. She recounted that her TA had invited students to visit office hours with their concerns. She had to pick up a midterm and planned to check in more generally: “I’ll pick that up and I’ll ask how I am in my grades.” In general, she felt she should have a good reason to go, not just a grade inquiry, for example: “I feel like I would go there more but I don’t have any questions, so I don’t know.” Frances seemed a bit unclear on how to forge the connections she wished for with her instructors. In her second year, Frances indicated that she felt she could “approach professors and TAs better and ask for help if I need help...I feel more comfortable emailing them now and just like asking them questions...about an assignment or extra credit. I’m more confident and more comfortable asking them.” Over time, Frances developed confidence in approaching

instructors, indicating a positive shift towards more comfortable interactions that more closely resembled the interactions with teachers that she had valued in her previous schooling.

Jae took many opportunities to interact with his professors through email and face-to-face meetings. One such occasion was on a field trip to see the geology of the region. Jae knew a bit about geology in China from a high school class, but he had had limited experience identifying rocks and rock formations. He summed up the site visit: “The professor explained to us how do you differentiate those rocks. I don't see, I actually, I don't see the difference because all of the rocks look the same to me.” Jae went on to clarify that the shapes were different and sometimes he could see minerals “inside of the rock” formed by pressure. He connected this process with what he had learned in high school chemistry class. While riding in the van to the site visit, however, Jae was unsure of how to connect with his professor, who was driving: “At first, it was kind of weird. I don’t know what to say to him because he was my professor. I don’t know.” Jae settled on listening to the professor talk with a “returning student,” one who was similar in age to the professor, until the professor asked Jae a question about his major. Jae admitted that he was taking the class for natural science credits and proceeded to ask a question about how to measure the area affected by volcanic eruptions, which prompted an elaborate response, much of which Jae did not fully capture. The professor used a lot of “professional terminology which I didn’t understand” but Jae tried to follow along: “I tried my best to keep the conversation going.” He felt the experience of having a conversation outside of class with his professor to be a positive one.

In our forum discussion, Jae characterized a reply he received from a professor as one of his successes of the year: “a happy moment.” He had written to several professors inquiring about different classes and asking for advice: “I tried to email 6 professors and 5 of them ignored

me and one of them replied." The reply he received was from a professor in social psychology, the branch of psychology that interested him the most at the time.

Jae's interaction with professors really took shape in his second year when he was interested in learning more about the international studies major. One of his most rewarding experiences was when he "met people, met the one who introduced me to [international studies] class. He introduced me to another professor, and that professor introduced me to another colleague, [talking about] graduate school and they helped me a lot." Jae's friend had encouraged him to talk to the first professor since he was interested in Korea and China, and Jae ended up talking to the professor two or three times during office hours, seeking answers to his questions about the major. Jae had a good impression of their interactions and said the following of the professors he met outside of class: "They are friendly; they want to talk to you. When I wanted to go there, I thought, 'what if they are not friendly'." However, Jae's fears were allayed because he felt welcomed by these professors in the program he ultimately chose as his major. Jae also discovered a mentorship program in which students meet graduates of the program who coach current students about "what to prepare for and what kind of job" students can expect to find. He was interested in networking with professors, graduates from his program, and the working world.

If Emma had questions about her classes, she first tried to figure things out on her own or search for answers through the Google search engine, but she knew she could tap into the campus resources available to her. She cited the TA or grader as the first line of assistance, and then she was also aware of the physics study center: "For this course I would probably go to my TA or grader because there are a lot of people in both of these classes to help us get a better grade. And I think there is a physics study center in the building where we have class." She was

also thrilled about the possibility of going to other disciplines' study centers, like the one for computer science. If the study center had daytime hours, Emma was willing to give it a try since she preferred to study during the early morning or during the day. She emphasized that the physics tutoring center was "really convenient and it opens for a really long time, like 10-7 in the afternoon, so it's really enough time. This is pretty awesome." Since her daily routine started at 5am, she had no intention of using a tutoring center that only had nighttime hours. In Emma's mind, study centers on campus that opened primarily at night might have served most other students: "It could be an advantage because a lot of people study at night, but I don't."

In general, Emma sought out her professors if she had questions about the course content, but she also felt comfortable in providing feedback to them about how well the course was working for her. In contrast to many international students who choose not to give feedback to their professors, Emma supported the idea that she could help the professor tailor the class to students' expectations. If the demonstration did not seem realistic, had a flaw of some sort, or did not challenge students sufficiently, Emma was willing to submit her feedback to the professor. Always one to embrace a challenge, Emma noticed that the homework problems in her physics class were more difficult on the "smart physics" software than those they discussed in the lecture session: "The homework is pretty good, actually, because there are a lot of really tough questions...much tougher than what we would be taught in the lecture." She was interested in working through more challenging problems in the lecture so she provided feedback on a form in the physics software that her professor would read: "I thought it's a really easy concept and I hope the lecture can evolve into a little bit harder problems, maybe. I think the monkey problem is pretty good." She further explained that the "monkey problem" involved a projectile,

acceleration and gravity and used a counter-intuitive concept. Her feeling was that it would take some hard thinking to arrive at the answer.

On the whole, my focal students actively engaged with professors, both through direct interactions, such as field trips and office hours, and through online communication. They felt these interactions helped forge connections that became instrumental in shaping their academic and career paths, especially in the cases of Chloe and Jae. The students' frequent and successful interactions signaled their proactive approach to seeking guidance as a main goal, and in some cases, networking as a secondary effect. Whether seeking clarification on coursework, navigating other academic challenges, or discussing career goals, the study participants consistently found professors to be invaluable resources. Chloe's utilization of office hours as a lifeline during Early Fall Start exemplifies how these interactions provided crucial support for international students grappling with academic expectations. The diverse ways in which students sought help, from Arielle's inquiries about context in art history to Jae's exploration of majors through mentorship, highlighted the advantages of building meaningful connections with professors, ultimately contributing to academic success, personal growth, and likely, a sense of belonging within the university community.

6.4.2 Review Sessions

Most of my focal students took advantage of review sessions as a way to study for their exams. These sessions were often led by professors and/or teaching assistants, or they were offered at the Center for Learning and Undergraduate Enrichment (CLUE), one of the campus study centers. Frances attended as many review sessions as she could in her classes that held them. On one occasion, she reflected on the value of the session as providing not only a review of the material, but also offering a smaller classroom space in which to learn: “I really needed

that review." Jae also attended all of the review sessions available in his classes and corroborated the value of meeting in a smaller group to discuss the material. On one occasion, Jae's TA did not know all the answers to students' questions, but other students were able to chime in and they all figured it out together. Cassandra also recognized the value of attending the review sessions as the professor was "super-nice." Her impression of her professor was linked in part to the "many opportunities to get bonus points" that he offered, from review sessions to field trips.

At the study center for statistics Chloe met up with a study partner and some of the Chinese TAs each week. She explained how she used this resource in the hours prior to the statistics class homework deadline or the day before an in-class quiz: "We just meet at the study center every Wednesday because I know some TAs who are Chinese. Sometimes it's hard for them, they're saying." She clarified that the course content had changed from the previous quarter when they had served as TAs, and the current course content was "totally different from the textbook." Chloe noticed that the lecture notes were different from the textbook and was able to confirm that with the Chinese TAs who helped her. The Chinese TAs were generous enough to give out their cell phone numbers so she could call them at any time to ask questions: "Sometimes if I have a question and I really need to know the answer, I can call them." At the study center the TAs explained the concepts in both English and Chinese depending on the context. Since they were learning about the concepts in English, it was common that Chloe spoke English with the Chinese TAs to sort out these ideas.

The students' consistent use of review sessions in preparing for exams reflected their recognition of the valuable support these sessions provided. Their experiences also highlighted the benefits of collaboration and interactive learning in smaller group settings.

6.5 Effects of Friend Networks

Friend networks and peer interactions among students proved to be valuable resources for Eve, Chloe, Cassandra, Arielle, Frances, and Jae in navigating their academic socialization at the university. These students actively engaged with their social circles to exchange information on coursework, professors, and major-related insights. Emma had friends from her activities but did not explicitly comment on their role in her academics.

Friend networks were important sources of information and connection for Eve as she and her friends would talk about the homework and the professors in their courses, as well as relevant information about getting into one's major: "we share how to get into your major and talk about prerequisites and required courses." If her friends had information about how easy a course was that would satisfy a graduation requirement, they would share it with each other. She noted that many of her friends were interested in computer science and were mostly men. In her second year, she gained access to information about jobs and internships through her statistics club. Older members of the statistics community talked to her about their experiences: "one of them has a job and two of them got into grad school, one at Berkeley and the other at UW." Through the network in her major, Eve learned more about how to achieve her goals.

Chloe also discovered numerous opportunities at the university through her peer contacts and networks. Early in her first year, she had initially found out about the honors program from an American student in one of her classes who was enrolled in the program and encouraged her to apply. Similarly, she met various peers who had gained admission to the Foster School and helped her understand what she should do to be considered for admission. In her second year, Chloe felt more secure in her decision to accept the offer of admission to the business school on the Bothell campus when an American friend who had gone through the program told of the job prospects for graduates.

Cassandra's close friends were not involved in her academics, but she understood the value of networking to her academic success. In this regard, she had several casual acquaintances who were political science majors who could give her information about the higher level classes in the major. On occasion, Cassandra was able to take some of her required classes with friends, but in general her intended major was different from that of the friends in her social circle: “This quarter, me and my friends have different classes because we are going into different majors. One is going into computer science, another one’s going into nursing, the other’s in education. I’m going into history and political science.” Even if she and her friends focused on different disciplines, her friends did lead Cassandra to extracurricular opportunities. One of Cassandra's friends recommended that she apply to UW leaders, a campus organization stressing leadership and mentorship. This was sort of a last minute application since she found out about it very close to the due date. Cassandra even mentioned that when she looked back at her submission, she hadn't even completed one of the essays. What she had written must have been compelling enough, though, because they accepted her. As she put it, awkwardly enough, the friend who had mentioned it was not accepted into the organization.

While Cassandra actively sought opportunities through a friend's advice, Arielle's study routine included collaborative efforts with her boyfriend. Although she preferred to study alone to limit the distractions, she did study with her boyfriend, also a Chinese international student. Since they were taking some of the same classes, they could review the course content together. They typically studied at the library until late at night, so she felt safer that she could walk back to her dorm with him. During the quarter of this study, Arielle was taking lecture classes and only one quiz section, so she didn’t have much chance to make friends in those classes. This

meant that she relied on her boyfriend to stand in for the friend network that the other students had.

Frances had many friends, but did not comment extensively on their role in her academic success. However, Frances often had an Indonesian friend accompany her to off-campus activities such as service-learning. They held each other accountable and she enjoyed having a friend who engaged in the same activities. She did not mention whether they discussed their journal entries or other assignments related to service-learning.

Jae, on the other hand, wanted to build connections through friend networks, but struggled to establish meaningful relationships in his classes. He found it “hard to know people” he had met in class, mostly because he would make small talk and connect with someone, only to find out that they would run out of things to say. During the forum discussion Jae offered an example of meeting a friend in class: “Actually I know a friend from economics class, and the first few days we had some topics to talk about, and after one week – nothing, just say ‘hi-hi’ and then do your work, that’s it.” When he tried to follow up and ask some questions about the course content, he discovered that she had never studied economics before, so he felt it to be a dead end: “The thing is she never studied economics. [laugh] I tried to ask some questions, she said ‘no, I don’t know’ – ‘okay.’ That’s it. That’s the end of the conversation.” Even though he attempted to add her on Facebook, nothing really came of the interaction. While Jae did not address whether this potential friend was a local or international student, from the context, I could guess that the student was local. Jae later mentioned that English 108 proved to be a good place to meet friends “because you have to talk to each other, like really…” The other key factor in Jae’s English 108 experience was that all the students in his class were international students, so the time spent together in an intensive class during Early Fall Start combined with their shared

status as international students may have facilitated the friendships that Jae fostered and continued to hold.

Even if he had difficulties creating new connections with students in his classes, Jae had a friend invite him to take two classes with her, so they studied together. He noted a great difference between his experience in having a friend in class in biopsychology and geology versus not knowing anyone in astronomy. The two of them could pool their knowledge and resources in sharing notes and locating additional resources, such as practice exams.

Eve, Chloe, Cassandra, Arielle, Frances, and Jae actively utilized their friend groups to exchange valuable information on coursework, professors, major-related insights, and other opportunities. Eve, Chloe, and Frances leveraged their networks to navigate decisions related to their prospective majors and access information about jobs and internships. While Cassandra's academic focus differed from her friends, she successfully tapped into casual acquaintances for information about higher-level classes and extracurricular opportunities. Arielle relied on her boyfriend for studying. Jae also expressed the positive impact that collaborative learning offered in the classes he shared with a friend. In contrast to the other six focal students, Emma was noticeably silent on the role of her friends and friend networks on her academic socialization.

6.6 Conclusions on Other Influencing Factors

The focal students exhibited varying approaches to their academic pathways; most carried heavy course loads, and several sought out continuous learning opportunities and international experiences. Their long-term plans ranged from strategic credit management and timely graduation to aspirations for double majors, internships, and careers abroad. Eve, Chloe, and Arielle exhibited a commitment to balancing academic and personal goals to ensure their timely graduation and continuous learning. Demonstrating global engagement, Chloe, Arielle,

Jae and Cassandra shared an interest in gaining international experience, whether through potential double majors or active participation in summer classes and study abroad opportunities. Frances talked about wanting more time to explore possible majors. The challenges and decisions associated with selecting courses and declaring a major were central to all of their academic experiences. All students, regardless of the number of credits they entered with, shared a concern about selecting the right major. Frances and Jae approached this process by ruling out undesirable subjects, while Arielle and Cassandra explored disciplines within the humanities to discover their intellectual interests.

Seeking help from professors and teaching assistants also emerged as a common academic behavior as the participants engaged in interactions for guidance, clarification, and mentorship. The nuances in their approaches highlighted the impact of such interactions on their learning outcomes. Building connections with academic mentors and gaining a wealth of knowledge from friends proved to be crucial in their academic trajectories. Like the other factors influencing the focal students' academic socialization, friend networks offered resources for excelling in their coursework and learning of other campus opportunities. Taken as a whole, these factors highlighted the diverse yet interconnected experiences of the students as they navigated their academic paths, showcasing resilience in the students' pursuit of excellence in the university setting.

CHAPTER 7: IDENTITY

7.1 Integration into the Campus Community

The study participants' relationship with the university community through social relationships both shaped their view of themselves and was influenced by their personalities.

7.1.1 Role of Social Life in Identity Formation

In our forum discussions, the participants chose to talk about the value they placed on their social lives. I observed that the relative importance of students' social lives fell on a continuum, demonstrating varying levels of focus on social relationships and diverse views on how to create and maintain them. While four of my focal students were satisfied with their social lives, three of them felt they wanted more friends and sought to integrate more fully into their friend groups. On the extremes, Eve was not expressly focused on having a social life, while Jae desired more friends. Cassandra was hyperfocused on social relationships and had standards for what constituted having a social life. Emma, Arielle, Chloe, and Frances were satisfied with their social lives, although perhaps for different reasons. Despite her active extracurricular life, Emma drew energy from having time alone and found that too much stimulation wore her out. Arielle wanted to meet people naturally through shared interests and experiences. She was not someone to "put a lot of effort into making friends," and had some questions about what constituted a "true friendship." In contrast to Cassandra's strong interest in interacting with Americans, Arielle stated that her criteria for making friends was more attuned to their character: "It depends on what kind of person they are, not their nationality." Chloe indicated that having a social life was "hard to manage" and she preferred not to spend too much time on social activities since she was "not really good at that." She determined that a few friends went a long way as she just needed

someone to have lunch with and a roommate to talk to. Frances was relaxed about her social life, and would have welcomed more friends if she had had opportunities to meet them.

During our first interview, Eve asked me how Americans made friends. From her past experience in high school in China, students made friends within their cohort since they all took the same classes and spent lots of time together. She was uncertain about how that would work here, at the college level. While she had met people in her classes, she considered these relationships to be more for studying, which she felt was different from having real friends: "If you know somebody [from your classes], the relationship is only for studying. I don't know how to make live friends." By "live friends" Eve meant people who share an interest in activities or food or other aspects of life. She wanted to have friends to have lunch or dinner with, and she thought she might like to join a badminton club to meet friends because she felt "it's easier [to make friends this way] than in class." Yet, she recognized the importance of having friends in her classes so that they could "discuss something" related to the course material. However, she encountered difficulties in making friends. The main issue Eve identified was that when she talked with people who were from the U.S, she felt it was hard to connect with people from different backgrounds: "it's hard to find topics that you both know." From a lack of shared knowledge or experiences, just getting a conversation started proved to be a barrier for Eve. She decided not to worry too much about friends in her first year.

In contrast, Jae sought out more interaction with local students, and realized he would have more success in that regard if he participated in extracurricular activities. Jae indicated in our initial meeting that he wanted to be "more involved in college life" and intended to join a club like the Korean Students Association to "have some fun hanging out together" and also do some volunteer work. However, at our follow-up meetings, Jae revealed that he had met with

difficulties in connecting with Americans to the extent that he felt "maybe American friends are not for me." As much as he saw himself as a social person, he struggled to find the American friends he was seeking.

In her first year, Chloe explained that the extent of her social life was enjoying meals with friends, often one on one, and hanging out with her roommate. At the time, she felt this was enough. She spent most of her time with Chinese friends and met new friends through her friend network. When she reflected on the differences in her social life from her first year to her second, she noted the following:

> I still keep in touch with Chinese friends. Before this year, I only made friends on campus. I [would] know a girl, and then I [would] meet her friends. I'm getting more friends off campus [this year]. It's so random. I make friends at coffee shops with people who work at Amazon or Microsoft. With these people, I don't have common friends. It's an interesting experience as long as you can make sure it's safe – like only meet in public and be sure they are good people. And let a friend know where I'm going.

Chloe enjoyed meeting people who were no longer students and had entered the working world, yet realized that since they were outside her friend network, she would need to vet them herself.

From outward appearances, Emma seemed to be well-liked and well-integrated in her social life on campus. She had drawn the conclusion that she should hang out with people she liked, regardless of where they were from. Since she felt strongly about using English all the time, she did not have many Chinese friends, or at least not those who mostly spoke Chinese with other Chinese students. In some ways, Emma differentiated herself from both Chinese international students and American students alike. In her second year, she reflected that she had felt a lack of connection to those around her: "At first, especially the first quarter, which seems

very distant to me, I was kind of lost. I was calling my mom from the study room in the library. I felt lost. I was in a triple and I got up really early, so I always went to the library. The library was always empty at 5am since people stayed until 2am." Emma kept different hours from her peers, which may have contributed to her feelings of lack of belonging. She indicated that she thought studying abroad in the US would solve some of the feelings of being different that she had had in China: "I tried really hard to put myself into this place. I sort of felt out of place in China as well. That's why I wanted it so bad. Certain expectations made it so much harder." If Emma expected to be the center of attention or to feel a deeper connection to those around her, she may not have felt it in her first year. She did, however, become much closer to her cohort of computer science students as well as those in her dance classes and tango club.

Emma's most rewarding moment was closely linked to her identity as a dancer. She declared a dance minor in her second year, and something about being part of a group of dancers empowered her: "It's kind of funny - learning how to dance is rewarding. It's something I always wanted to do. I always danced in my bathroom. I still dance in my bedroom. Now I can dance publicly. I couldn't hide the truth that I have become a dancer. Almost every friend here knows it. There are so many dancers here, so it is very easy to call myself a dancer here." Being in the US for college gave Emma a newfound sense of freedom so that she could discover this part of her identity. As part of a cohort of dancers, Emma organized a tango ball, which turned out to be a great success: "In the past, I just had to show up. This year the standards were higher; we wanted the decorations to be better. Things were better." She felt especially proud since she was able to overcome difficulties in collaborating with a group of people she called her friends: "There were good moments and not so good moments. We are good friends but we sometimes struggle to work together." One thing I noted with Emma and her friends is that they were

always doing something, building something or achieving something, not just hanging out. In general, Emma strived to have many types of friends: “I want to make more connections with people, and have a more diverse circle. I’m always happy to have more friends. Every time I have a new friend, I just like it. Dancing friends are very different from other friends.” Having many types of friends was important to Emma, and these various friendships were reflective of her myriad interests.

