EAST ASIAN INTERNATIONAL SOJOURNERS’
IDENTITY MANAGEMENT IN
THE HOST COUNTRY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the East Asian international sojourners’ identity performance and negotiation in the host country as a part of cultural adjustment. To explore the communication behaviors of East Asian international sojourners, I interviewed individuals ($N=26$) from four East Asian countries (South Korea, China, Japan, and Taiwan). The collected data were analyzed with an emergent thematic analysis. The result indicated that East Asian international sojourners negotiated and performed their identities when they communicate with others in the process of cultural adjustment. Firstly, when East Asian international sojourners interacted with people from their home-cultural group, they (a) avoided home-culture group, (b) showed their American side, (c) approached cultural informers, (d) experienced instant connection, (e) de-emphasized Americanness, (f) were extra polite, (g) shared home culture. Secondly, they showed nine communication behaviors when they interacted with host-culture groups: (a) following American norms, (b) experiencing distance, (c) communicating with ease, (e) avoiding certain communication topics, (f) becoming more expressive, (g) keeping their home-culture way of communication, (h) effort driven negotiation, (i) strategically interacting for benefit, (j) working to make a good impression. Finally, they actively interacted with diverse groups and set up new version of identity regardless of cultural groups they communicated with.

The analysis of interviews also revealed that East Asian international sojourners experienced two types of tension, as well as the environment of less tension during communication in the host country. They felt pressured to selectively assimilate to the host country. To negotiate the tension, they followed American norms to be successful.
Next, they experienced tension between the two cultures (home culture and host culture). They chose code-switching communication styles based on the audiences in order to resolve the tension. Finally, in the host country, they felt less pressure as they were physically away from their home culture. In the environment of less pressure, they chose communication behaviors based on their preference.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to everyone who supported me and assisted me through blood, sweat, and tears for creating this dissertation. In particular, my family and close friends who were always beside me and supported me throughout the time taken to complete this masterpiece.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It has been six years since I moved to the United States and started my first graduate degree. Some people may say six years is long enough to adjust to a new culture and some people may say six years is not enough. For 6 years, I have been exposed to direct and indirect intercultural interactions with local people, while also interacting with people originally from Korea. Through this process, I realized that I have been gradually navigating my identity in the United States, negotiating between my Korean norms and American norms. When I went back to Korea during summer vacation after I spent two years in the United States, some people told me, “Oh, now, you have become an American.” On the other hand, American people expect me to follow Korean characteristics and traits that they know based on stereotypes. Eventually, my identity has become midway between “being a Korean” and “being an American.” The more I spend time in the United States and interact with local people, the clearer the in-between identity has been. In my case, rather identity as “being Korean” or “being American” was chosen to adjust to American society, the “in-between” identity, negotiating both two identities, became salient. Based on my experience and friendships with international students and sojourners, I see that they also have had similar experiences.

In my master thesis (Kim, 2017), I interviewed seven international students in order to explore their change of identity performance in the process of intercultural adjustment. They were enrolled in a college in Louisiana and they had been in the United States less than a year. Identity performance is a set of behaviors and actions that individuals engage in in order to follow the norms in a society by interacting with others in the society or culture (Goffman, 1959; Kim, 2017). However, individuals may harm or change their own existing identity
when they follow social norms (Crane, 2002). International students, who are not familiar with American society and its culture, may not feel capable or comfortable performing their own identity in the host country because of the social norms. The common emotion that they experienced during their residency in the United States was “excitement.” According to Lysgaard’s (1995) U-curve model of intercultural adjustment, they were likely in the honeymoon stage, when newcomers often have positive feelings about the host culture. The study paid attention to the changes in international students’ identities and how they changed from their original identity in their home country. With positive feelings toward the host culture, they constructed new identities, reflecting expectation of the host culture. The result of the research indicated that participants built up new identities in the process of adjustment, either their identities became closer to American culture, or they developed a stronger identity as a member of the home country culture. Also, being apart from their home country and community lead them to build a new identity.