Not unlike Emma, who partook in many extracurricular activities, Cassandra strived to make the most of her time in the US. Giving special attention to her social life and extracurricular activities would provide her a richer total experience in the US, she firmly believed. Most salient of the aspects of Cassandra’s identity was her ambition to balance academics with her other interests. Prior to starting at the university, she had been given advice not just to focus on getting high grades but instead to capitalize on the balance between studying and experiencing life in the US. Her goal included efforts to make American friends. Once she made them, she worked “hard on maintaining [these] relationships.” In her mind, bridging cultural gaps demanded a fair amount of effort: “sometimes you want to maintain a relationship; it’s not like it’s a door — you step in and you’re in all the time. It’s a wall you have to push all the time and when you stop pushing, they push it back.” While I don’t think Cassandra meant to imply that her friends were trying to push her away, she did recognize the substantial effort needed to keep the door open to those friendships.

Furthermore, in Cassandra’s mind, thoroughly immersing herself in American culture did not come without complications. She often felt she was the only one in her position and talked at length about how she felt about her efforts to integrate into the host community: “I don’t think I’m the same as others. In many cases, I’m just a minority, like for example, I wanted to get

more information about American culture. I want to get involved in a culture no matter how long it is — 4 years, 7 years when I graduate from graduate school. Most of my friends are Americans." Cassandra felt that she was an "exception" because she had not encountered other international students "who will do the same." She explained one challenge: "Actually, it's pretty hard [to integrate into American culture]. At first you have to be pretty bold. You have to talk to them with your English which, say your English is not that good, well not for me, but sometimes you make mistakes and you have to admit it. Even if you become friends with them, you still have to push hard. If you don't push hard...you become surrounded by Chinese again." Notably, Cassandra downplayed the issue of making herself understood in English, but still highlighted the work it took to make and keep friends, including taking risks and being humble about potential misunderstandings.

Cassandra worked hard to make friends and maintain those relationships throughout the year. Doing a 30-minute abdominal workout (which she called "AbLab") several times a week with her friends helped her maintain a connection with them in the face of their busy schedules. While they had "basically spent every single day together" during their first two quarters at the university, schedule conflicts kept them from meeting more often during their third quarter: "We all have different directions [for our majors] and they don't live on campus so we kind of squeeze in time to be social. When I have class, [a friend] has a big break and when she has class, I'm free. They have to go home and have to take the bus, but I don't want them to go home late. We squeeze in 30 minutes, 15 minutes, so it's kind of frustrating." Her friends lived at home and worked on weekends off-campus, so this difference in their living situations further complicated their scheduling of time together. I wondered if part of Cassandra's obsession with getting a job was so that she would be on par with her American friends who also worked while

studying. Since they lived at home, she would often meet them in the commuter lounge. In fact, she invited me there to one of our meetings because she had staked out that spot as a place where she was comfortable. She was happy to see friends there and point them out to me when we met.

During the forum discussion with Chloe and Arielle, Cassandra had discovered a point of contention with Arielle over her efforts to make American friends. She felt Arielle was accusing her of focusing on their Americanness as the reason behind making friends with them, rather than a mutual interest or shared activity. Cassandra returned to this point at our end-of-quarter meeting and again at our meeting during her second year. The issue clearly stuck with Cassandra if she needed to hash it out and clarify her point to me twice. Cassandra's point was that she had to "put in effort to maintain a relationship" especially with Americans because she did not have a shared cultural background with these friends. She stated emphatically: "I didn't put my friends on my American list or my Chinese list. I have friends on both sides." Her choice of words here is interesting as "both sides" does suggest a division of sorts in her mind. She went on to explain why she did not have to put in the same effort to keep Chinese friends: "And honestly, in the US, Chinese kind of have a community, like we are Chinese, we share the same things and friendships come relatively naturally. So you don't have to hang out every single day to be friends. Maybe once a week, we still feel pretty close." She continued to offer a reason for this closeness: "We share the same background and culture. Sometimes we say things, like I don't have to say the whole sentence, and they kind of understand." She contrasted this situation where friends can finish their sentences for each other with her interaction with her American friends: "So with Americans, sometimes you have different cultures, you have different things. Like so many things, like the bonfire, like party culture, I didn't have that. So that's why I have to put effort into that. What's wrong with that?" She later admitted she was offended by Arielle's

comments because she had made such an effort to integrate into the host culture: "it's kind of an accomplishment of how much I got involved in this culture, like how much I know more and like more about this culture. So I can say I was kind of offended by the comment." She felt that Chinese students who felt they did not want to have American friends had set up a psychological barrier as a coping mechanism for something they could not attain: "when you cannot have it, you will be like, 'I don't want it.'"

From my participants' stories, I learned that their social lives played a role in identity formation, highlighting the complexity and significance of social relationships in shaping one's sense of self. Their experiences revealed the importance of maintaining friendships through efforts such as workouts or collaborative projects for their positive impact on students' overall well-being. While shared interests and activities helped my focal students form meaningful connections, the process of making friends was not always straightforward, as Eve and Jae discovered. Engaging in activities that aligned with the students' personal interests contributed to a sense of belonging at the university and in US culture. Both Emma and Cassandra, and to a lesser extent Chloe, took a holistic approach to personal development that included both academic and social aspects. In short, the importance placed on social life among the participants ranged from those satisfied with their social lives to those actively seeking more friends or realizing that making friends was more difficult than they thought. This diversity suggests that the significance of social relationships in identity formation varies among individuals and may be influenced by cultural similarities and gaps.

7.1.1.1 Social Skills

The majority of the study participants felt language and cultural differences initially to be a barrier or at least a hurdle to surmount in making friends. Only Frances, the participant who

had attended an international school in her home country, Indonesia, found it easy to make friends with English-dominant speakers. Regardless of their initial comfort or discomfort in adapting to higher education in the US, the focal students' social skills served them in meeting their goals for their social lives. They identified that they should develop those skills through on- and off-campus activities; the more active they were in extracurricular activities, the more they developed their social skills.

Frances had well-developed social skills, as evidenced by her large network of friends and her ability to get along with her roommates. One of the reasons her family had sent her to international school was so that she would know how to get along in the English-speaking world. Indeed, she was comfortable with her level of English proficiency, and was even occasionally mistaken for an American. Frances had made numerous American friends, yet she still enjoyed spending time with other students from Indonesia. Frances indicated that her Indonesian friends here at UW were mostly from Jakarta, the capital, and had attended Indonesian schools rather than international schools. This meant that they shared some aspects of their home culture, but had vastly different schooling experiences. Frances said the following about her interactions with Indonesian friends: "It's fun because, I don't know, I feel like it's different from my friends in high school, the way that we hang out as well." Frances never talked about religious differences among her Indonesian friends, although I surmise that her Indonesian friends in the US were Muslim, a possible contributing factor to the different feeling from her friends in high school, who were not.

The reason she did provide for why it felt like a different world from her experiences with friends in high school was that they were free to do what they wanted, away from the watchful eyes of their families. Interestingly enough, she implied that being in the presence of

her family somehow restricted her freedom, but at the same time, she still wanted to feel a part of a family, so she recreated this feeling with her Indonesian friends at the UW. She appreciated that they could go on trips as a group of friends during the holidays since they did not have their families there: “We could like go more on trips because we don’t have anyone except us.” They could “go somewhere” and do “more activities” together.

In my interview with Frances in her second year, I got a renewed sense of her strong connection to her Indonesian friends. She described it as being weird when they would go off to activities with the Indonesian club, which Frances had not joined. I never learned why Frances chose not to join the Indonesian club as the reason was something she did not feel comfortable verbalizing. In those moments when her Indonesian friends did club activities, Frances would hang out with her other friends.

Like Frances, Cassandra had solid connections with her friends. She was someone with a strong personality who did not shy away from a challenge, especially if that challenge meant getting involved in American culture. Cassandra felt strongly that “when people come from Hong Kong or China, it’s easier” to make friends with them, but she was not very interested in cultivating friendships with people from a similar background. On the contrary, Cassandra sought out American friends and worked hard to connect with them across cultural lines: “I would say the people who I feel comfortable socializing with, which are not international students apparently, but they are more like just American people.” Most of Cassandra’s friends were Washington State residents who lived with their families in the area. However, Cassandra sometimes felt like an outsider among her friends: “When it feels not right, it’s like I am always the only international student in the group.” The downside of prioritizing activities with local students is that she occasionally felt isolated.

For the most part, she was able to keep up her friendships from her first-year friend group into her second year, but she lost a few friends from attrition: “Some friends go longer with you. They are just like passengers in a train, some stay longer and that’s fate... I just tend to think it’s fate and I can’t control it. I try my best but it’s not my call: when they have to get off, they have to get off.” Cassandra used an analogy to riding a train to refer to the longevity of her friendships — some were in it for the long haul and others dropped off when their busy lives took over. She still maintained some key friendships, though. When her friends threw a surprise party for Cassandra’s 21st birthday at the end of her second year, she was thrilled and couldn’t wait to show me the photos of the event. We came to the conclusion that it was a defining moment of her time in the US.

At the same time, through her campus job at the library in her second year, Cassandra confirmed her beliefs that at heart, she was not a “people person.” The irony was not lost on me that she spent so much of her life cultivating friends yet she identified that connecting with people did not come naturally to her. She summed up her personal challenge in dealing with people who did not wish to pay their library fines: “Customer service is not my strong suit because I don't think I can deal with people all the time. I think people sometimes are rude and dumb. They really are and I am just not so patient with that, like I have a more strong personality compared to many others so I can get like pretty, not aggressive, but pretty offensive when people say something and when they challenge me by saying something, when they get rude, I don't think that I am patient enough to respond to that.”

Just as Cassandra, Jae, Emma and Frances actively sought to interact with and be friends with people from cultural backgrounds different from their own, Arielle found her tennis class to be an excellent place to meet new friends, including graduate students and international students

from Europe. She felt she did not have to be “really skilful” at the sport to enjoy hanging out with friends and “relax the brain.” Arielle also noticed an evolution in her identity related to her social circles. Especially after a summer program in the Netherlands, Arielle expressed her takeaway with enthusiasm: “I’m turning more and more international!” She felt comfortable with this identity as it reflected her continued exposure to more cultures on her study abroad as an international student studying in yet another country.

When we met during her second year, Chloe indicated that her personal life was “a mess” but that her academics were still strong even if she was “less focused” in her second year than in her first: “The speed of my life slowed down. Personally, I’m a mess. Academics are fine.” Chloe felt she had achieved a personal goal of being “more comfortable communicating with others.” She described the contrast between her comfort levels in interacting with people from different cultures and her own culture: “Before, I may go out with Chinese. I was not that comfortable going out with Americans, but now I’m getting more and more comfortable with that.” She then mentioned she had gone hiking the previous weekend, and enjoyed social activities or doing new things with friends: “I will go out with people. You can be more confident being with them. I also go out with my old roommate – we have fun and get some ice cream.” As someone who had already turned 21, Chloe presented as mature, sophisticated, and personable so it’s no surprise that she had plenty of personal engagements.

7.1.1.2 Interactions with Roommates

In Chloe and Frances’s case, American roommates served as a pathway to social relationships with local students. Chloe had a laid back relationship with her roommate, while Frances and her roommates used a contract to guide their conduct, adhering to it faithfully. However, several other students described tense encounters with their local roommates.

During her first quarter, Chloe established a friendship with her roommate, a native Seattleite, after they bonded over personal issues. In the forum discussion, though, Chloe mentioned feeling uncomfortable in the beginning. Prior to their bonding moment, she had trouble connecting with her roommate and wondered what in the world she was talking about. Chloe did not hesitate to ask her about new vocabulary words and cultural concepts that she encountered for the first time. They also joked around about cultural stereotypes, such as Chinese students excelling in math. When Chloe expressed concern over having to take the math placement test, her roommate just said: "'You don't need to worry about this – you are Chinese!' And yeah, I mean I passed. I just made one mistake and got 2 credits waived." Chloe admitted that she had a preconceived notion that academics would be easy in the US education system: "I don't need to worry about mathematics; that's gonna be awesome! But Chinese are not good at clubs and activities." Chloe knew she would learn a lot from her roommate and from the activities that she eventually participated in. After three quarters together, Chloe considered her roommate to be a really good friend and laughed at trivial differences between them: for example, that they could never agree on the flavor of ice cream they would buy.

Frances and her roommates set up guidelines to avoid awkward situations with significant others: "At the beginning of the year we already made rules like 'guys can't sleep over' so my roommate has a boyfriend and whenever he comes they go somewhere else. So it's just rules." She and her roommates abided by the agreed-upon rules guiding their behavior.

Jae, however, experienced an entirely different roommate situation when he was tasked with "taking care" of his roommate by his roommate's parents. The parents had contacted him and asked that he "look after" their son. As Jae tells it, "It's the first day I'm in the US and I

never spoke English before and suddenly my roommate's parents come in and are like, 'Hey, what is your name? Where are you from? Okay, look after your roommate, he's really introverted, you need to…" Aside from the obvious point that Jae might need more help adjusting to college life than his roommate who was from Spokane, a city just a few hours away, Jae was shocked to find that his roommate was "not an introvert at all." In fact,

> he brought his girlfriend into the dormitory, which is like one bedroom, two beds, and they are there, I'm here. And okay, it's a joke, I mean, that girlfriend talked to my roommate in a low voice, like something private which I can hear, you know. [laugh] I'm trying to don't understand any English. [laugh] And she said 'do you think it's appropriate I'm sleeping here' and the roommate said, 'he's okay, he's fine.' I'm not fine!

Jae followed up with his roommate after the girlfriend had left the room and although he did not directly request that the roommate not have his girlfriend over, Jae did signal his displeasure by asking his roommate to stay away from Jae's bed.

Cassandra had talked extensively about her difficulties with roommates while she was taking my class during fall quarter. Since that time, she had had two different roommates and was currently living without one. During her third quarter, she did not comment much on her past issues with roommates.

Emma spoke of roommate difficulties around issues of the shared mini-refrigerator and shared space in general. She mentioned that she was amazed when roommates could become good friends: "I actually admire those who make best friends with their roommates because there can be a lot of problems with roommates sometimes." She then elaborated on some issues she had had in her first year with the temperature of the shared refrigerator. She found that when

someone’s food freezes, it puts a strain on roommate relations. In her second year, Emma described other troubles she had with a roommate who wanted to talk to her family in Mongolia at all hours of the night, which went against the roommate agreement they had decided on. After a couple more roommate switches, she summed up the roommate situation as follows: “There are a lot of people who become best friends with their roommates, but I can’t do that...I started having my own room at the age of 2. I look forward to the opportunity to have my own room again.” That way, she could maintain her desired level of cleanliness, which she described as “clean,” and keep to her own schedule without conflicts. She planned to have housemates in her third year, and hoped for the best.

Effective communication and proactive rule-setting were key elements of the students' positive encounters with roommates. For those students who struggled to maintain amicable relations with their roommates, adaptability, resilience, and conflict resolution proved to be necessary. The dynamics of roommate interactions, thus, played a significant role in shaping the focal students' social and problem-solving capabilities. Cultural sensitivity and communicating clear boundaries were valuable assets for those who interacted with their roommates successfully. Their challenges and successes with roommates likely resembled those of the entire population of first-year students.

7.1.2 English Proficiency

The focal students' comments on English proficiency underscored the dynamic nature of language development and the importance of language in their social integration and cultural engagement. Several students overcame their discomfort in their English language skills through their motivation to learn about the local culture and integrate into the college community. Others

came to college with their outgoing personality and a degree of confidence in their ability to communicate.

Arielle expressed initial discomfort in participating in class, which might on the surface have been ascribed to language issues. Since she prided herself on exploring course concepts deeply and thinking critically, she may have been hesitant to participate if she was not entirely confident in her preparation or her expression of ideas. She believed she took longer than English dominant speakers to read challenging texts. She was, however, highly proficient from an outside perspective, so my interpretation of her reticence lies in a cultural explanation: that she did not want to speak up just to hear her own voice. She had commented previously on the lack of depth in some students' contributions, and she may have held her own to a higher standard. Therefore, if she was not entirely confident in reading these challenging texts, she preferred to remain silent.

Cassandra described herself as "kind of fluent in English" and felt she was a strong communicator. Even though she used the phrase "kind of fluent," everything about her tone and her body language suggested that she was confident in her level of fluency and she found her proficiency in English to be one of her strengths. This became evident when she explained a story of miscommunication with a student worker at a campus dining hall; it turned out that she had to repeat her request because the person did not understand what she had said, but she felt totally in the right and blamed the other person's inability to understand her rather than her inability to communicate the idea clearly.

Jae was outgoing and felt fairly comfortable with his English skills. The issue of proficiency in English did not surface directly in our interactions, although one or two comments he had made related peripherally to proficiency. In reviewing peers' writing in courses early in his first year, for instance, he felt unequipped to offer any real advice for revision. While this

issue afflicts many students or would-be readers, regardless of their dominant language, Jae intimated that his issue had something to do with his confidence in giving feedback in English. The other moment where his skills in English were called into question was when he told professors that he was going to Brazil to teach kids how to use computers in English. When I heard the news of his plan, my reply was: “You can do that because you know English.” He confirmed: “I know, I speak English.” Apparently, others had questioned him: “I was talking about [my summer plans] with other professors and they were like, ‘You are teaching English.’ and I was like, ‘Yes.’” When I reiterated that the experience sounded fun and that he’d be good at it, he did not sound 100% convinced, although he noted that the main goal was a cultural exchange where “you just go there and show them your country and open their mind probably.” Jae did not specify which of his cultures he intended to share with them, although he acknowledged that he had several to choose from.

Chloe started the year feeling a bit overwhelmed with the adjustment to a new language and culture. Although she felt language to be a barrier early on, by her third quarter, Chloe received feedback from her friends and instructors that she was continually improving her English.

Emma recognized some minor limitations with her English skills compared to English dominant speakers, but these limitations did not have a notable effect on her ability to engage with her coursework and extracurricular activities. Her habit of using English as frequently as possible gave her plenty of opportunities for practice.

Eve only infrequently commented on her English skills; she did note that some classes took longer than she thought if they had lots of reading. When I asked her what advice she would give to a friend who was studying in the US for the first time, she felt strong English skills were

valuable. Her advice was "to do a lot of practice about English. I do think the language is the most important part because if you don't understand the language very well, you couldn't 'get into' the country. You can only stay on the surface." She reflected that she had not yet gotten involved in the local culture as much as she might have wanted. Eve felt you could learn English or even course content anywhere, but you could best learn about the culture by participating in it: "If the only reason you came to America is just to learn the knowledge, you can learn [that] everywhere because the knowledge is fixed, the same. I don't need to pay so much tuition to study here then." Eve clearly wanted to make the most of her experience studying in the US as an international student and she saw English proficiency as a pathway to social and cultural integration.

Frances was confident in her English skills and thrived in English literature classes at the university, especially in those English classes with a writing focus. She sought feedback on her writing from friends whom she trusted as well as from the writing center, not so much because she lacked confidence in her English skills but because she understood the value of having additional readers to help her look over her work: "Just like to review my paper, because sometimes I feel like it's kind of hard to... after writing it, you review it by yourself again. It seems fine but when you have someone else to check it…" Frances went on to say that she noticed an improvement in her grades when she had another set of eyes review her writing because they helped her reword things so that it all "made sense" to readers.

As much as Cassandra expressed confidence in her English skills, which was on many occasions, she still encountered challenges in her everyday interactions. She wanted to blend in linguistically so that people would not press her to talk about where she was from: "Sometimes it kind of bothers me because when you speak, it's hard to pretend I'm a native speaker. Well, I

can; within three sentences, I can pretend I'm a native speaker, but well, not on the fourth." She compared herself to a native speaker standard primarily because people would not question her identity if they had no reason to believe she was not American. In reflecting on her first year experience, she indicated that a main concern of hers was blending in, which entailed not speaking in a way that drew attention to her national origin: "My first year here, so I was not constantly but pretty conscious about how I should blend in. That's a big part." She clarified that "blending in" for her meant integrating socially with her American peers. In her second year, Cassandra also connected the idea of fitting in with English proficiency: "Starting this year, I stopped thinking that I am not part of it. People stopped asking me [where I'm from]. When they make comments on my English, I just hate it." Cassandra was suggesting that she felt she had put in the effort to integrate into the US, and her sense of belonging should be respected by others.

Yet, just when Cassandra had surmounted one challenge, she would encounter another. At her library job in her second year, Cassandra explained one of the challenges she faced in customer service: "I have to do the phone. I have to do 'in-person,' too. I hate phones...all the time I have to spell people's names and it's really hard to say their name, especially international students. They have really long names, like 20 letters long." Regardless of these language-based struggles in her social and work life, Cassandra forged ahead and continued to motivate herself to use English with confidence in all aspects of her life, including her academics. She reminded herself that she could always improve her class participation in political science, for example, since she was interested in those topics.

7.1.3 Language Use and Choice

Several students used multiple languages in and outside of class, while others preferred to use English as frequently as possible. The study participants navigated their language choices

based on context. Eve spoke English in academic settings and not unlike Jae, she likely felt more comfortable using Mandarin with her Chinese friends. Chloe, on the other hand, used English, Mandarin, and Japanese in various contexts, adopting a flexible approach to language use. Eve, Chloe and Jae were all learning Japanese and wished to develop their language repertoire further. Using language as a tool for social and academic integration, Cassandra and Emma stressed the importance of using English in academic settings to avoid making others feel uncomfortable as they viewed using Mandarin in public or class settings as unprofessional and exclusionary.

Eve spoke English in all her academic encounters, but did not directly state whether she spoke English much outside of academic situations. I surmised that her roommate and most of her friends in her first year were Chinese, and that she felt more comfortable speaking Mandarin with them. In her second year, she joined a Taiwanese club on campus and mentioned that she spoke both English and Mandarin with the other students in her club. In her statistics club, she presumably spoke to the local students in English, but did not comment on this point. When Eve did bring up language use, it was in her choice to take three years of Japanese out of a personal interest and to satisfy a graduation requirement.

Chloe used her three languages, English, Mandarin and Japanese, with different people and in various contexts. She talked about using these languages as switching “channels.” Sometimes in her Japanese class, she used Chinese with a friend for fun. Since they were the only two Chinese students, they could talk about personal things and it was unlikely that anyone would understand them. With her roommate, Chloe used English and questioned her about colloquial expressions such as “That’s sketchy.”

In her second year, I talked to Chloe about whether she still used the English name she had chosen the year before. It turned out that she mostly used her English name: “Even with my

Chinese friends, I'll use my English name or a nickname they have made up for me. It's kind of sad that your friends might not remember your Chinese name, but it's lucky I picked a short name that's easy to remember. It's a little sad, but it's ok." Chloe felt that she had lost a small part of herself from the infrequent use of her Chinese name. She did still use her Chinese name in official dealings with the university: "If I send an email to my professor and I haven't said my English name, I'll use my Chinese name so the professor knows who I am." For the most part, though, Chloe was set on using her English name to make things easier on others. In thinking about the difficulties Americans had in pronouncing her Chinese name without butchering it, she asserted: "I don't think they can really call me [by my Chinese name]." Chloe was somewhat resigned to this reality.

Both Cassandra and Emma used English in their daily interactions in their social and academic lives. In contrast to Cassandra, who spoke frequently of her plans to integrate into American society and preferred not to disclose her national identity, Emma's use of English aligned with her social identity as someone with many different types of friends and extracurricular interests. In this regard, Emma and Cassandra differentiated themselves from other international students in their approach in their language use.

As part of her goal to integrate into American society, Cassandra sought to speak English as frequently as possible. She often felt isolated as someone who strived to use English to the exclusion of her native language: "I know sometimes I am really an exception among Chinese students. Some of them think I am pretty weird because I want to speak English with other people, like even among Chinese." Even if Cassandra stressed her personal preference for using English, when she went on vacation with Chinese friends, they outnumbered her and refused to speak to her in English. As she described it, she would speak to them in English and they would

respond in Mandarin. Since they all spoke both languages, “it sort of worked.” Cassandra suggested that she would be thrilled to find other Chinese students like her who wanted to speak English: “I am trying to find these people that we have the same culture, the same mind. It would be so much fun, but I didn’t [find them], so I am still looking.”

Cassandra stressed the importance of using English at all times in her classes. She felt it would be unprofessional and exclusionary to speak in Mandarin to classmates in front of others: “When we’re working in a group we should use the common language. When you speak Chinese, [others] cannot understand you and this will make people feel uncomfortable.” Cassandra suggested that people would wonder if the Chinese speakers were talking about them, or the project at hand, or something else. At other times when she heard Chinese speakers using their dominant language in public, she found it unprofessional as it conflicted with her personal standard to speak English as much as possible in all situations. She reiterated this concern when recounting a visit to a campus eatery in which Chinese international students were working: “They are talking in their native language all the time. And some people talk about it with me. They feel really uncomfortable about it because they don’t know whether they are talking about them, or talking about the food, or talking about what thing. It’s really unprofessional and you may think something’s wrong.” Cassandra was referring to local students when she described what others might have been wondering. She felt a deep sense of dismay that others had not adopted her code of language ethics by accommodating English speakers at all times in public.

Similarly, in a classroom setting in her geology lab, someone Cassandra had just met for the first time in class spoke to her in Mandarin, and she was taken aback, not wanting to either reveal her identity or accommodate this person's language request in front of others in her class.

Cassandra admitted that she didn't feel comfortable with the interaction and described her adverse reaction, questioning her peer's language choice:

> Why are you asking me, like do I look like Chinese or something? All Asians have the same face and basically, I'm not saying that I'm really fluent in English, but I'm pretty confident at it because I spend most of my daily life with American friends, and I speak English all the time, so don't just assume I'm Chinese. I'm not confident about my identity as Chinese. So that's why I said, 'Why, why ask me this?' So if I'm Chinese what does that have to do with it?

If her classmate sought to make a connection with Cassandra over their shared status as Chinese international students, Cassandra put an immediate stop to that trajectory with her abrupt response, which clearly surprised the classmate. Cassandra followed up by explaining her reaction: "I'm not comfortable with my identity here so I don't want to be identified as Chinese. I don't want people to know I'm from China."

Cassandra felt this way at the end of her first year, and maintained her feeling of discomfort into her second year, when she raised the topic of her mother's visit to the US to see her. She revealed that she texted her mother in English, presumably so that her mother would practice her English, but also ostensibly because Cassandra wanted to share all aspects of her new life with her mother, including her English. The prospect of having to speak to her mother in their home language during her visit made Cassandra uncomfortable, so much so that she couldn't really describe the feelings she had on the subject. While she had hoped her mother would visit so that she could share her life in the US with her, she characterized the situation as complicated: "It's difficult to say what I am feeling. It's complicated." In fact, Cassandra did not explain the situation further; instead, she reiterated that it was complicated three more times.

Much like Cassandra's interest in integrating into American society through predominant English use, Emma made a similar effort in navigating her language use. Emma preferred to speak English in most settings, with everyone she encountered, perhaps with the exception of her parents. She explained her rationale for speaking English, even with other Chinese students whom she considered friends, as not wanting to exclude others: "I feel like we isolate ourselves or the other people who are in class because I feel like when you are in lecture or in the classroom, when you are talking and the other people have no idea what you are talking about, they feel like you are minding your own business so we cannot be a part of you." Emma preferred to exhibit more inclusive or pro-social behaviors on the whole. On rare occasions, Emma admitted to using Chinese words with her friends to point to specific concepts like food names for which an English word does not exist. However, she occasionally ran into situations where Chinese speakers wondered if she was Chinese because they expected her to speak Chinese to them: "Someone does think that, like they feel I am not raised Chinese or something like that, but I explained it to them. I do want to practice English and everything more so if they don't mind, I will speak English. Most people were pretty understanding about that." Emma's genuine and open nature must have put other Chinese students at ease as they typically obliged her interest in practicing her English. Even a long-time high school friend agreed to switch their shared language to English on Facebook: "we actually use English to chat." Although Emma speaks to her mom in her home language, Mandarin, she still has moments where she wants to explain an English phrase or concept so that she'll feel closer to her mom and her mom will understand more about her experiences at college in the US.

Frances used English in myriad situations in college since she spent most of her time around English speakers. However, she did discuss her interactions with other Indonesian

students at the University of Washington in almost every interview we had. She often sat with an Indonesian friend in class or went to activities outside of class with an Indonesian friend. Outside of class, she spoke Indonesian with her Indonesian friends.

Jae spoke Korean with his family, and occasionally connected with Korean speakers on campus, too. Interestingly enough, he tended to use English with them. During a check-in after the second school day in which I observed Jae, another student from Jae's English 108 class walked by and stopped to chat for a moment. She was an international student from Korea, and as Jae put it, "she is the reason why we mainly speak English for this class, you know." All of the other students spoke Chinese as their dominant language, and were speaking Chinese with one another. She and Jae were the only ones in the class whose home language was Korean, although he admitted to me that the two of them had always spoken in English. They met a few times each quarter since the class had ended and he seemed pleased that they used English to communicate: "She never talked Korean, never. I don't know why but good for me." Jae encountered a similar situation when he met Korean Americans on campus and attempted a sort of language exchange. He said of one friend from class, "she can speak Korean. She told me she wanted to practice her Korean, so I spoke Korean but she didn't understand." At that moment, communication broke down and the friend asked, "What are you saying? Speak English. I don't want to speak Korean anymore." Disappointed, Jae made a mental note not to speak Korean anymore with her. When he elaborated on that moment, he was surprised she did not understand since he had asked "what is your age?" in Korean and she didn't get it. This conversation led Jae to tell a "funny story" about this Korean American friend: "I was older than her and suddenly she talked to me like she's talking to her father or something...I mean, I know she's from America. She can't get used to those things but…" Jae intimated that while he excused her weird tone

because of her own translation of cultural habits or lack of experience with other Korean students, it felt more comfortable to him to speak English. His conclusion was that he would "probably speak English all the time" to avoid such awkward moments.

Jae decided to take the series of introductory Japanese language classes in his second year to add to his strengths in Asian languages. When I asked about what he hoped to gain from learning Japanese, he stated: "It's best if I can communicate with and talk to a Japanese person, so I may have another language that is Asian. I think that I know Korean; it's kind of my strength, so if I can learn Japanese it will be whole Asian…" When I followed up on this strength to find out if he was interested in pursuing Asian studies, including languages, he sounded interested in learning more languages or even studying linguistics, but he did not feel it would be his major.

Another situation in which Jae commented on his use of language was in group work in his geology class. He found group work in the lab to be challenging "because for me it's quite difficult to communicate with each other. Yeah, to communicate with those English-speaking friends, students and that's why I don't get along with the other groups." When he described the situation as not getting along with other groups, he went on to say "I can't elaborately describe what I think." The idea of having to accomplish a shared task in English was daunting for Jae. In the group work that I observed in the lab, Jae had formed a group with other Mandarin speakers so they could use both Mandarin and English to communicate about the content and the tasks to accomplish. Jae felt the work was easier when all group members spoke the same languages, and found some procedural benefits: "We can divide the work, yeah. How to find the right answer for those questions more effectively, maybe." Jae's experience emphasizes the practical

considerations and potential difficulties that students face in academic collaborations where language use is crucial.

The students' experiences demonstrate a nuanced understanding of language practices and identity negotiation in fostering connections or creating barriers in social and academic environments. Cassandra faced challenges in her efforts to speak English exclusively, even experiencing discomfort when spoken to in Mandarin. Emma's open nature and desire to practice English were generally well-received, but some Chinese students expected her to speak Chinese. While Cassandra and Emma preferred to use only English in class, expressing this preference with varying degrees of diplomacy, Jae found it more comfortable to communicate in both Mandarin and English for more effective and streamlined group work in class.

7.1.4 Campus Jobs

Having a campus job allowed the focal students to interact with local students and other community members, practice their communication skills (in most cases), and create a pathway to integrating into the campus community at large. Emma thrived in her role as a tour guide, yet she still felt her language fluency to be a factor in her ability to connect with visitors and succeed in a public-speaking role. After much frustration and several failed attempts at finding a campus job, Cassandra managed to secure a campus library position, which offered her more of a sense of connection at the university. Eve, Frances and Jae all got jobs in food service and described their interactions with co-workers as a highlight of the experience.

Emma was hired by the Office of Admissions as a campus tour guide in her second quarter at the university. This position offered her many opportunities to practice her public speaking and her ability to think on her feet and answer challenging questions that prospective students and families had. She had spent a fair amount of time shadowing experienced tour

guides to prepare for her own tours: “Every new tour guide has to shadow four tours.” Everyone had to shadow as part of the job, but she attributed the need to shadow as linked to her language proficiency: “I’m not a native speaker, so I have to shadow.” Emma was a quick study and a keen observer: “it’s really interesting and everybody has their style. Some jokes [other tour guides] would say, some jokes they wouldn’t and actually, a lot of us know the same jokes.” However, as much as she felt prepared when she rehearsed her spiel, she found the act of giving the tour to be “nerve-wracking”: “I’m not too confident right now because I would imagine myself talking – the things I would say, the tone I would use but it is really different when you are standing there, just so nervous and I don’t know why that sentence just flew out of my mouth.” Despite her nerves, Emma was pleased that she had taken on this role: “I’m actually the first international student, non-native speaker tour guide ever in [the university’s] history...It’s sort of like ‘we’ll make history today.’...I told my team, ‘let’s just make history today’ and they were really happy about that.” Both Emma and her co-workers were proud to be part of this accomplishment. Even though she never tried to hide her status as an international student, she did note that her tour was different from theirs: “I don’t feel ashamed about where I’m from. It’s great, though I couldn’t speak as fast as a lot of tour guides or as good as they do.” The reason her fluency in English mattered, in Emma’s mind, was because she could potentially connect better with visitors if she captured their attention and answered their questions well: “The connection [visitors] have with the tour guide is sort of the connection they have with [the university].” Emma once gave a co-tour, which turned out to be more stressful since she felt her proficiency was being judged: “there’s a huge contrast – like someone is confident and fluent in English.” She implied that she is not totally confident in English, although she knew the material well enough to give a tour in Mandarin without a practice run first.

Even though Emma seemed to be the ideal candidate for any campus job because of her charisma and work ethic, she was not hired as a resident advisor (RA). She had applied for this job at the same time as her position with the Office of Admissions. That she was turned down surprised her because she was very involved in the hall council as a leader and active participant in dorm life: “I applied for RA this year but I didn’t get it. That is pretty depressing because a lot of my friends also applied for it and they’re in RA class [the training sessions for the job] right now. It’s like ‘no’ and I didn’t even get an interview. It’s like, ‘what’s going on?’” Emma was clearly baffled and frustrated that she was not even called back for an interview. She mentioned that she was the only international student involved in her hall council and noticed that most people who went on to the RA class were local students. When I asked a question about why they might not have taken international students, Emma said: “Yeah, I’m wondering about that as well. But there is one international student who speaks pretty poor English [who got into the RA class]...At first, I thought I could at least go into the interview, but when I didn’t, I was like, ‘okay, [the job is] pretty prestigious this year and then I find out about that guy.” Emma clarified that he must have been “ok to be an RA in the international student dorm” whereas Emma had applied to a “traditional residence hall” with mostly local students, as that was where she was living in her first year.

Cassandra spent a good portion of her first year preoccupied with securing a campus job, and spoke of this topic on numerous occasions. She was set on getting a campus job for the experience it would offer her as well as the compensation. She applied for jobs that required no prior work experience, and was frustrated that she got no response to her queries: “I just submit my application and nothing pops up!”. During her third quarter, she had expressly rearranged her schedule to allow for 20 hours of work at a campus job, to no avail. When she contacted human

resources twice, they would not give her a "specific reply" and only said that jobs had not opened up on the schedule. Cassandra wondered, "Why is it so hard [to get a job]? I have zero control on that." Her frustration was palpable and she was clearly upset at having wasted her time and energy over the course of several months. Each time she would pass by a Chinese international student doing the job she had applied for, she felt a sense of ill-will towards them: "I don't know why they can get a job, not me. I can do way better than they do. I'm not just saying that. I can do it...I'm super confident about it." One month into the quarter, however, Cassandra was offered an interview with campus housing as she had applied for a summer position in housekeeping. She succeeded in getting hired for a full-time summer position to start in June after her first year. However, Cassandra admitted that her complex personality might have gotten in the way of some opportunities. For instance, she applied to become a Resident Assistant (RA) in a dormitory, which necessitated that she take a course as the first level of training for the position. From among the participants in the course, the finalists would be selected for additional training for the job. Cassandra described why she felt the position would not be a good fit for her after having taken the class: "I took the class and ...I just hate all the stupid rules. I think it's not reasonable; they have so many expectations for RAs. I just think I don't want to live in the building where I work. I feel that would isolate me from my friends." She explained the specific rules that she took issue with. Given that her friends lived off campus, her suspicions about her feeling isolated might have turned out to be right. I later learned that she was not selected for the next round of training: "Part of the reason they did not choose me was that I was constantly challenging their rules." Cassandra's rejection of the institutional authority in the form of rules set for resident assistants made it impossible for her to continue along the path to that position.

In her second year, she landed a job at the library in the cashier's office where they handled overdue books. In recounting what she had learned from this experience, she identified that she was not good with people and not good at customer service, but she did not shy away from practicing these skills. Moreover, she found a sense of fulfillment in having the job and planned to keep it out of loyalty to the department. Even though the work did not challenge her intellectually, I surmised that being employed at the university bolstered her sense of belonging.

Eve found American food to be somewhat confusing and sought out a campus job to understand Americans and food better. She was fortunate to find a job at a mobile food truck stationed in the central square on campus. She started her job during her third quarter at the university: "The main purpose to me for applying for a job, especially a dining job, is I want to know how American people eat food." She especially wanted to learn about cheese since cheese seemed to be omnipresent in American food. Eve identified a gap in her knowledge about cheese: "I don't know their names and their flavors." Her tasks included preparing sandwiches and acting as a cashier. At the job, she had opportunities to talk to her coworkers: "you have co-workers – you can talk to them and I think it's really cool." She could ask them questions about food, but she did not interact much with customers. Prior to her start at the food truck, she asked me for my thoughts on sandwiches. I found out that she doesn't like them, but she was curious about them and the cheese one might put on them. She seemed interested that I liked goat cheese.

In her second year, Frances got a job at a campus eatery making sandwiches and cleaning tables. She applied to campus dining services by email and got the job. One benefit of this work experience was that she enjoyed interacting with her co-workers and had met a new friend through her work. Frances implied that her reason for seeking employment was to become more active on campus and try new things.

Jae also worked on campus in food services in his second year. He did not say much about the position except that he was hired through email and that his boss intrigued him because he was writing a book. That is to say, his boss primarily identified as a writer and worked in food services on campus merely to make money. Considering that Jae wanted to meet more people from the Seattle area, this connection with his boss was of interest to him.

The employment experiences of the focal students offered further exploration of the role of language proficiency, institutional dynamics, and personal fulfillment in their lives in a university setting. The pursuit of campus jobs was often driven by more than financial considerations; having a job served as a means for students to integrate into university life, continue developing their sense of belonging, and explore new aspects of American culture. Conversely, a rejected application to a campus job or a mismatch with the position's expectations proved to have a deleterious effect on the students' well-being; both Emma and Cassandra experienced difficulties in the application process to become a Resident Advisor (RA). Emma's unexpected rejection for the position, despite her involvement in hall council, raised questions about the selection process and potential biases against international students. Her observations about the selection of another international student with poor English proficiency added complexity to the situation. Cassandra, on the other hand, made it through the first round for an RA position but stepped back once she learned of the institutional requirements for the position. She found that the more she asserted her agency, the more push-back she received from those who trained the RAs, which made it clear to her that the position would not be a good fit for her.

7.1.5 Conclusions on Integration into the Campus Community

The study participants exhibited diverse approaches to social integration, ranging from those who were content with their current social lives to those actively seeking more connections. The students' level of focus on social relationships varied, with individual preferences and personalities influencing how students approached creating and maintaining these connections. Roommate dynamics were seen as influential in shaping the overall social experiences of the focal students.

Additionally, language use and choice played a key role in the focal students' social integration. Students navigated their language choices based on context, with some using multiple languages in different settings. The students emphasized the role of English proficiency in their academic and social integration, and Cassandra and Emma highlighted the importance of using English to avoid exclusionary behavior in public or academic settings.

Campus jobs also emerged as valuable opportunities for students to interact with local students, practice communication skills, and integrate into the campus community. These jobs not only provided financial support but also facilitated meaningful connections; the study participants expressed positive experiences and a sense of connection through their work roles.

7.2 Student Identity

The focal students exhibited a diverse range of identities shaped by their academic pursuits and exploration of extracurricular activities. Three students planned their academic paths meticulously but also actively sought diverse experiences and courses to explore different interests. Other key factors influencing their identities were their adventurous personalities, curiosity, and a sense of independence and self-reliance as they emphasized the freedom and opportunities college provided. Students' interest in trying new courses and joining study groups

or clubs reflected their adventurous spirit. Several students' commitment to leadership development and community engagement also played an important role in their growth and maturation as students and community members. Leadership was a developmental journey as students took on leadership roles in various contexts, demonstrating a commitment to personal growth and improving their interpersonal skills. Their identities reflected a dynamic blend of academic, social, and personal experiences during their college experiences.

7.2.1 Good Student Identity

The level of confidence in accomplishing academic tasks was closely tied to the focal students' academic socialization, as it shaped their approach to learning and adapting to the university environment. The distinction between having a good student identity and confidence in academic tasks was subtle, with both aspects intertwined in their experiences within the academic context. The students' strategies for coping with the academic challenges varied, including seeking help, adapting their study strategies, and embracing a growth mindset. The focal students' perceptions of success were influenced by cultural and personal factors, such as competition, class size, and the perceived value of the major.

In stark contrast to her high school experiences, Frances felt like she was no longer a good student because her grades were lower in college than in high school. She tried to stay organized and do all the things she was accustomed to doing to achieve success, but the missing piece was her connection to professors, which had been a key component in her relationship with school in the past. She also noted that the grading system was different from her past experiences: "In the beginning [of the quarter], I'm like 'I'm going to work hard' but then there's always disappointments. I feel like I don't really do well on tests as I want to. If it's a big class, if you don't get 90 and above, it will make your GPA go down, drop down." She acknowledged

that the competition was a challenge at the university-level and seemed to think the size of the class affected her rank and by extension, how she felt about herself as a student. While in high school, she would get similar percentages but was happy with her grades based on the grading scale, “whereas in here, I would get maybe the same mark, but it would be a low GPA because of how many people there are.” Frances could not exactly articulate the correlation between class size and grades, but she felt that having so many students to compete with negatively affected her success in her courses.

Jae identified as a capable student, but not a stand-out. He stated: “I won't say I'm a good student. For so many [classes] I'm just an average student who will not fail the test.” The effect of feeling merely “average” was perhaps due in part to taking classes that met general education requirements; even though he was a motivated student, he did not feel true passion for much of his coursework in his first year. In the first year, Jae took hard classes to test them out and ended up getting lower grades than he would have liked in several of them. In assessing the results of his quarter, Jae said “it’s kind of okay. At least I know how to go to the office hour!” He recognized a small achievement as valuable and did not let these lapses in his academic record cloud his self-concept. Instead, he just focused on working harder and adjusting his strategies. In fact, Jae was the type of person who went to a review session and when no one else would ask a question, he would step up and ask one. He usually picked something that he thought everyone would want to know about but that no one was asking. This is not to say that he was willing to put himself out there to ask a “lame question,” but if the review session was centered around students’ questions and students were passive, he was interested in making the most out of his and everyone else’s time. Otherwise, they’d all be sitting there “reading a book.” His concern over asking “lame questions” seemed related to his self-esteem as well as his role as a student. In

our mid-quarter interview, he and I talked extensively about asking questions in his astronomy professor's review session since the professor did not offer a mini-lecture but instead wanted students to bring their questions. In my interview with his professor, I learned that students start to get overwhelmed in weeks 4 and 5 of the quarter as the cognitive load from the material increases. Jae has mentioned that he asked the professor "a question that was on the material that I thought was important...but the material was not on the quiz" so he felt his time studying was misguided. I offered Jae some advice about how to make the most out of his interactions with the professor during the review session or office hours so that Jae would understand which content to prioritize. His conclusion was that "after this conversation, I am kind of confident to ask a question." He reinforced the idea that he was still striving for success in the class: "I'm trying to get more, more help."

I could tell Jae was an actively engaged student as he was always willing to talk about the content of his courses, assuming he understood it. This held true for all three classes, despite his lack of genuine interest in two of them. For instance, in his astronomy class which he ultimately described as "boring," he explained ideas such as the classification of stars, moon phases, and the relationship between light and colors to me. In his biopsychology class, which he enjoyed from the start of the quarter to its conclusion, he talked about sleep stages and other real life concepts. He described a recurring task in which students were required to post a question for the week on the discussion board, from which the professor would select about 10 questions for students to reply to. Jae shared with me the question that he had posted, which did not get selected, but then he recounted his response to one of the 10 selected. The question called for a bit of creativity and deeper thinking since it drew an analogy between the brain and the class and had students explain their thinking. Jae picked the basal ganglia to represent the class because "there might be

something important to know about the basal ganglia but we don't know it yet, so it's mysterious." Jae's attention to the mysteries of the course material stood out to me as a way to represent his curiosity towards learning something that was unknown but appealing as well as his intellectual engagement with the task. Perhaps Jae's assessment of his good student identity could have been broadened to include intellectual curiosity in the subjects that held his attention, something beyond mere numerical assessments.

Like Jae, Arielle had a heightened sense of intellectual curiosity in the humanities, but in her case, she had strong grades to go with it. Arielle's work ethic paired with her constant exploration of a range of interdisciplinary subjects from the interdisciplinary visual arts to the Comparative History of Ideas (CHID) yielded someone who excelled in academics. Not surprisingly, Arielle was ultimately accepted to the honors program in CHID.

Chloe was also confident in her abilities as a student, and was not hindered by any relative weaknesses she may have had in spoken fluency and comprehensibility. For Chloe, being a good student equated to keeping up her grades. She found herself in the unpleasant position of being just above the average in her statistics class, which meant she might get a 3.4. It was noticeably uncomfortable for her to stomach receiving a grade this low as it would bring her overall GPA down, and thus, decrease her chances of getting into the Foster School of Business. She weighed her options and thought she might drop the class and replace it with an easier one to fulfill her requirement and to avoid the dip in her grades: "I feel I am not good at statistics, you know, so I am kind of worried about this, if I had to drop the course. I think I will talk to my advisors." We spent more than 20 minutes talking about the topic and weighing her options as she understood them. She already knew that dropping the class would have a cascade effect on her summer and fall courses, which were predicated on her successful completion of the statistics

class. She was mostly worried about the workload combined with her other courses if she did have to retake statistics because she could not find a better course to replace it. In reality, at the time of our discussion, Chloe's grade in the class was only 0.1 grade points below where she needed it to be not to have much effect on her GPA. She concluded that she should just try her best on the final exam and hope that it all worked out in her favor. She did fine in the end, but her grades were not what she ultimately felt kept her from gaining admission to the business school on the Seattle campus. As far as she could tell, it was the writing test that served as the gatekeeper.

Being a good student also meant not choosing a major like "languages" that Chloe might enjoy but that would not be worth her tuition at the university, in her view. She was very interested in Japanese and Korean languages, but instead of majoring in them, she considered that she might transfer to a university in one of those countries. If she was seriously considering such a plan, it was probably because her progress in the US did not match her expectations for success and she did not see a clear pathway into the accounting field. Chloe's final thought at our meeting at the end of the quarter was that she had a concern about admission to the business school since it was just so competitive. She felt her grades were decent, but perhaps not quite enough to achieve her goals owing to substantial barriers she had encountered in the admissions process. She talked about her options in her first year, but by the time we met in her second year, she had already decided to change to the accounting major at UW Bothell and no longer entertained the idea of transferring to another country for her undergraduate work. She still held firm to the idea that she would try one last time to gain admission to the Foster School of Business in her third year. In the end, she did not get admitted to the business school on the

Seattle campus. Instead, she completed her degree at UW Bothell and later earned a master's degree in accounting there.

Eve was also driven as a student. For Eve, being a good student involved both learning deeply and getting high grades, although the quest for a strong GPA was perhaps more prominent in her mind. Eve had clear criteria for the grades that were acceptable to her as she felt they would advance her plan to get into the statistics major. In her math classes, she'd be happy with a 3.8 or higher and in her computer science class, a 3.7 or higher would be acceptable to her. For Eve, part of being a good student was keeping track of her grades and keeping them high. The other part was learning the material well enough to teach it to others in her classes. She competed against the other students in a subtle yet good natured way.

Emma knew she was a good student. She associated a growth mindset with her thoughts on her academic successes: "I like stuff that is more challenging. It gives me a sense of achievement because you finally get it right. You feel like you are smart because you work hard for it." A salient aspect of Emma's self-concept was that she was not afraid of a challenge and liked to work hard for her grades and other accomplishments. Emma did, however, have some doubts about her abilities when faced with the competition in her computer science classes: "I was a little bit intimidated at first because they were so smart. Everybody is so smart and so down to business. They know what they are doing and they are super smart. This is kind of too much!" Despite her confidence in her abilities, she felt at first overwhelmed by the competence of her peers, which she attributed to her being new to her major.

Cassandra was motivated to achieve her academic and social goals and balance her life. This meant she monitored her progress frequently and maintained control over how much time she spent studying: "I would say the first quarter, I put 85% of my effort into studying and the

second quarter would be 65% and now it would be like 50% I guess." Despite the dropoff in her level of effort devoted to her academics, the efforts she expended usually equated to the grades she desired. At our mid-quarter check-in, Cassandra raised the topic of being in charge of her life and assessing how things were going: "I have zero control over everything...It's like I don't know how well I can do. Last quarter, I had total control in my linguistics and other classes. I knew how well I could do and the percentage I could get. I was completely in control." In her economics and political science classes, she felt that grading on a curve added a layer of uncertainty to her work, but in the end, she stated, "I cannot worry about it." She had some questions about whether her work in her desired fields was up to the level of the students majoring in those fields, but once she got positive feedback from her professors, she gained even more self-confidence. She was aware of her areas of strength in fields that she chose not to go into: "I can do math, I can do physics, I can do every single class, but I don't want to do that." Instead, she decided to focus on a course of study that interested her most, taking responsibility for her choice: "I know [political science] is pretty hard but I chose to do it, so it's my decision. I should handle it." In fact, at the end of the quarter, she confirmed that she would take hard classes if the subject interested her: "Even if it's hard and I cannot get a high GPA on it, I would still do it." She felt strongly that her willingness to let her grades "slip" to a 3.7 was ultimately beneficial to her overall college experience in the US.

In this way, Cassandra differentiated herself from her Chinese peers. She was willing to take academic risks, where other students would not: "I am not like some Chinese students or Asian students who want 4.0 and all that stuff and they think 3.7 is too low. I don't think so...I am not saying this because I am discriminating against them, but some students, like Chinese students, they take math, they take econ, they take physics and chemistry. Okay, I can take easy

stuff but it's not what I really want so I am not doing that." To be clear, Cassandra classified these math- and science-based courses as "easy" because Chinese students had learned them well in high school. In her mind, the real challenges lay in courses with a heavy reading and writing load and new theoretical perspectives. She applauded one friend for taking a comparative literature class, but even then, it was "not the writing one, but the film one—the easier one...and she said it's hard and changed her grade to credit/no credit." Cassandra, on the other hand, did not believe in using the credit/no credit option as she felt it diminished her level of responsibility for her work: "I made the choice [to take a hard class] and I am responsible for it. I am interested in it so I will handle the result." This sense of responsibility was something that Cassandra returned to throughout our meetings.

Cassandra also admitted that she skipped her childhood development class a few times to go to organizational meetings and once had to miss class to fix her laptop. She did find ways to make up the missed participation points by writing a summary of the course readings, for instance. In the spring as the weather became sunnier, she sometimes went to play tennis during her study time, letting her grades slip a bit. She offered her rationale for her choices: "it's not really like, about academics, about GPA. I'm not paying so much tuition to get just a higher GPA on my resume." This was one of three or four times Cassandra stressed the monetary value of the total college experience. That is not to say that she was not affected if she saw a low grade for an assignment on the Canvas learning management platform, but her philosophy was to put everything in perspective: "Life is much simpler if you care less." In her second year, she made a pact with herself and possibly a few friends not to study on weekends, but instead to devote that time to her social life and other activities. In doing so, she did not cede her awareness of her roles and responsibilities as a student, but merely sought to achieve even more balance than she

had previously had. Given that Cassandra had won a merit-based scholarship as well as an academic award in her major in her third year, she thrived on keeping a strong academic record in addition to her other life goals.

The focal students' narratives about their identities as good students reflected diverse experiences, self-perceptions, and coping strategies within the academic environment. Their perceptions reflected not only academic identities but also broader life philosophies, including the pursuit of balance, responsibility, and the monetary value of education.

7.2.2 Identity as a Planner

Balancing priorities proved to be a concern for my study participants as they sought to manage their time to accommodate academic pursuits and other life goals. Each student had a unique approach to future planning, reflecting personal goals, concerns and adaptability to unexpected circumstances. Several of the students commented on their intention for "on-time" graduation and they were mindful of potential issues that might have affected their ability to complete their degrees within the expected timeline. Differences in their preferences for planned versus spontaneous activities revealed individual attitudes toward social interactions, academic concerns, and time management.

For the first year, Eve had a level of uncertainty related to her major since she would be in the first cohort of students in statistics who had to compete for admission to the major; this meant that she spent quite a lot of time on academics in her first year. She knew that if she did not get accepted to her major on her first try, she would miss the window of opportunity for the necessary sequence of classes and would have to graduate in five years instead of four. Eve cited the law of conservation of energy to suggest that energy is limited. If she spent too much time on one thing, she would miss out on other things. With this tradeoff in mind, Eve crafted a plan to

achieve all her goals over the four years she would study at the university. When Eve first mentioned her four year plan, she suggested that the plan would help her balance her academics with other activities so that she did not become overly focused on school work. In the forum discussion in her first year, Eve was adamant that she did not want her academic life to overwhelm the other aspects of her life: "if you don't consider anything else [besides academics] and you only study, people will call you a nerd...I don't want to be a nerd." Eve used her plan to clarify her goals and answer the questions, "what do you want to achieve or where do you want to finish?" She went on to explain her vision for the four years: "Oh, actually, the first year goal is to get your major, and the second year is to know a lot of people and have a lot of experience and the third year is to prepare for the GRE and take the exam and the fourth year is to finish and get into graduate school." One of her peers, Jae, responded with curiosity when he heard Eve's plan. From Jae's perspective, the focus of the first two years was reversed: "I guess the order is flipped. The first year you have to know more people and the second year you have to decide [on a major]." Considering that Jae was exploring different possibilities for his major, it makes sense that his priorities would be different. Since Eve already had clear intentions for the statistics major, she focused first on getting high grades in the prerequisites before moving on to being more involved with friends and campus activities.

The idea of Eve's plan was familiar to Emma, who had a four year plan of her own. The main difference was that Emma's plan included several adjustments to account for potential changes in plans, which she had already experienced when she decided to focus on computer science instead of accounting. Emma said of herself: "I am a planner. If those things don't work out, I come up with another plan." Arielle also had her undergraduate career mapped out, but her plan included finishing in three years with two interdisciplinary majors since she could not settle

on just one. She felt strongly that she would need to improve her reading skills to assimilate more complex ideas in higher level classes. She was worried that the workload in advanced coursework would impinge on her sleep, or even possibly force her to take longer to graduate. Arielle spoke of wishing to avoid what she perceived as a traditional path, which involved adhering to social pressures to choose a prestigious career and eventually raise a family.

Within her aspiration to become an accountant, Chloe expressed some of her preferences. For instance, she was interested in living in a big city with tall buildings, much taller than those in Seattle. For the record, Chloe was gainfully employed as a tax accountant in Seattle at the time of this writing. Frances did not identify as someone with a heavily prescribed academic plan, although she had some notions of working with her sister in communications or social media after graduation.

Future plans were a sensitive topic for Cassandra. She intended to go to graduate school in the US, but did not say much more. It was unclear to me why she chose to remain silent on this point, but I surmised that it was related to her identity or even possibly her migration status. Alternately, she may have been reserved in declaring her goals on the off chance she was unable to achieve them. In talking about short-term social plans, however, Cassandra shared freely that she liked to be spontaneous in her social activities. In contrast to Chloe and Arielle, who avowedly preferred not to be spontaneous at all, Cassandra would drop what she was doing to meet friends for dinner and a movie, to play tennis, or engage in other activities. Jae mentioned that he would be spontaneous if he had more opportunities to meet up with exciting people.

7.2.3 Academic Adventurers/Extracurricular Explorers

Several students indicated that they were predisposed to trying new things, either in academic exploration or in life experiences, or both. Cassandra, Arielle, Chloe and Jae engaged

in exploration as part of their academic paths. Cassandra meticulously maintained a focus on law school but valued a balance with other activities, including study abroad in Vietnam. Arielle explored diverse social science and arts classes to find her major and academic trajectory. Chloe's willingness to audit classes outside her immediate scope showed her curiosity in academic exploration. Jae actively sought to learn subjects he was not familiar with. Additionally, Chloe, Cassandra, and Arielle shared an interest in deviating from the traditional educational path. Chloe appreciated the interdisciplinary nature of the honors program, Cassandra valued her free time in college for exploration of other activities, and Arielle steered away from a predefined major, choosing to explore interdisciplinarity in different directions. Emma and Eve’s curiosity led them to seek out new experiences and learn from others. Chloe's willingness to form study groups and meet new people, as well as making friends in "random places," showed a social aspect to her exploration. Likewise, Cassandra's spontaneity in making plans with friends and meeting them in various situations contributed to her vibrant social life.

Cassandra thrived on her image of herself as both a planner and adventurer. Cassandra sought out new experiences especially if they represented typical American activities like getting a job with a non-profit advocacy group, or applying for leadership positions in UW organizations. She also wanted to be spontaneous in her social life, but that did not keep her from being extremely organized and rigorous in the rest of her life. In order to maintain her level of rigor in academics and her organizational work, she relied on planning. As a first-year student she had already made a list of 10 law schools to which she would apply after her graduation. She also kept careful tabs on her grades and monitored the slightest fluctuations as she found 3.7 to be the ideal average to gain access to a law school she desired while simultaneously working the appropriate amount to balance her life with her studies. Her observations of the fine line between

a 3.7 and a 3.8 pertained to the extra effort she would need to expend for the slightly higher grade, which she deemed unnecessary: “If I want to get a 3.8, I have to work really hard because it’s really hard to get a 4.0 on a paper. You can always find something wrong in that paper. So 3.8 is really good, but for a 3.8, I probably had to work extra hours on that paper to revise it and read it again and again. But if I go for a 3.7, I have all that time to do other things.” Cassandra was quite adamant that she should have time to have a robust social life and posed a rhetorical question: “Like why would I sacrifice my socializing time, my ‘having fun’ time?” She went on to describe her spontaneity in making plans with a friend at the last minute, all the while taking into account bus schedules and feasible modes of transportation. She and her friend agreed she would take the bus, catch a 10:30pm movie, and spend the night at her friend’s house off-campus: “I had to pack up, finish my last 2 paragraphs of reading, and get on the bus.” We should note that she did not neglect those last 2 paragraphs of her assigned reading for her classes before enjoying an outing with her friend. She distinguished her spontaneity from a situation in which she would be striving for a higher grade, in which case she would “have to study.” Cassandra rejected that approach in favor of a bigger picture view: “That’s just so lame and college is probably the most free time that I can have. Why not make the best of it?”

Arielle demonstrated her “explorer” trait in multiple instances, from taking classes to doing experiential learning in urban settings. She explored a variety of social science classes to find her major. Arielle indicated that her goal was to “explore every interesting social science class.” At the end of her first year, she felt that she had already taken 2 anthropology courses, so that’s why she was steering away from sociology in favor of communications and political science so that she could “take other directions.” She continued to look to the interdisciplinary arts to round out her interests. Arielle explored experiential learning through study abroad and

study in different cities, and participated in service-learning with a variety of organizations affiliated with her courses to see what they offered and what their missions were. Arielle wanted to continue to study abroad in different countries.

Both Emma and Eve were inquisitive by nature and open to trying new things. In our forum discussion, Emma asked several questions of the group. She wanted to get their opinions on how they met friends, what kind of interactions they had at work, and finally, whether they had contact with people in the world outside of campus. Emma was looking for additional ways to make contacts with people outside of the university community and wanted to know if others had already done so. Eve, although she had clear tendencies as a planner in her academic life, was curious about American food, so she applied for a food truck job to learn more about food.

Chloe demonstrated that she was interested in trying things to which she had not previously been exposed. For instance, Chloe liked the honors program because of its interdisciplinarity; she especially appreciated that she could learn about different fields all in one class: “I really want to try some different courses. That’s the reason why [I’m taking this honors course]. Just taking this one class, I can learn about language and linguistics and maybe more about culture, something like this.” Chloe’s interest in exploring new things meant that she was full of surprises, from her fascination with airplanes at the Boeing tour to her willingness to transfer to another Asian country to finish her degree. She also explored courses in the business school, taking those she was permitted to take in her first year, and auditing others that she was not yet allowed to take. She ultimately left the honors program at UW Seattle and switched to the business program at UW Bothell to achieve her goals. Even though she characterized herself as an independent learner, one who was more accustomed to working alone than in groups, she still

found it interesting and relevant to form study groups and meet new people. In her second year, she also met people in "random places" like the local cafes and got to be friends with them.

In Jae's role as an explorer, he sought to push himself outside his comfort zone since he was interested in learning things he was not that familiar with. Through his selection of courses, Jae intended to learn "how to be independent, like not just rely on those things you are already familiar with." Jae spent three quarters "exploring everything" in terms of courses and fields that might interest him based on advice from advisors and mentors. The end goal of his process of exploration was to find his major: "I tried to find the major thing so I [took] a lot of courses which I liked, which I didn't like, kind of exploring."

Along with the explorer mindset came a feeling of independence for a few of the students. At their forum discussion, Chloe, Cassandra and Arielle discussed feeling independent and taking care of themselves and to a lesser extent, their finances. Frances and Eve, at different moments, corroborated the feeling of being more independent and doing everything for themselves.

7.2.4 Leadership

Among the focal students, Emma, Cassandra, Eve, and Jae all demonstrated a commitment to developing leadership skills through various extracurricular activities. Of the four of them, Emma and Cassandra were the most assertive about developing their leadership skills in their first year and actively engaged in leadership roles within their extracurricular activities. Emma took on the roles of a university tour guide, hall council member, and officer in the tango club. Cassandra served as a board member of WashPirg and was a member of UW Leaders, a student government group focusing on peer mentorship and leadership development. Eve

engaged in formal leadership roles in the statistics club and a Taiwanese service organization during her second year, actively planning events and contributing to the community.

Emma took advantage of numerous leadership opportunities in her extracurricular activities, from her job as a university tour guide to her role on the hall council at her residence hall. Emma had not really thought of taking on a leadership role through academics in her first year, though: “international students have better grades in math, physics, or science, but we aren’t really good at teaching. ‘Cause it is kind of different too so that the other people understand what you are thinking about. Especially it is sort of hard too, we've learned all these subjects, we do work by ourselves, so we don't teach people, we don't explain it, and all we have to do is get a correct answer.” This mindset changed a bit when Emma got accepted into her major. In her second year, Emma continued to build leadership skills in her role as an officer in tango club, and also sought professionalization in her work in computer science. She joined listservs to find out more about what was going on in her field and interacted with the computer science community more deeply. After a coding competition in which she co-produced a wireless writing robot and got the attention of a Facebook engineer, she and her fellow student continued to work together by meeting every two weeks with the engineer to further the project.

Cassandra thrived on the leadership roles that she played in her extracurricular activities, namely as a board member of WashPirg and a member of UW Leaders. Cassandra applied at the last minute for UW Leaders, a student government group focusing on peer mentorship and leadership development. Out of 300 applicants, she was one of 48 to be accepted. The criteria they used to evaluate applicants were a demonstrated drive to learn, the ability to self-reflect, adaptability and a community mindset. She then joined the group of 48 leaders and 20 mentors, all of whom were active on campus in a variety of ways. Aside from the leadership skills she

developed, Cassandra identified that the other participants were resources for her: “I was pretty involved. They know a lot about resources and they are pretty active and involved in different parts of campus. So I got a lot of resources [through my interactions with them].”

Eve did not talk much about formal leadership opportunities until her second year, when she had joined two campus organizations. One was the statistics club for students in the statistics major and related fields. One of a small cohort, she served on the board in the capacity of web programmer. Her club planned events and took care of the graduation ceremony for statistics graduates. She was also an officer in a Taiwanese service organization and planned events, such as a clothing drive at the Night Market, a campus event. She and her club mates took the proceeds from the clothing drive to three homeless shelters near Pioneer Square downtown.

Jae felt that doing volunteer work would help him develop “leadership skills and a group work kind of ability.” He had had previous experiences in class working in groups early in his first year and felt this was an area for improvement. Since he had lacked experience in group work, he wanted to figure out how to be a leader in such activities: “I had group experience in bioengineering class, and at that time I thought I’m so introverted ‘cause I cannot say what I wanted to say directly because there’s some kind of barrier for me.” His group had to prepare a presentation and group paper on “the way to solve some kind of medical disease, and I should write a medical [report].” Since two of his group mates were biology majors, they helped him understand the content of typical papers on the subject as he had never read journal articles on bioengineering topics. The barrier he referred to was likely the series of new experiences: the content of the reading material, the genre they needed to write in, and the act of working closely with others to write a paper and produce a presentation. Jae turned to group activities outside the

classroom to develop his interpersonal skills so that he could become more of a leader in his academic work.

While their specific roles and contexts differed, Emma and Cassandra both demonstrated a proactive approach to leadership and a willingness to take on responsibilities in extracurriculars. Through their extracurricular work, they developed an interest in the broader community and professional development. Eve got more involved in her community in her second year and took on leadership roles as a web developer for the statistics club as well as acting as an officer in a service organization. Jae felt that he was still a novice in terms of leadership, but he sought out opportunities to hone his skills and gain confidence in taking on leadership roles in group work in the classroom.

7.2.5 Conclusions on Student Identity

The focal students' identities embodied academic, social and leadership dimensions. The participants faced challenges in balancing priorities, particularly in managing time to accommodate both academic pursuits and other life goals. Each student demonstrated a unique approach to future planning, reflecting personal goals, concerns, and adaptability to unexpected circumstances. Several students expressed their intention for "on-time" graduation, emphasizing their awareness of potential issues that might affect their ability to complete their degrees within the expected timeline. This demonstrated their proactive approach to academic planning and commitment to timely degree completion.

Differences in preferences for planned versus spontaneous activities revealed individual attitudes toward social interactions, academic concerns, and time management. These preferences suggested subtle differences in the students' approaches to organizing their lives and engaging with their surroundings. Several students, including Cassandra, Arielle, Chloe, and Jae,

exhibited a predisposition to trying new things, both in academic exploration and life experiences. Their willingness to take courses in diverse subjects reflected a curiosity and openness to new opportunities. Chloe's willingness to form study groups, meet new people, and make friends in "random places" highlighted the social aspect of her exploration. Similarly, Cassandra's spontaneity in making plans with friends and engaging in various social situations contributed to her vibrant social life during college.

Emma, as a university tour guide, hall council member, and tango club officer, and Cassandra, as a board member of WashPirg and a member of UW Leaders, demonstrated their commitment to leadership roles. Eve also engaged in formal leadership roles in the statistics club and a Taiwanese service organization during her second year. These three students' commitment to leadership roles underscored the importance of extracurricular activities in shaping the students' identities and promoting their interpersonal growth and communication skills. The experiences gained through leadership positions played a vital role in shaping their dynamic identities for the students involved.

7.3 Students' Sense of Belonging at the University and Beyond

My study participants' experiences with on- and off-campus activities, combined with their race, national origin, and encounters with institutional power, contribute to a multifaceted understanding of their sense of belonging at the university and beyond. Their narratives highlight the complexities of cultural adjustment, the role of institutional structures in shaping experiences, and the ways in which individual agency and resourcefulness play a role in fostering a sense of belonging in a new academic and cultural environment. Furthermore, evidence of the students' sense of belonging in the US is woven into their narrative accounts, actions, and responses to challenges. The students developed a perspective on their inclusion status based on their levels of

adaptation and community engagement, navigation of cultural perspectives, expressions of independence, and strategic choices in communication, to name a few.

7.3.1 On- and Off-Campus Activities

Participating in extracurricular activities both on campus and in the broader community offered the students opportunities for what Severiens and Wolff (2008) refer to as "informal social integration" at the university. On-campus activities included participation in clubs, while off-campus activities ranged from advocacy work and service-learning to study abroad. Engagement in both on-campus and off-campus activities played a significant role in fostering social connections and creating a positive environment for personal and social growth. Participating in clubs, events, advocacy work, service-learning, and study abroad programs provided opportunities for community involvement and international experience, contributing to students' sense of belonging.

7.3.1.1 Campus Activities

Activities on campus afforded Emma, Frances, Arielle, Cassandra, and Jae moments to make social connections and explore the campus offerings. Emma's engagement in various clubs and events helped her feel more connected to the university, fostering a positive environment for personal and social growth. While Chloe recognized the value of campus activities, she prioritized maintaining a high GPA to enhance her chances of getting into the business school. Frances, Jae and Eve expressed a desire for personal growth and exploration through participation in various campus activities. Eve and Chloe, however, preferred to prioritize school work over activities until they were accepted into their majors.

In the forum discussion with her peers, Emma noted the numerous opportunities for campus activities and the ease with which students could find out about them and join. In fact, she sometimes felt overwhelmed by her own enthusiasm for the different activity options and "realized how crazy [her] schedule [was]." Emma lived up to her vision of how involved she would be: "Before I came here, I sort of imagined I'm going to have friends and be active. There's going to be a lot of activities and I'm going to get involved. But it's sort of different from what I imagined." Emma linked her vision of getting involved with leadership: "I did get into several leadership programs, but it's different because we talk about leadership. I had the idea that we could do huge activities and everybody would come and be happy and I would get praised." From clubs like running club and tango club to the council at her residence hall, Emma did get involved in many activities. However, she found the process of putting on events to be more complicated than she had thought: "so we do programs but it is more messy than I thought because there are problems everyday. We wanted to have clubs but we don't have any budget for that. They aren't sustainable so it's really messy." Emma described an open mic night at her dorm in which "any student from the hall can sign up and do whatever they want. Some will sing, dance, play instruments – a lot of people played guitars, drums and piano." Emma deemed the event a success since 200 people had participated.

On the other hand, Emma admitted that she had often felt social pressure to be involved. Her activities were the main way that she developed friendships, as she had very few friends in her classes during her first year. Despite the benefits of her involvement, namely developing a sense of belonging through her interactions with the friends she had made there, making friends through her participation in these organizations meant that she had to sacrifice her personal time. Sometimes she just wanted to be alone.

Practicing sports was popular among the students. Cassandra and Arielle took classes at the sports center or played tennis with friends. Frances was not one to spend much time participating in sports or exercising at the gym, although she occasionally tried new activities like yoga and kickboxing with a friend. Jae played basketball at the intramural sports center on a regular basis and met friends who shared an interest in the sport, even if these friendships were short-lived. He recounted a long conversation he had had with another basketball player: "There's one guy who is really into the NBA. I talked to him about the NBA for an hour and a half and I never felt tired because I'm so enthusiastic about this topic, but it's the only time when I had a long conversation."

Jae also sought to be more involved in campus activities in other ways, yet he was unsuccessful in getting a campus job in his first year and was even closed out of some volunteer opportunities because of space constraints in transportation to the site. He joined a cultural organization called Foundation for International Understanding through Students (FIUTS) so that he would have a chance to meet more people on campus through their cultural exchange program. He did participate in activities such as "restoring the environment and clearing the aggressive plants."

Chloe joined a club for undergraduate women in business majors who were either interested in the business school or already accepted into the business school. Aside from this activity, Chloe had not really gotten involved in many campus activities. She felt that she would have time later in her undergraduate career to take on more campus activities. In listening to Cassandra talk about her activities during our forum discussion, Chloe stressed that her priority was her grades so that she could have a better chance of getting into the business school: "I can do those things after I get into my major. Now I still need to focus on my GPA." Chloe felt that

the time spent on campus activities would take away from her ability to study as much as she needed to achieve her goals.

Similarly, Eve intended to wait until she could declare her statistics major before dedicating time to activities. Part of Eve's four year plan was to seek out campus activities in her second year. She wanted to join clubs and meet friends with similar interests since they would have a lot to talk about: "For next year, I want to join a club I'm interested in and meet some friends with the same interests. If you already have a common interest, you'll have a lot of topics to talk about and you'll discover more topics and know what they are thinking." Even though she worried about her English proficiency, she wanted to learn debate and practice public speaking. Even if she wasn't comfortable engaging on her own, she would watch others and learn from them: "this is a problem for me because my English is still not good...I can watch them." Eve was willing to participate at whatever level she could.

7.3.1.2 Off-Campus Activities

Several students engaged in off-campus activities such as advocacy work, service-learning or study abroad. They gained practical insights beyond their academic studies, enhancing their understanding of real-life issues through civic engagement with a social impact.

Even though Chloe did not participate in many campus activities in her first year, she did take a translation job, a volunteer opportunity for the American Red Cross and was very interested in new experiences as part of her college in the US. As she put it, "That's why I came here right?" This rhetorical question highlights her interest in getting more out of her college experience than just studying. In her second year, she continued with the Chinese-English translations. This work suited her: "When they get work, they send it out to all the volunteers. [If you accept the work] you just send it back in two days. I like it. It makes you realize the

differences between words. Looking back, you think you might choose a different word." The translations proved to be a fun challenge for someone who enjoyed languages. She also volunteered a few times with the equestrian club: "You have to go somewhere really far; I did some volunteering and helped take care of the horses. I did that when I was in China, too." Most notably, in her second year, Chloe raised money for survivors of an earthquake in Nepal. She responded to an email for a one time event: "We went to a sports field downtown during a game and I got a lot of [money]." Almost under her breath, she mentioned her success in fundraising was "probably because I'm pretty." While her male counterparts "just got a few dollars," she raised $600 in 2 hours: "Someone gave me $20 – many people gave me $20." She felt the event was a positive one as she connected well with people. The experience attested to her willingness to extend herself and participate in civic activities.

Like Emma, Cassandra was very interested in participating in a range of activities outside of her academic life. Many of these activities took place off campus. As part of her advocacy for the Washington Public Interest Research Group (WashPirg), she canvassed for affordable textbooks on campus and also attended organizational meetings downtown. She valued this experience outside of her school work: "I would say WashPirg gave me real-life experience. Besides school work, they gave me what is really going on on campus especially. I mean America is not like universities in China – you just study there. It's basically no clubs or anything like that. I'm interested in policy-making so [our campaigns] really interest me." She also found out about internship opportunities during the summer, but was uncertain as to whether such jobs were open to international students.

As a requirement for her early childhood development course, Cassandra participated in service-learning at the Boys & Girls Club. While she was not entirely clear on what she would

learn at her service site, she did know that she would connect the experience with research on social, emotional, and cognitive development and attachment, a psychology concept pertaining to a child's relationship with a caregiver. She imagined she would analyze her experiences through an attachment lens. Prior to her service-learning, she had very little experience interacting with kids. Although she understood the premise of applying the course concepts to her experience outside the classroom, she did not feel her time in this activity was well spent because the kids did not seem to truly need her to be there. If someone approached her, it was often because they were not well integrated in the group of kids at the center and wanted to do one-on-one activities with an adult, or possibly even gain access to computers that they were typically not allowed to use. She had many opportunities to observe how the kids interacted with each other since they often chose not to interact with her.

Frances, on the other hand, valued her service-learning experience and found it deeply satisfying. When Frances recalled the most rewarding experiences of the quarter, she mentioned a successful midterm in American ethnic studies as well as her service-learning experience in that class: "It feels like I'm giving up my time for helping others so it's a rewarding experience."

In his second year, Jae took a more aggressive approach to his extracurricular activities by applying to six or seven internships and volunteer positions for summer break. His goal was "to meet a lot of people with a lot of interesting opportunities" so that he would find one that worked for him. For the most part, he "got rejected" until he successfully found a program through an organization called AIESEC. He applied to Turkey, Greece and Brazil, among others, ultimately landing a summer internship in Brazil teaching English and computer literacy to children. The application process was valuable to him as he learned to write a CV from talking to his advisor, the career center, and his friends.

Study abroad turned out to be a common interest among the focal students as four out of the seven students continued to earn course credits on university-organized study abroad programs or their own opportunities during the summer. Arielle took a Comparative History of Ideas course in the Netherlands the summer after her first year, and Jae entered a credit-bearing summer immersion in China after his first year to get some general education requirements out of the way. Both Eve and Cassandra studied abroad in Asian countries in the summer after their second year at the university—Eve in Japan and Cassandra in Vietnam. Cassandra had been taking a seminar associated with the Vietnam trip, but the focus in discussing that point was to indicate that she could save money by studying abroad and that the seminar did not push her quarterly course load over 18 credits, which would have incurred additional fees. Like the other students who cherished their study abroad, she was clearly excited about this upcoming experience. The study abroad participants who participated in a university-sponsored program especially appreciated the opportunity to take advantage of university offerings in multicultural settings.

Students like Chloe, Cassandra, Jae and Frances found significant value in off-campus activities, particularly those involving translation work, volunteer opportunities, advocacy, and service-learning. These off-campus activities allowed students to make meaningful contributions to society while broadening their perspectives beyond the university setting.

7.3.2 Race and National Origin

Several of the students experienced challenges with being labeled as international students and spoke of their position either to accept or reject the label. While Arielle, Jae, Emma and Chloe were generally accepting of their status despite its complexities, Cassandra struggled with this assigned identity. Chloe, Cassandra and Jae faced difficulties in their interactions,

which they strived to overcome. Chloe faced the challenge of language and cultural adjustments but used her international status strategically. Cassandra experienced microaggressions when questioned about her origin and struggled with the perception of China – her own and that of others. Jae faced difficulties in connecting with American friends, citing cultural differences in interests and activities.

Chloe accepted that she was an international student, but characterized the label as directly related to the quality of one's academic performance and the effort needed to achieve one's goals. In our meeting in her second year, I asked Chloe whether she identified as an international student. Her response revealed the complexities of the label: "That's my nationality; I'm a Chinese student. My language is getting better; when I talk with others, it's not that hard to talk with me or do group work with me." She had received feedback from her friends and group mates that this was the case. The implied comparison to her previous level of language proficiency or comfort in group work settings suggests that Chloe's language and communication skills were not as strong in her first year, but she wanted to recognize her progress: "Instead of an international student, I want to define myself as a student. I'm trying to be better." She felt strongly about not being treated as someone who was struggling based on language or cultural differences: "You can take that as a reason to explain your failure in your studies. 'Oh, I'm an international student – I don't really understand.' But I don't want to do that." However, she still recognized the extra effort she expended as someone who was not working in her dominant language: "It's true – we definitely have a harder life. We have more work to do and we need to spend more time." She compared her life in the US to what it might have been like in China: "I have so many friends in China. They just go to college. People in China work really hard in high school and then they just need to graduate. They don't really

work that hard in college to get a good job. Here, I have to work hard or I'm not going to pass." She felt that her workload in high school in China, where students are known to work assiduously from early in the morning to late at night, was not dissimilar to her college workload in the US: "I have 7 years of 'high school life' – hard work! Three years in China and four years here." This is not to say that Chloe had devoted her time exclusively to academics. Especially in her second year, she had a "life other than studying." As she explained, "I do still have good grades, but I'm getting into American culture. Like really really American." This admission represented a change in Chloe, who had initially been a bit taken aback by certain elements of American culture, such as American style clothes and fashion.

At our meeting in her second year, Chloe further explained how she interacted with her American peers, using her international student role to her advantage. She walked me through what she does in group work in her classes: "With Americans, in my group work, I start with some beginning questions like what did you do over the weekend, and then we may talk about some cultural differences. If you have nothing to say, it's so embarrassing. [Using small talk] helps you to take charge of this conversation – otherwise it's so awkward and I don't like that." Clearly, Chloe had refined her social skills in English as her comfort in the language grew. Stronger English language proficiency allowed Chloe to bring in more of her personality and social skills in her group work interactions in academic settings.

Chloe felt she could identify herself as an international student to her professor in certain cases. As previously mentioned, she did not want to seem clueless or incompetent, but would ask for help in a friendly way: "It's a good thing to be an international student. In class, if you need something or you have a problem, you just tell the professor that you are an international student, and 'I don't know anything about this.' Sometimes they may give you more time to do your

work and answer your questions." In a good-natured way, Chloe welcomed the chance to learn from those who were interested in helping her.

In contrast, Cassandra flat-out rejected the international student label. Instead, she identified as a person of color. The aspect of her identity related to being an international student from China was problematic and complicated in her mind.

Cassandra provided some background information about her relationship to her Chinese heritage: "There are many things in China I don't like. And one of my personal reasons is that I don't want my children to suffer what I had suffered. ...[My high school experience] was not right, just not right." Cassandra expressed strong feelings about her desire to make substantive changes to society, including the Chinese education system: "People should band together and change things. When you think it's not right, then you should do something." She recalled a moment when she made a new year's resolution to "do whatever I can to change the education system in China." However, Cassandra did not feel support at the time from her peers: "I'm alone. When I started to realize the problems and started to pay attention to this kind of stuff, I feel I'm alone." One of her hopes was that she would encounter like-minded people in college, those who believed in and were invested in social change. When she thought about other Chinese students attending the same university, she felt a sense of separation from them based on their class status or their interest in maintaining the status quo: "Many of them are from rich families; they don't know the reality. When people say something bad about China, they get mad because they don't know it's true." Cassandra went on to dissociate herself from her national origin: "Sometimes I am kind of ashamed of my own identity...I don't like people to ask me where I'm from because I don't want to say, 'China.' It's just that 'China' is not a good word for me to say."

Cassandra went on to describe the microaggressions she often felt when people asked her where she was from. If she was away from Seattle, she'd respond with "I'm from Seattle." When she was asked this question on campus, she would say she was from "out of state." She felt the question to be invasive because it insinuated that she did not belong here in the US or at the university: "you can find that really offensive...depending on the context, 'you don't belong here – where are you from.' It's like where am I really from." Although one would think that would be the signal for people to stop with their questions, "it doesn't shut everyone down. That's what I hate...It's pretty obvious that I don't want to say [where I'm from], so just don't ask more." Cassandra felt these questions to be loaded: "It can be a sensitive topic and it has so many aspects in there, like telling where I am from, it doesn't mean, it doesn't represent who I am." Again, Cassandra rejected other people's labeling of her and assigning her a specific identity based on national origin.

In her political science class, however, Cassandra encountered an unusual situation. She felt tension in a situation where she might have volunteered her identity as Chinese or as someone from an Asian country. Her professor asked the class "Who isn't a citizen of the US?" and several people raised their hands, most of whom were from Europe and Mexico. When the professor asked, "How many are from Japan?" one person was from Japan, another from the Ukraine. He then made a joke about North Korea and Cassandra then expected him to ask about who was from China. In this case, it seemed that she was prepared to raise her hand, and was surprised that she did not have the opportunity to say she was from China: "I was prepared to raise my hand because Japanese, Korean, Chinese – like three big countries in Asia, and he

didn't ask." Her twinge of disappointment suggests that her feelings about and relationship to her national origin are changeable and context-dependent.

Cassandra retold this story ten days later in even more detail and related a new twist when she approached her TA and professor about their thoughts about the hegemonic role of China in the region. She first asked her TA, who gave a preliminary response and encouraged Cassandra to approach her professor with the question. In relating the story, Cassandra indicated that she might have sounded like she was promoting Japan as her professor asked whether she was from Japan: "The interesting part is that he asked whether or not I'm from Japan. Usually people would ask where I'm from." She expected him to press her on the subject, but he didn't: "Well, the interesting part is usually people either don't ask at all or they want to know. And he was in between. 'Are you from Japan?' – 'Like no, I'm not.' Then no question. Oh, it really shocked me a little bit because it's not really what people would do." Cassandra was surprised that he did not press her about her national origin: "he didn't give me the chance to say I'm from China. I don't want to be identified so that was ok." She continued talking about China's lack of diplomacy in meetings in the region, and she was clearly embarrassed by China's actions. She referred to a *New York Times* article she had read where the writer referred to China as "acting like *Mean Girls*, like the movie...I think China acts really ridiculous."

Cassandra also encountered some challenges in interacting with others in her class to become a resident assistant in a dormitory. She felt the class was not productive for her and was a "total waste of time." In the final sessions, the topic of discussion was diversity, something Cassandra had "talked about for years. So it's nothing new. There's nothing new for me." She went on to emphasize that "some people can be really ignorant about certain topics." Since she was working with her peers, she expected them to be well-versed in issues related to race,

privilege, diversity, equity and inclusion: “These are people from my own level and you just say, how can you not know?” When she referred to “her own level” she meant students at her same level of education and exposure to social issues, and was shocked that people did not “see that social problem right there. Like it’s historically rooted - how can you not see it?” When I asked why Cassandra thought her peers intending to be resident assistants did not have an awareness of social issues in the same way that she did, she expanded on her thinking: “I think, first of all, they were not exposed themselves to a social problem, like what is going on around the nation, what is going on around campus. And secondly, maybe it’s background education. They are not really into it and they are not critically thinking about race. Race is a really fluid word that can have so many different elements – in race and racism.” She found herself arguing with a white person about why the Black Lives Matter movement was necessary in the face of structural racism. Even though Cassandra had tended to be a quiet participant in that class because she had “talked so many times in different classes, like history and psychology,” she felt moved to speak up. She interrupted, admitting that she had been “pretty rude” because she had little patience for someone so uninformed.

In contrast, Frances didn’t hide her nationality or even worry about how she represented herself. When people asked her, Frances identified as being from Indonesia. She had previously explained to me that she speaks Indonesian at home with her family. When I asked her if she identified as an international student, her response was: “I just say [to people who ask about my identity] ‘I’m not from here.’ She went on to assert that people asked her where she was from “most of the time.” Although Frances did not place a value judgment on these types of questions, which could be interpreted in some cases as microaggressions, she did indicate that the questions

were a frequent occurrence. She then expressed that she did not know why they always asked where she was from.

Frances connected with the content of her American ethnic studies class, which focused heavily on race and identity. In our interviews, for the most part, she did not share much about the specific content of her classes; however, she explained that she was interested in learning about cultures and social mobility in the US from this course and shared details of a film they had watched on hip hop in the US. In this class, one of the discussion board assignments was to name three groups that students identified with and find a statistic on those groups. Frances chose Indonesians at the University of Washington, Indonesians in the United States, and Catholics in the United States. She mentioned that she had grown up Catholic, although she was "not very religious." For one session of the quiz section of that class, students were asked to bring an artifact from alternative pop culture. She needed clarification on what that meant and what she needed to bring to class, so she emailed her TA who encouraged her to "bring a pop artist...an Indonesian pop song" so she chose three Indonesian pop songs, including " a funny one, not a serious one, but kind of an old one." In explaining her choices, Frances still seemed unclear on the purpose of the exercise, so she wasn't sure which of the songs would be best suited to the assignment: "I'll just see later, I guess." She mentioned that she would have to explain them to her class since they were in Indonesian and no one would know about this artist or understand the lyrics. When I observed this quiz section, the class was divided into small groups and each group was asked to analyze one group member's artifact through a lens they had been discussing in class related to power, capitalism and representation. Frances' group decided to use a Macklemore song that another group member had brought and they were all familiar with, so she never shared her Indonesian songs.

Like Frances, Emma was surprised at the frequency with which people on campus asked her where she was from. Since she had a public-facing campus job as a tour guide, and participated in myriad campus activities, she encountered many people each day. She noted a strong cultural difference in these types of probing questions from her previous experiences in China: "It's really interesting because after I came to the US, everybody's asking where are you from." Her reaction of "oh, okay" signaled that she found the question a bit unusual, although she did not vocalize feeling that it was offensive or a way of "othering" international students. She would respond that she is from Shanghai. She went on to say: "But it's really new to me because back in China, when we are greeting each other, we don't say 'where do you come from?' or "where are you from.'" She indicated that people just guessed where others were from by their accents, but it was not something that people insistently asked. When prospective students or their parents asked where she was from, she would in turn ask them where they were from. She raised the issue of what to do with the information they gave her: "That brings me a lot of trouble because I have no idea which part of America that is." Her way around not knowing American place names or having the country's geography mapped into her brain was to tell them flat out that she is not that familiar with their city but would like to know more about it. She would ask them (challenging!) follow up questions to get them to talk about how it felt to live where they did: "I always admit that I'm trying to learn and I think some people like teaching me about that. I let them talk a little about their hometown. 'Is that a huge city, how is that, how do you feel about that?'" She felt "most people were pretty willing to talk about their hometown" so that worked well as a strategy to connect with them and negotiate differences across cultures.

Another challenge Emma faced in interacting with families was her lack of sports knowledge, since she felt someone who could connect with people over sports would be likely to

give a successful tour. A continued and lively interaction with the visitors typically made for the best tour experience: “When you’re mingling with those people and you have to spend an hour giving them a tour, you expect them to ask questions. Definitely if you’re able to answer their questions, they would come up with more questions and more interaction. That makes a pretty awesome group and tour!” While one’s national origin was not necessarily a predictor of success in a tour, Emma felt that the tour’s success hinged on her ability to connect with people, and having a strong background in American culture and behavior played a role in those interactions.

In Emma’s second year, she reflected on her own value to the university as someone from another place. She saw her role in relation to the tours she and other students gave: “Every time they talk about diversity, they think about me. My native language is not English. This is why we are so diverse. I am honored. They mean good. I am not that outgoing. I am not from this country, so I am not from this country. This place accepts me for who I am and that includes where I am from. That is part of who I am.” Emma was matter-of-fact about her realization of what she could bring to the table while giving tours. She learned to focus on just being herself and “just trying to be honest.” Indeed, Emma demonstrated an elevated sense of integrity in all matters, personal and professional.

Even if Emma felt free to be herself and embrace her identity as an international student, she was well aware of the drawbacks of stereotypes and labels:

> people identify you as a Chinese student. It’s a label. It’s just like a lot of times you just consciously don’t want to fit in that label so that people can look at you the way you want them to. You want them to see over the cover. That’s definitely something I was struggling with and I think everyone was struggling with that. I was talking to my mom about that. There was a time that people would just judge me by how I look, how I dress.

> Everyone will judge… skinny, fat, blah, blah, blah.. They stop their thinking when they actually know you. I have to reach out first to show that I'm a real person.

Emma's conclusion that she would have to be proactive and bear the burden of giving a face to the label spoke to her willingness to extend herself in mature ways and help others see her for who she was. Yet, she admitted that she did occasionally hide or deny her Chinese identity in her first year: "I felt ashamed about how other Chinese people do. I just wanted to deny and say 'it's not me. I have nothing to do with them.' One person cannot really face people judging you." As much as she recognized it was human nature to make judgments about people, Emma did not want others judging her without knowing her.

Jae self-identified as Korean Chinese as his family is Korean and he had grown up in China. He was excited to meet another person with his same background at the university, but it turned out that the person was too introverted for Jae to connect with: "I saw him at a small party, and so I asked, 'Are you like from my place?' – 'Yeah.' – 'So are you Korean Chinese?' And he was like 'yeah.' – 'Oh, nice to meet you.' – ' Nice to meet you.' That was it." Jae found the interaction "really awkward" since he had been excited to talk more with someone of the same ethnicity, but the person did not seem interested. Jae added him as a friend on Facebook, but he did not respond to the request.

Following a discussion of Jae's interest in learning Japanese to add to his Asian language repertoire, and his capitalization on his strengths and interests, he shared an interesting anecdote about his experience on the first day of a Korean studies class in the international studies program. He went to the first class, which lasted three hours, and summed up his experience: "I'm kind of interested in that topic, but...I can't understand [the professor]." He described the situation: "The class is in English, but the professor spoke not really that good English. It's more

like Korean English, so...it's really...I mean, I can't really understand it...if they speak…" The word he eventually found was "Konglish" to describe the professor's use of English. I could tell he felt strange about the experience, when he concluded: "I know I should overcome these difficulties, but I really can't." Aside from a friend from English 108, Jae had not been around Korean speakers using English and was unequipped to make this situation work for him.

Like the other focal students, Eve recognized the complexities of what it meant to be an international student, both the positive values and the challenges. Eve identified as an international student and liked talking about her background with people. She embraced the benefits of being an international student as learning about another culture and having a more multicultural education: "you can know different people, like different people from different cultures. This is more multi-cultured." As an international student, she had a chance to meet a range of people living in the US – Americans as well as other international students from other countries. Her mom had encouraged her to integrate more into the campus community to understand American culture better and take advantage of the opportunity of studying abroad: "I would like to feel what the real America is. My mom told me, 'you don't need to pay so much attention to academics. For the college years, what you need to do is feel another country to know another country's culture.'" Eve wanted to understand "the difference between what America thinks about one thing and what my country thinks about another thing." She felt she should focus on getting to know American culture, but in her four-year plan, she intended to focus on academics in her first year. Then in her second year, she would shift to integrating more into American culture, in keeping with her mom's advice. Nevertheless, in the final quarter of her first year, Eve managed to learn quite a bit through her campus job at the food truck and a seminar on race in the US.

During her third quarter, Eve took a 1-credit general studies seminar on race. She came to appreciate the importance of race in the US and even if she struggled to understand the readings and participate in class discussion early on in the course, she still learned a lot about American culture through this lens. Taking the class helped her know more about and get involved in American culture. More specifically, taking the class helped her “to listen to their discussion and to know how we will discuss this topic because race is a really big discussion in America.” At a mid-quarter check-in, Eve asked what my race was and guessed that I was Caucasian. She then shared some information she had recently learned about miscegenation and we talked briefly about race.

Eve then talked about the disadvantages of her situation as an international student. Even though she was exposed to new cultures, she did not fully integrate into American culture: “you can know about new cultures, but you can’t know them deeply. We grow up in my country, so we know about us, like [pop culture] stars or history, we have more knowledge about that.” Eve suggested that at home, she had more topics to talk about with people because of their shared history, but in the US, it was hard to find topics to talk about that both people knew about, if they were from different countries. Adapting to life in the US was a long process, in Eve’s mind: “it takes a long time because you have to know the basic things first. You need to build up your knowledge about this country.” She felt that with more background knowledge and experience in the US, she would be better equipped to relate to others. At the end of her second year, she still felt that knowing people in her statistics club did not really help her feel integrated or was not enough to achieve her personal goal of learning more about Americans.

Chloe noted one disadvantage of being an international student, as she felt the writing test was a barrier to entry in the business school. International students notoriously struggled with the

writing test, no matter how much they prepared for it: “You can’t can’t really get past the writing test; I tried to figure out where I went wrong - how did those people we know get in? I know one. She was just lucky, she thinks. The other students I know just got a really high GPA.” Although Chloe strived to get a GPA worthy of admission to the program, she was not accepted in her 2nd year. She remarked: “It just didn’t work out. I can’t really tell what went wrong. All I can do is keep practicing. I can’t do other things so I will just do the best on my part.” Despite her disappointment, Chloe still managed to keep striving and keep making progress towards her academic goals.

In our discussion during Jae’s second year, he lamented one of the disadvantages of being an international student, which was a lack of American friends. He indicated that he and his Chinese friends did not have any “American friends.” When I pushed Jae, it seemed that Asian American students were not the Americans he envisioned when he thought about the friends he was missing since he had one Chinese student and three Asian Americans in his study group, two Chinese Americans and one Japanese American. From the context, I surmised that he was looking for friends of races and ethnicities different from his own to count as “American friends.” Yet even if he had found these elusive friends, he was not convinced that their friendship would be suited to him as he found it hard to make friends: “I guess it’s mostly about the culture, the things we can talk about, the things we can do [together], I guess. I don’t know, but it’s not for me.” I was surprised to hear this assessment and his rejection of cross-cultural friendships at the end of his second year since he had been so enthusiastic about meeting new people in his first year. He clarified that “the connection” between him and potential American friends was absent because of a lack of shared popular culture: “You don’t watch the same TV shows, you don’t watch the same sports, you don’t play the same games.”

The implications of labels assigned to and challenges faced by international students extended beyond individual experiences, influencing social dynamics, educational opportunities, and the overall inclusivity of the academic community. Embracing or rejecting the international student label influenced a given student's self-perception and identity formation. Among my focal students, those who accepted the label of "international student" felt positively towards their unique identity and their contribution to diversity, while rejection of the label for oneself resulted in internal conflicts. The focal students' experiences of microaggressions and discomfort related to national origin underscored the importance of fostering cultural sensitivity among all members of the university community.

7.3.3 Power and Authority

The level of power and authority in academic and other interactions at the university varied across the focal students. Their experiences suggested that their power and authority were influenced by factors such as cultural background, language proficiency, resourcefulness, and academic hierarchy. Chloe demonstrated a form of authority in her honors class by leveraging her proficiency in Mandarin. Her initiative to offer help and the professor's showcasing of her work reflected a degree of influence in academics. However, the professor's decision to edit her grammar without discussion pointed to how authority could be exercised over her writing voice. Emma exhibited a different kind of power by creatively navigating institutional constraints to optimize her schedule. In contrast, Cassandra felt a lack of trust and questioned the power dynamic between herself as a student and her English composition instructor. Despite Cassandra's competence, the traditional hierarchy in academia positioned the instructor as an authority figure, limiting Cassandra's perceived power in the context of judging her own work. Eve had limited control over her dormitory placement, indicating that certain aspects of

university life were beyond the students' direct influence. Yet her awareness of the advantages of her dorm, such as having a kitchen, hinted at some agency in her adapting to her living situation. Arielle rarely revealed specific encounters with institutional authority, but she had an existential moment when she wondered how she would survive in the US after graduating from the university.

A defining experience for Chloe was in her attempts to enter the business major. Institutional authority stood in her way in the form of a writing test, which served as a gatekeeper to admission to the business school. In that instance, she lacked the power to surmount this hurdle. In two other moments, Chloe's interaction with power and authority revealed itself in her honors class during her third quarter at the university. For the first, Chloe's good student identity interfaced with her confidence as someone skilled in academic tasks. At the start of the quarter, she emailed her professor offering her help if he thought she could be of assistance as a native speaker of Mandarin, since the course content related to the Chinese writing system. I found this move to be bold but for Chloe it was second-nature to wish to genuinely help. She wielded her authority over her native language with grace, diplomacy, and skill. The second was at mid-quarter, when the professor showcased one of Chloe's discussion board posts since its content was distinctly different from that of her peers. She knew right away that the anonymous post under discussion was hers. Her professor later told me that he had edited her grammar before sharing it so that her peers would not let non-standard usage influence their reading of the ideas in her paper. While I never discussed the editing with her, I always wondered what Chloe's impression was of these changes. Since she often had her papers edited as a matter of course, she may not have felt a large impact from these changes. However, it is worth noting that her professor took control over the presentation of her writing voice.

During her first quarter at the university, Cassandra ran into a roadblock with her English composition instructor. She continually sought out help with her assignments during office hours, but felt her instructor would not answer her questions directly. Cassandra began to question the instructor's expertise, all the while understanding the power dynamics at play: "How can I trust you to judge my paper? Maybe I am better than you but you are the professor and I am the student." Cassandra was dissatisfied with her final grade in the course but did not have any recourse, she thought. In fact, Cassandra only discovered the department's official route to contesting an instructor's assessment of a student's work, the grade appeal, when it was too late.

Emma found a way around institutional constraints in scheduling classes by signing up for a math class and then attending a different lecture of the same course number that fit her schedule better. She had ascertained that the material was the same across sections and "all the sections do the same homework," so as far as the content went, she would be getting everything she needed in her selected lecture. She still attended the quiz section that she had registered for, but she felt that registering for the lecture she actually attended would have been too complicated. The reason she attended the math lecture that she did was based on its location on campus since she had a class right before math and would not have to travel far. She mentioned that she "didn't try [to register for her preferred lecture time] because that will mess up my schedule." Emma had her work schedule to contend with, and even though her move to make the system work for her sounded confusing to others, it worked for her.

For her living arrangements on campus, Eve had requested several different dormitories on campus as her first, second and third choices. She did not know why she was placed in the dorm where she ended up, yet she noticed there were many international students there. One

advantage of her dorm was that there was a kitchen so that she could cook. When I asked her if she cooked her own food, she said that she wanted to cook more, but in reality, she did not cook very often.

Different from the other focal students, Frances felt life at college in the US was hard because she did not have access to drivers and housekeepers that were part of her life in Indonesia. The downgrade in social capital that she experienced in the US meant that she had to live her life independently, which she felt made her physically tired.

Jae experienced the effects of power and authority in his classes in two distinct ways. First, he discovered that perspectives on key historical events were subject to interpretation, and the Western interpretations differed from what he had been taught. Jae had difficulties discerning whether he should draw from his previous experiences in China as a valid source of information or whether he should focus on his professor's viewpoints from a Western perspective. Sometimes the course content was presented differently here in the US. from what he had learned through the media in China growing up: "Things we cover in our own country and here, sometimes it's different so I had a tough time figuring out which one is right...It would be really awkward [stating what I had learned in China] so I just close my mouth." Jae felt silence was the best approach in the face of competing perspectives, each wielding their own authority. In one situation, he wrote a paper on the Vietnam war and struggled to make clear who had won the war, knowing that China had presented a different side of the story from the US. His teaching assistant noted, "I had a hard time understanding which [position] you supported." He pressed his professor for a way to resolve this issue, and was encouraged to interpret the events as he wished: "I told my professor about it and he was like, 'Ah, okay, it's your choice' – 'Can I choose one?' – 'Yeah.'" Jae continued to encounter differing political perspectives in other

courses, too. For instance, in the US "they are saying that certain things helped Japan to boost their economy or something, but in China, they say that Japanese are occupied by the US, so it's not democratic." Jae's struggle to reconcile the perspectives he had learned in China with those presented in US courses reveals the complexities of navigating cultural differences.

Aside from the representation of information and events from different points of view, Jae also observed that in his international studies program, professors "have strong political opinions" and it was important to be sensitive to those leanings. He gave another example about negative attitudes towards extreme right wing groups in Japan in the readings and the professor's lectures which he felt he should pay attention to "because you don't want to go against them because it would be really awkward and really not good for you" to express a view that opposes the professor's convictions. His Korean professor was "really interested in the 'comfort women' issue in Japan" and got upset when someone identified the practice as prostitution, talking for an extra hour about "why this is not the case" to the class. She informed the class, "there are certain things where there is not another perspective. That's what she told me...and I was like, 'Yeah, I got it.'" His takeaway was that some professors had strongly held beliefs that he should accept rather than question.

On the whole, the study participants navigated within the existing institutional power structures, facing both limitations and opportunities. The ability to exercise agency within these constraints varied among the students based on their individual circumstances. Eve and Frances highlighted the importance of social integration and the impact of living arrangements on students' experiences. From dormitory placement to the absence of family support systems, the students underwent a process of becoming more independent and self-reliant. Students like Cassandra and Chloe grappled with issues of authority and trust in student-teacher relationships.

Chloe's experiences also illustrated how institutional structures can influence students' academic journeys when she faced the writing test as a gatekeeper for admission to the business major. Emma's strategic maneuvering in class scheduling and Chloe's diplomatic use of her language skills demonstrated their resourcefulness and adaptability. They both dealt with institutional constraints and found practical solutions to logistical challenges. While she might not have directly challenged authority, Emma's choice to attend a different lecture demonstrated a level of agency in managing her academic experience. In Jae's case, exploring conflicting historical narratives and understanding his professors' political leanings constituted an academic challenge he faced, based on his cultural and educational backgrounds. His decision to remain silent on certain viewpoints reflected a negotiation between asserting personal beliefs and aligning with academic expectations for successful integration.

7.3.4 Conclusions on the Factors Influencing Students' Sense of Belonging

The role of activities, race, national origin, power, and authority influenced the identities of the student participants in the study. The participants' experiences with on- and off-campus activities, combined with other factors such as institutional structures, cultural adjustment, and stereotypes associated with their international student status influenced students' positions at the university. Students' individual agency and resourcefulness played crucial roles in their perceptions of belonging in the new academic and cultural environment of the University of Washington.

Not surprisingly, the students' engagement in on-campus activities, such as clubs and events, contributed to social connections and a positive environment for personal and social growth. The varied perspectives on participation reflected individual priorities, with some emphasizing academic achievements, while others sought personal growth and exploration

through activities. Off-campus activities such as advocacy work and service-learning provided the students with opportunities for community involvement beyond their academic work. The students also relished study abroad opportunities in which all students – both local and international – gained international experience. The value students placed on these activities varied, with some finding significant worth in contributing to society and broadening their perspectives.

Furthermore, the experiences of being labeled as international students influenced their self-perception and identity formation. The focal students' acceptance or rejection of this label had implications for social dynamics and inclusivity. All of the focal students demonstrated cultural awareness and sensitivity, and they sometimes experienced microaggressions, to which they felt inclined to react by dispelling misconceptions or combating stereotypes related to their national origin. The strategic use of international student identity, as observed in Chloe's case, suggested adaptability and resilience in overcoming academic challenges and cultural differences. The students' interactions with power and authority in academic settings were influenced by their cultural background and the academic hierarchy.

Overall, the students navigated to the best of their abilities within institutional power structures, facing both limitations and opportunities. Agency within these constraints varied among the students based on their individual circumstances related to their level of social integration and personal responsibility in shaping their academic experiences. The students' stories underscore the need for open conversations on campus to build cultural sensitivity and create an inclusive environment that values each individual's personal, cultural and academic contributions.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter, I remind readers of the purpose of the study, summarize the findings from the previous 3 chapters, offer brief responses to my research questions, make connections to the findings from Sandra Silberstein et al.'s 2016 campus surveys on international/ multilingual students at the University of Washington, and highlight implications for students, instructors, and institutions.

Through my selection of qualitative methods and an appropriately complex analytical framework, my intention has been to represent the student participants' views, needs and voices through personal accounts. I interpret the events in students' academic lives by revealing the meanings they assign to such events (Athanases & Heath, 1995; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999). Not only has this study allowed the focal students to share their perspectives on the academic tasks they were asked to complete, and reflect on effective strategies for the completion of such tasks, but it also better acquainted them with their own strengths and weaknesses regarding relevant tasks that affected their learning. Acceptance of and respect for all students and their multiple, changing and conflicting identities is a step in the right direction for the empowerment of students. In fact, educators' critical examination of students' identities and experiences is key to transforming our vision of society (Cummins, 2001). Embracing multilingualism and multilingual orientations to identity will help English language learners and users overcome an unfair "linguistic and academic partiality" (Benesch, 2008) and begin to see themselves as whole, productive members of academic and other communities they seek to join. Both Tran (2011) and Shuck (2010) conclude with a moral imperative to direct our attention to the complexity of multilingual students' identities by taking

up Leki's (2001) call to listen to their voices and make their strengths visible. With this study, I have sought to accomplish just that.

8.1 Summary of the Interpretation of Data Chapters

In Chapter 5, I presented the focal students' stories on the most salient academic tasks that they faced, their struggles with those tasks and the strategies they used to work through those challenges. The three main tasks were course readings, class discussion and group work. The students were well aware that their success in their courses required understanding the course readings, managing their reading load and preparing for exams. Language proficiency and cultural background influenced the students' prior and current experiences with the course readings. Whether or not the students had had much prior exposure to reading in English, they quickly got up to speed on active reading techniques to deal with unfamiliar vocabulary and manage the reading load. The focal students also sought external help and advice from their peers in study groups and instructors in quiz sections or office hours to fill in gaps in their background knowledge and improve their reading comprehension and efficiency. With practice over time, the six students who had not had English-medium instruction across the curriculum in high school gained confidence in their skills as they saw themselves make gains in English language proficiency, much like the students in Andrade's (2009) study.

The students' confidence in their reading skills also had an effect on their perceived knowledge of the material, which in turn affected their participation in class discussion, perhaps the most complex of the academic tasks required of them. In effect, their preparation of the course readings directly influenced their interest in surmounting barriers to participation, such as the direction, structure and pace of the discussion as well as large class sizes. The students

encountered significant challenges with class discussions due to the dynamic and spontaneous nature of discussions, language and cultural differences, and the pressure to participate actively.

Despite challenges, the students identified a number of conditions under which they would participate in class, including when they wanted to share strongly held convictions, when they engaged in small group work, or when instructors offered them either direct invitations to speak up or alternate methods of participation. Not unlike the students in Ha and Li's (2014) study and Zappa-Hollman's (2007) study, my focal students all felt compelled to make efforts to participate and for that reason, were cognizant of the types of challenges that emerged during their attempts. One student highlighted the benefit of online discussion boards as part of their coursework, where students could engage with each other's opinions more thoughtfully, allowing for time to think and respond to discussion prompts, which was seen as an effective strategy for overcoming challenges with impromptu oral discussions.

Additionally, the students' experiences with small group work in class depended on the nature of the tasks, the ways the instructor framed them, and their familiarity with their group mates and the motivation of each member. The two STEM students tended towards working individually rather than collaboratively, although all the students kept an open mind to the possibilities of collaboration in one form or another. In some courses like quiz sections in physics or math, small group work was crucial for allowing students to collaboratively problem-solve, cross-check calculations, and discuss various answers, thereby deepening their understanding. If group members did not contribute equally or were not motivated to work, my focal students became disheartened with the experience. In humanities classes, most students actively participated in small group work and saw the benefits of collaboration to their learning. The effectiveness of group work was contingent upon active participation and an equitable

contribution from all members, alongside supportive structures that facilitated meaningful collaboration. This finding corroborates the observations of other researchers regarding small group work in class (e.g., Glass, 2012; Glass & Westmont, 2014; Glass et al., 2015; Liu, 2002; Yang, 2010).

In sum, the study participants applied a range of strategies flexibly as they adapted to the demands of their coursework. They emphasized collaborative learning, note-taking, and exam preparation as skills vital to their academic success. The students grew to value study groups; having started with preferences for individual study, they ultimately recognized the benefits of out-of-class peer collaboration or study buddies for discussion and review of the course material. The peer collaboration my students experienced echoes the student-centered learning outside of class that other researchers have described (e.g., Ho, 2011; Seloni, 2012; Slaten et al., 2016). They prioritized key concepts in the course readings and in class, actively engaged with the lecture material by streamlining their note-taking. Attending review sessions and instructors' office hours proved to be valuable strategies for their success on exams. Through these practices, my focal students gradually became more attuned to the academic literacy demands at the University of Washington. Their habits and practices reflect what Jabeen, Wang & Cheng (2019) have identified as academic engagement.

The study participants also exhibited the ability to transfer procedural knowledge and concepts across disciplines, including applying academic concepts to real-life scenarios. Their recognition of this transferability underscored the interconnectedness of their academic pursuits and disciplinary knowledge. The students demonstrated their metacognitive practices in a third way: understanding personal strengths and challenges. In this sense, awareness of their academic

strengths and areas for improvement helped the focal students to actively seek resources and strategies to address challenges and navigate academic demands effectively.

Not only did the students glean techniques for preparing their coursework and studying for exams, but they also paid close attention to time and workload management. Cheng and Fox (2008) note that strategy use, including finely tuned time management skills, may compensate for lack of English language proficiency. Regardless of their level of proficiency, my focal students discovered methods to evaluate their workload before the start of the quarter and devised a plan to accomplish everything. In many cases, the students demonstrated both metacognitive awareness and adaptability as they transferred strategies from one situation to another. As needed, the study participants evaluated their study strategies and modified their time management practices to meet the academic challenges they faced.

In Chapter 6, I presented several other factors influencing academic socialization. Students' academic predispositions played a role in the approach to their academic pathways; several students demonstrated commitments to heavy course loads, continuous learning during all four quarters of the year, and international experiences through study abroad. Their long-term plans included aspirations for double majors, internships, and careers abroad.

Students entered the university with a level of confidence from their academic experiences in high school. This confidence, in combination with their goal-oriented behavior, helped them possess high levels of self-efficacy in their new academic environment. They showed adaptability (as needed) in the direction their coursework might take on the path to their major, maintained a focus on strategic planning to select the major and ensure timely graduation, and paid meticulous attention to credit management to balance academic and personal goals. The admission process to a major was complex, influenced by factors like individual interests and

program competitiveness in business and STEM fields. In effect, the challenges and decisions associated with course selection and major declaration were central to all of their academic experiences. Before declaring a major, the students felt anxious or uncertain about their course of study and burdened by institutional requirements. As they progressed into their major-related courses, my focal students demonstrated proficiency in navigating academic tasks in their future disciplines.

On their paths to the major, students often sought help from faculty to clarify course concepts or seek guidance on their assignments or other academic concerns. Building connections with academic mentors and gaining a wealth of knowledge from friends proved to be key elements in their academic trajectories, which is also a finding in Bastien, Seifen-Adkins & Johnson (2018). For my focal students, friends provided support, shared information about courses and majors, and facilitated connections with faculty and campus resources, just as other studies have found (e.g., Neri & Ville, 2008; Rienties et al., 2012; Severiens & Wolff, 2008, Wilcox et al., 2005; Zhou & Zhang, 2014). This peer support played a key role in the students' academic decision-making and engagement in campus life. Similar to Lee and Ciftci's (2014) findings, my focal students' experiences demonstrated that both social support and academic self-efficacy were important to their sociocultural adaptation and academic socialization.

In Chapter 7, I focused on the ways in which students' identities affected their personal and academic lives and their sense of belonging in the university community. From my participants' stories, I learned the extent to which their social lives played a role in their identity formation, which emphasized the complexity and significance of social relationships in shaping one's sense of self. Their experiences revealed the importance of maintaining friendships, through efforts such as workouts or collaborative projects for their positive impact on students'

overall well-being. Students' engagement with social relationships varied; some were satisfied with their current friendships while others sought deeper or more frequent connections with local students. Like the students in other studies, my focal students' proficiency in English as well as their choice of when to use English played a role both in their social integration and in their engagement in academic culture at the university (e.g., Wang et al., 2018; Zhou & Zhang, 2014). Students' decisions around language use were context-dependent: while some students used multiple languages in various settings, two students preferred to use English to foster inclusivity and avoid what they saw as exclusionary behaviors. The focal students deemed English proficiency as important for both academic success and social integration.

In addition to participating in social activities, securing campus jobs was a strategy for participants to further integrate into the campus community. These jobs offered opportunities for meaningful interaction with local students, enhanced communication skills, and provided a sense of belonging. The experiences in campus employment were generally positive, contributing to participants' overall campus integration. Three of the focal students found campus jobs in their first year, while three others persisted in their efforts to find jobs, which ultimately paid off in the second year.

The focal students' level of confidence in accomplishing academic tasks was closely tied to their academic socialization, as it shaped their approach to learning and adapting to the university environment. Their self-perception as good students was shaped by factors such as cultural influences, competition, and personal aspirations. Despite challenges, they employed strategies like seeking help, adapting their study methods, and adopting a growth mindset to cope with academic pressures. Several of the students were predisposed to trying new things, whether in academics or extracurricular activities. Some exhibited a mix of meticulous planning for their

academic paths and an inclination towards exploring diverse interests and courses. All of them displayed curiosity and independence, and placed value on the freedom they felt to have new experiences and pursue personal growth on a path to integration at the university. Extracurricular activities played a crucial role in shaping the students' identities as they offered avenues for leadership development, community engagement, and self-discovery. Mirroring the findings of other studies, my focal students' participation in clubs, events and sports provided avenues for developing social connections and a sense of community (e.g., Glass & Westmont, 2014; Zhang & Goodson, 2011). In addition, off-campus activities, including advocacy work, service-learning, and study abroad, allowed my focal students to engage with real-life issues through civic engagement. These activities broadened the students' perspectives and contributed to their sense of belonging.

In short, the study participants displayed evidence of their sense of belonging in the US through their narrative accounts, actions, and responses to challenges. One challenge they faced was related to their identity as multilingual international students. The label of "international student," a racialized label on UW's Seattle campus, had complex implications for students' self-perception and social dynamics, not unlike the findings in Horne et al. (2018) that reveal incidents of discrimination and lack of respect towards international students on campus. While some embraced the label and the diversity it represented, others felt uncomfortable with it due to the stereotypes associated especially with Chinese international students. Students navigated these biases by dispelling misconceptions, combating stereotypes or strategically drawing on their international status. Overall, their narratives on race, language, national origin and encounters with institutional power highlighted the complexities of cultural adjustment, the role of institutional structures in shaping experiences, and the ways in which individual agency and

resourcefulness played a role in fostering a sense of belonging in this new academic and cultural environment.

8.2 Findings in Response to the Research Questions

In the following section, I respond to the research questions in succinct ways after having interpreted the data extensively in the previous three chapters. The overarching question guiding the study was:

What constitutes academic socialization for first-year multilingual international students and how do students seek to achieve this?

Academic socialization for my focal students consisted of achieving their personal and academic goals while adhering to the institutional constraints placed on them and abiding by the requirements asked of them. Students used a formal or informal four-year plan of their devising to move through the college experience, and for them, academic socialization meant finding a major and integrating into the university community. To achieve this, the study participants often relied on their academic predispositions, time management strategies, metacognitive skills, and a healthy dose of self-efficacy. Similarly, their creativity and resilience were indispensable in the academic socialization process.

Institutional academic constraints included a lack of academic advising specifically for international students, registration difficulties and narrow pathways to the major. When students could not register for the prerequisites needed on their pathway to a potential major, they became frustrated and discouraged. Students faced requirements in the prerequisites for their major and then again, in the elusive barrier which was the application to seek admission to a major. Having to apply to a competitive major, which meant that only a select few would form the cohort for that year, proved to be a source of enormous stress for students in statistics, computer science,

and accounting, to name a few. Likewise, other areas of the college experience, such as seeking a position as a Resident Advisor, presented obstacles including a mismatch in student desired outcomes and the requirements of the position.

A perhaps unstated or underestimated aspect of academic socialization was students' sense of belonging in the campus community. An important way that my study participants nurtured and strengthened a sense of belonging was in their engagement on campus through extracurricular activities, their social circles, and campus jobs. These activities served as a gateway into more central participation in the campus community and stood as a proxy until students could gain access to their majors, which proved to be an entry point into their desired academic communities. The value and labor of relationship-building proved to be key components of students' acclimation to their new social and academic environments. As Cassandra so aptly put it, "social life is a wall, not a door." To gain access to integration into the campus community, my focal students needed to keep pushing up against that wall and stepping deftly through the pile of bricks keeping them from their goals and ideals. The counterpart to my students' feeling of social belonging was in fact their actual belonging to a cohort of students in their major in their second year, which got them one step closer to faculty and more advanced students with similar academic interests.

The first sub-question was: **How do students perceive the tasks related to academic socialization and how do they seek to accomplish these?**

As mentioned above, the tasks that my focal students identified as most prevalent, or perhaps most problematic, were course readings, class discussions and working in groups. The strategies they used and the skills they drew from and/or developed were multiple and varied. The process of academic socialization comprised the general experience of managing their academic tasks, a

process for which they drew from and adapted their long prior history as students. Managing the specific tasks like preparing the course readings and participating in class discussions or group work demanded strategies tailored to the new academic environment at the University of Washington in the US. More globally, the primary academic task in their first year was learning how to learn, as Arielle suggested in an interview.

The second sub-question was: **What difficulties do they face in accomplishing their academic tasks?**

The focal students faced language and cultural differences, as these affected impromptu interactions like class discussions and the readings that undergird these. Such differences meant that students had to spend more time than they wished on tasks for which the differences were salient. They could not help but compare their efforts to those of students who had gone through the US education system in their primary and secondary schooling years. This discrepancy meant that my focal students had to be particularly attentive to managing their workload across their courses, especially when they had courses with a heavy reading load. Managing the workload tied into their preparation for class discussion and their willingness to participate, based on certain conditions such as their motivation for thinking deeply about the material, their confidence and the strength of their opinions. The students noted that they also had to navigate linguistic and cultural differences in group work.

The third sub-question was: **How do students position themselves in terms of membership in their academic discourse communities?**

For the most part, the study participants saw themselves as capable students who were open to learning about all aspects of university life in the US and adapting to many of them. They were receptive to discovering new perspectives and resilient when faced with academic challenges.

Once they entered the major, they felt more confident about their positioning as members of the university community. Getting selected for leadership positions in clubs and securing campus jobs also contributed to their sense of social belonging, which was inextricably linked to their overall socialization process at an educational institution in the US.

The fourth sub-question was: **How does identity shape the resources students use for academic socialization?**

Whether the students self-identified as strong students, avid learners, or needing to work a bit harder, they all sought to excel in their classes and find a major that fit their interests. Some identified as "planners" while others were a bit more spontaneous and adventuresome in their academic habits, seeking to learn about many fields before settling on one. Another way the students differentiated themselves from one another was in their language use, and those who sought to use English almost exclusively tended to participate more actively in extracurricular activities, which in turn gave them more access to social and academic networks. These social and academic networks offered pathways to academic success and proved to be intricately linked to students' identity positioning as students aspiring to join a cohort of like minded students in their majors. Regardless of their identity, they all sought out the resources they needed to understand the educational system at the University of Washington and thrive as students and individuals.

The final sub-question guiding the study was: **What other factors impinge on their academic socialization?**

The students' academic predispositions played a role in their academic socialization, as the nature of their long-term goals affected the pathways they chose to accomplish them. The students' confidence in approaching and accomplishing the tasks they encountered affected their

process of academic socialization. Their goal-oriented behavior and strategic decision-making were both contributors to and a reflection of their self-efficacy. Not surprisingly, the focal students were active users of campus resources, including attending office hours and review sessions, and forming study groups. Even the student who characterized himself as mediocre was quite resourceful and used the campus resources as much as the others. Like the other factors influencing the focal students' academic socialization, friend networks offered resources for excelling in their coursework and learning of other campus opportunities. In short, the students' self-efficacy, strategic decision-making in selecting a major, help-seeking behavior, and use of friend networks played crucial roles in their academic success.

8.3 Points of Convergence with Campus Surveys from 2015

The study findings suggest a need for holistic support systems that address academic, social, and cultural dimensions of international students' experiences. This includes targeted academic services, cross-cultural communication initiatives, and a concerted effort to create an inclusive and supportive campus environment for all students. These findings have several points of convergence with other data collected on international multilingual students at the University of Washington. After over a decade of research on international students' academic needs at the University of Washington, Professor Sandra Silberstein's task force conducted three surveys through the College of Arts & Science and campus partners in 2015-16. The first survey sought feedback on teaching international students from faculty and the second from teaching assistants (TAs). In the results from both surveys, the pedagogical challenge mentioned most frequently by the instructors working with international/multilingual students was in class participation. Of the 228 faculty respondents, 70% indicated that "generating participation in class" was a challenge. Similarly, of the 292 TA respondents, 57% identified "generating participation in class" as a challenge in teaching international/multilingual students. In both surveys, class participation

emerged as the most common concern (Silberstein et al., 2016). Given my focal students' elaborate discussions of why participating in class discussion was a struggle for them, or why they hesitated or declined to participate, it comes as no surprise that faculty and teaching assistants observed this challenge as well.

The third survey consisted of over 1000 international student responses, 563 of which were from undergraduate international and/or multilingual students at the Seattle campus. In their responses to the 2015 International and Multilingual Student Academic Survey, among other requests, students revealed that they wanted targeted academic support, opportunities for socializing with other students, and a more inclusive campus environment.

Like the students surveyed in 2016, my focal students identified the need for targeted academic support services, such as advising or language support. When Chloe and I met for our final meeting, ironically in the study rooms of the business school to which she never gained admission, she was insistent that I include a recommendation to set up academic advising expressly for international students. As someone who frequently asked questions of advisors and sought their advice on matters pertaining to her Honors program curriculum or the business school admissions process, Chloe found some gaps in their services. She was surprised that no one had informed her of the option to transfer to UW Bothell and she happened to find out about this possible pathway to achieve her goals from a chance encounter with a friend. She wanted to ensure that students who came after her would have more avenues for achieving their dreams and finding the information they needed to do so. Chloe requested that the UW create a space dedicated to international student academic advising.

Academic support for students and its accompanying pedagogical support for instructors are both resources that are crucial to the success of multilingual international students. Given the importance of class participation to student learning and engagement and its identification as a

main academic challenge by international multilingual students and their instructors, the university should continue to develop initiatives in this area. One implication arising from the surveys and my study is that cross-cultural communication could be the focus of skill-building workshops for students and faculty alike. The burden to work towards mutual understanding of academic expectations regarding class participation should not be placed on one population alone. On the international students' part, if students were to build their listening and speaking skills and their cultural awareness through more interactions in and outside of the classroom, their English language proficiency could be less of a barrier to class participation. Among my focal students, Frances was the only student to have attended an international school with English-medium instruction, but Arielle had opportunities for English immersion at her school and through activities like Model United Nations. The other five students spent varying amounts of time preparing their English language skills, from 3 months to 10 or more years. In recent years, students have arrived on campus at the University of Washington with increasingly strong English language skills, yet they may not feel comfortable engaging in class for cultural reasons. Regardless of the length and intensity of their preparation in English, with more confidence in their oral English skills, students could thus turn their attention to the cultural elements of participating in American classrooms in higher education.

Instructors can, in turn, learn ways to invite and welcome student participation in traditional and alternative forms alike. Basic teaching techniques such as think-pair-share or freewriting offer productive ways for students to process their thoughts and share them in small groups prior to participating in a larger group setting. Scaffolding such as providing discussion questions in advance or offering explicit ways to use active reading to prepare for a class discussion can promote student engagement and learning. Using techniques to encourage

participation among quieter students may also work well for international students. For instance, assigning roles in group work or asking talkative students to invite quieter students into the conversation in small groups may disrupt habits that had previously kept reserved students from claiming the floor. Or informing the class that the instructor will put forward a question and then wait for 15 seconds before calling for responses so that everyone can gather their thoughts may help local students be more intentional about their contributions and create space for international students to speak up. Other forms of engagement, such as written submissions on discussion boards, offer students time to process and organize their thoughts without the pressure of impromptu participation, as Chloe indicated in her analysis. The enthusiastic turn-out among faculty members at events directed by the Center for Teaching and Learning at UW Seattle suggests that faculty are motivated to continue adding to their pedagogical toolboxes to help all students learn. Put another way, with these workshops and sessions, faculty are socialized to the needs of their students, which promotes structural change with tools from the university.

Additionally, campus partners like the Center for International Relations and Cultural Leadership Exchange (CIRCLE) have sprung up since the time of my data collection and demonstrate the university's commitment to multifaceted support for international students. Some of their programs directly address the concerns from the campus surveys and those of my students, such as student success and well-being coaching, or academic and cultural discussions through a program called CIRCLE Fast Track. Interactions of this sort help students improve their English and learn what is going on at the university and in the US, offering them a lifeline of sorts as they are linked with one another by life experiences. As an undergraduate support organization offering an "extended home" for international students in the physical space of the student union, CIRCLE of Friends notes five program goals to address international students'

social, academic and personal concerns: connection & community, safe space, resources & support, social life and leadership. In one form or another, all five of these program goals were ones that my students also sought to achieve during their time at the University of Washington.

In essence, preparation of academic skills goes hand in hand with opportunities for social interaction and improving inclusivity on campus. Given the interdependence of academic and social support for international students, the UW's efforts to prioritize one aspect can have positive ripple effects on the others. All of my focal students noted that they would be interested in meeting more people and finding more local friends. The labor of cross-cultural relationship-building was something they were willing to undertake and did undertake when they had opportunities to do so. Social networks have been invaluable in helping students learn strategies for success and stay informed about what is going on in their campus community. In theory, the more comfortable multilingual international students feel in the social world of the university, the more risks they may be willing to take in the sociocultural context of learning.

To this end, programming for first-year students currently exists at the University of Washington to help students transition into higher education. First-year interest groups (FIGs) allow students to build networks in their academic areas of interest and receive mentorship. Yet, these programs could do even more by developing a conscious focus on student engagement across cultural and linguistic difference. The FIGs could be a site for engagement in which local and international students are explicitly guided to develop self-awareness of their personal and social identities, and then build skills to communicate across language and cultural differences. Such training would help all students as they prepare for increasingly globalized contexts. Students can then become peer mentors to help the next cohort adapt to the university and foster intercultural competence of this sort. Ideally these programs would offer sustained opportunities

for students to participate in learning communities over multiple years so that the bonds students create in their first-year interest groups could be carried through to the learning communities they seek to join once they select a major.

If every department had funding to cultivate the development of prospective students in the major with a focus on social spaces, students could experience the needed continuity of social and academic connections. They might be motivated to give back to the department and help the next cohort of new students who are in the position they once were in. Each department could provide spaces for gathering, set their agenda, invite students to learn about the majors and meet students who have selected those majors. The university could leverage current successes in programs in the College of Engineering, for instance, that provide extensive information about the pathways in various majors in “Discovery Days” and continued mentoring opportunities. Academic integration of this sort can streamline students’ adaptation to the university environment and promote feelings of inclusion and belonging.

Several of my students spoke of encountering viewpoints and even value systems different from what they had been exposed to in their home countries and education systems. In their first and second years at the UW, my focal students went through a process of negotiating differences in perspectives and feeling the effects those differences had on their identities. To make students feel a stronger sense of belonging, instructors could incorporate global curricular content and perspectives into their courses more prominently (Silberstein et al., 2016). The benefits would be compounded. If students feel safe to take social and intellectual risks and the risks pay off, the rewards will be to reinforce their feelings of inclusion and belonging on campus in a virtuous cycle.

While the UW was not the sole influencing factor in whether my focal students felt comfortable identifying as international students, one student's reticence in identifying as a Chinese international student is worth further examination and problematization. I can't help but wonder what the UW community could have done better so that this student had not felt an overpowering need to socially integrate into American culture to the exclusion of her identification with her home language and culture. This student felt it was undesirable to reveal her national origin and home language to others in her classes, in social settings and in her extracurricular activities. This student was heavily invested in befriending Americans and identifying closely with them, seeking inclusion to such an extreme that she erased part of herself in the process. This situation highlights the need to examine the broader political and societal dynamics that may impact the experiences of multilingual international students, such as the rise of right-wing authoritarianism and the stigmatization of multilingual, minoritized, and racialized populations (Duff, 2019). Understanding the sociopolitical contexts in which academic socialization occurs can help to combat linguistic prejudice, oppression and what Ortega (2019) calls "linguistic insecurity."

8.4 Additional Implications

Another implication of my study's findings is that the UW could make the process of finding and declaring a major less stressful. Many students struggle with having to apply to a program or major once they are at the university, but the university may not fully understand the impact of challenges and obstacles on the pathway to the major for multilingual international students. More institutional awareness of the requirements placed on students is merited.

The role of student responsibility in academic socialization in particular and campus involvement more broadly is an implication worthy of discussion. All of the focal students were

proactive in seeking out academic resources, leadership and employment opportunities, and social connections. Connecting with academic mentors, whether peer mentors or faculty mentors, led students to discover new ideas, new courses, new leadership opportunities, and even study abroad trips. It is relevant to note that my focal students came from backgrounds where academics and education played a strong role in their upbringing. In the context of the US education landscape, the focal students arrived at the university with academic privilege from years of hard work and success in their previous schooling. That said, the students drew from their academic capital derived from academic predispositions in surmounting myriad academic challenges in their first year.

I would encourage multilingual international students to get involved in study groups for academic and social support, and campus clubs for leadership, teamwork and exposure to diverse perspectives, as my study participants did. It takes a lot of work to build the relationships that make a giant college campus seem smaller, but students should know that they will find a major that is right for them, and they can and will find their people and carve out a place for themselves at the university. However, the burden of academic socialization and campus engagement should not be borne exclusively by the students themselves. These seven students had the resources, metacognitive awareness and self-efficacy to devise a plan and adjust it as necessary to succeed, but what about those students who enter the university setting with fewer resources at their disposal? The question then arises about how institutions of higher education can facilitate the academic and social development of all students, whether international or local. Barriers to student success are systemic, and thus structural changes and university-wide tools are needed to overcome these barriers.

Finally, it is unrealistic to make sweeping generalizations about a population of students; we should thus treat multilingual international students as individuals. Accordingly, research should reflect this level of nuance. How would someone capture the connections among my 7 focal students: the activist, the dancer-computer scientist, the persistent accountant, the artist-philosopher, the quiet dissenter, the statistician and the unflappable student? My intention has been to provide a "thick description" in Geertz's (1973) sense of the expression of my focal students' academic lives and identities in their first year. In so doing, I have attended to and highlighted the concerns, challenges and successes they identified in their academic socialization process. While I make no claims about the representativeness of these multilingual international students, it is noteworthy that all of them surmounted the challenges of their first years at UW to emerge largely successful, both at the university and in their future careers. Even as I have documented the challenges institutions and students face across cultures and languages, it is fair to say that this is a study of the focal students' academic development and success over time.

My research strives to identify and shed light on the contexts in which the process of academic socialization occurs in order to promote rewarding learning experiences for all students, including the growing body of international students. If we focus on "learners' actual experiences" (Belcher & Lukkarila, 2011, p.74) through an examination of their past experiences and current practices as contributions to their academic socialization process in conjunction with faculty perspectives of those experiences and identities, we can move toward reciprocal socialization among instructors and students (Duff, 2010). In this way, we can ultimately help researchers in the field of language education, instructors from a range of disciplines, and support program administrators better understand multilingual international students' perspectives, as well as their resources, challenges and needs. By understanding the complexities

involved in students' academic socialization, members of the academic community may become more equipped to meet the needs of incoming first-year multilingual international students through pedagogical, curricular, or institutional initiatives.

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APPENDIX

Interview Guides for Students, Instructors, Tutors and Support Program Administrators

Interview Protocol for International Students

Beginning of Term Interview Guide

1. Where are you from, and what languages do you speak? What is your first language?
2. What is your age and year in college? How long have you studied in the US or in other English-speaking countries?
3. When did you start learning English, and reading and writing in English?
4. Before coming to the UW, how regularly did you use English? For what kinds of academic tasks did you use English?
5. How did you prepare for coming to a US university?
6. How have things been going at UW?
7. Have you faced academic challenges since you've been at the UW?
8. What did you do over the break? How was it?
9. Did you spend any time on activities related to school? Describe what you did.
10. How regularly did you use English? For reading? Writing? Social activities?
11. How are you feeling about the upcoming academic quarter? What classes are you taking?
12. What do you think you will have to do to succeed in these courses?
13. How do those classes apply to your major, or prospective major?
14. Is anything else going on in your life that is affecting your school work that you would like to share?

After-shadowing Interview Guide (adapted from Leki, 2007)

1. How did your classes go? What did you think about your classes?
2. What are you working on now in each class?
3. Why do you think your instructor assigned this type of work?

Writing or Reading

4. What did you learn from this assignment?
5. How did you do this assignment? How did you know how to do this assignment?
6. What kinds of problems did you have with this assignment? How did you deal with it, or solve this problem? Have you been to a writing center since coming to UW?

Study Habits

7. How are you studying for this course? What are you doing?
8. How much time do you spend on each course?
9. Do you feel that you study the right amount, or too much, or not enough? Why?

Group Work

10. Are you involved in any group work now? Or do you have any study partners? In which classes?

11. If you have group work, can you tell me about it? What kind of project was it? Did you choose the groups, or the project?
12. When and where do you meet to work on the project?
13. What's going well with the group work? What is challenging about it?
14. If you have study partners, how do you help each other?

End-of-Quarter Interview Guide

1. What stands out for you in thinking about this quarter? Why?
2. What progress have you made in developing your academic skills?
3. What types of academic challenges did you face this quarter?
4. How did you solve problems that you encountered in your classes?
5. What was the most helpful strategy or resource you used to overcome challenges in your classes?
6. What was the most rewarding moment for you this quarter? Why?
7. What did you learn about yourself as a learner or student this quarter?
8. How pleased were you with the results of the quarter in terms of grades or your own learning?
9. How are you feeling about your major, or potential major?
10. How did your learning in these classes relate to your major?
11. What else would you like to share from this quarter?

Shadowing Guide to Field Notes (adapted from Leki, 2007)
During the observations, the researcher will pay special attention to the following:

1. Describe a typical day in [student]'s academic life.
2. Where does s/he focus the most attention academically?
3. How does [student] perceive his/her academic progress?
4. What academic or other concerns does [student] have, in general?
5. What areas of academic or other strengths does [student] identify and/or exhibit?

For specific courses:

6. How does the student react to the course as a whole, the class sessions, the professor and the assignments?
7. Do other students seem to react the same way?
8. What do students need to learn in this course?
9. What skills do students demonstrate (and need to succeed) in the course?
10. How much attention is paid to acquiring knowledge vs. building skills?
11. Characterize the student's participation in the course.
12. Do you see any interaction with other students?

Interview Protocol for Instructors

Interview Questions: Instructors
Interview Guide (adapted from Leki, 2007)

1. What are the most essential tasks in this course for students to succeed? Which activities and assignments move students closer to the goals of the course?
2. What types of writing do students do in this course? What is your goal in assigning these tasks?
3. How do students know how to do these types of assignments? What other resources do you expect them to draw on?
4. What difficulties do students have in doing these assignments?
5. What kind of feedback do you give them on their writing (on papers, exams, etc).? How are they evaluated on their writing?
6. What do you learn from reading students' writing?
7. What is the role of the course readings in the class?
8. What challenges do students face in the course readings?
9. How familiar with the readings should students be? How well are they supposed to know the readings?
10. How will they be evaluated on their understanding of the course readings?
11. Do you ever assign group work in this course? If so, what are the goals and typical outcomes of group work? If not, why not?
12. What is the ideal way for students to study for this course? What do you see students doing to prepare?
13. What other challenges do students have in the course? How do they address and overcome these difficulties?
14. What do students enjoy about the course?
15. Do you see any particular advantage or disadvantage for international students in this course?
16. What helps or hinders international students in this course? Do they ever come talk to you about their work?
17. Have you ever felt that international students have either a negative or positive impact on the course? In what ways do they influence the course?

Interview Protocol for Tutors and Support Program Administrators

Interview Guide: Tutors

1. What are your goals for a typical tutoring session?
2. What do you do in a typical tutoring session with international students?
3. What kinds of challenges do international students face in their academic tasks?

4. How are these challenges different from those that all students face (if they are different)?
5. What strategies do international students use to overcome these challenges?
6. Are students usually familiar with these strategies before their tutoring session, or are these strategies that you present to them?
7. What other resources do international students use in working through these challenges?
8. In your interactions with them, what other strengths have you noticed that international students possess?
9. In your experience, how do international students view themselves as students?

Interview Guide: Support Program Administrators

1. Why do international students come to your program or center for help?
2. How do they find out about your program or center?
3. What are your goals or expectations for your program or center in regards to helping international students?
4. What kinds of challenges do international students face in their academic tasks?
5. What kinds of resources do they use to overcome these challenges?
6. How do you see your role in regard to international students' academic socialization?
7. What future plans does your program or center have for supporting international students' academic needs?