My master thesis work (Kim, 2017) encouraged me to think about another angle of international sojourners’ identity change. In the thesis, I paid attention to the change of their identities and how different they perceived their identities as being from the original identity that they formed in the home country. However, based on my experience in the United States as an international sojourner for six years, international sojourners’ identities are gradually transformed by interacting with host-culture individuals and the community. While my previous research only focused on the “change” of their identity as a result of the cultural adjustment in a new environment, this project sees identity changes as a continuous progress through communicative experience with one’s surroundings. With this in mind, I explore the dynamics of identity that change over time adjusting to a new culture.
Research Purpose and Rationale

The number of international sojourners in the United States, including those on business and leisure trips and those arriving for academic purposes, has been increasing since 2005 and as a result there are many temporary residents (Institute of International Education, 2019; Pedersen, Neighbors, Larimer, & Lee, 2011; United Nation, 2017).\(^1\) The U.S Travel Association (2018) reported that 79.6 million individuals visited the United States in 2018. The U.S is one of the largest destinations for foreign visitors. The total number of international students who were enrolled during the 2018/2019 academic year was 1,095,299, and this number made up 5.5 percent of higher education enrollments in the United States (Institute of International Education, 2019). This number was 0.5% higher than the previous year. Also, the most recent data indicated that the number of temporary foreign workers with nonimmigrant visas was 1.42 million and the U.S. government expected that there were more temporary workers, considering the population of undocumented foreign workers. Also, the Trump administration had expected to attract more workers (Costa, & Rosenbaum, 2017; long, 2019), and the Biden administration stated they would accept more refugees to the U.S. (Alvarez, 2021). These workers made up 1% of the employees in the U.S. (Costa, & Rosenbaum, 2017). Even though individual international sojourners may not continue their residency in the foreign country, they should not be overlooked considering the number of foreign visitors in the United States. Also, while the COVID-19 crisis temporarily limited the movement of students, workers, and refugees to the U.S. because of travel restrictions, the numbers of people coming to the country is expected to resume at its previous rates in the next few years.

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\(^1\) The data is prior to COVID-19, when some numbers decreased.
The present study focuses on the international sojourners’ evolving identities. One’s identity negotiation as a member of a society and self-identification play an important role to help newcomers adjusting to a new culture and environment (Gao & Gudykunst, 1990). The formation of identity is achieved through the interaction between the individual and the community. In this process, individuals gradually develop their own cultural identity to adjust to new environment and culture (Kashima & Pillai, 2011). Individuals who come to an unfamiliar environment experience the change of their cultural identities in several ways. The process lets international sojourners compare the host culture and their heritage culture, and it leads them to negotiate their existing cultural identities and new cultural identities (Sussman, 2000). Also, international sojourners have an opportunity to interact with various social groups in the community, the interaction allows them to learn social norms and beliefs in the society.

Definitions of Key Terms

*International sojourners*

The term, *international sojourners* has been used in various ways, focusing on the length of their residence, their visa status, or their purpose of residence. From a short-time traveler to a temporary resident with a working visa, some scholars have defined international sojourners based on the residence period. Peterson, Milstein, Chen, and Nakazawa (2011) defined “sojourners” based on the period of their residence. They defined international sojourners as people who visit foreign countries voluntarily for at least half of a year without permanent residency in the foreign country (Lie, 1995; Peterson, Milstein, Chen, & Nakazawa, 2011). Moon (2011) also categorized participants of a research project by the length of their stay, calling them international sojourners: short term (up to 4 years), midterm (five to 10 years) and long term (more than 10 years). The length of stay is one aspect that differentiates other types of residents such as immigrants and refugees. International
sojourners stay for a comparatively shorter length of time than immigrants or refugees (Nishida, 2005).

Visa status is also part of international sojourners’ residence. Depending on the purpose for visiting and the relationship between countries, sojourners obtain legal status to stay in the country. The U.S. offers several types of non-immigrant visas for non-American citizens who want to visit the U.S. for different purposes; for example, H1-B visas are for skilled workers and F1 visas are for international students (Thakur, Singh, Singh, & Rana, 2018; Wilson, 2019). However, the status for these visas is not permanent residency for immigration, which would allow someone to stay in the host culture indefinitely.

An individual’s goal for residence in the foreign country is one characteristic of international sojourners. For example, international students and international employees come to the foreign country for a certain purpose and achieve that goal, then (in theory) return home. The goals for international students are academic achievement including language proficiency and obtaining a degree in the foreign country (Spencer Oatey, & Xiong, 2006; Young, & Schartner, 2014). Foreign-born workers move to a different country to build their career, to seek job opportunities, or to earn money (Froese, Peltokorpi, & Ko, 2012).

Some scholars have differentiated between refugees and international sojourners based on by the necessity of going back to their home country. Peterson, Milstein, Chen and Nakazawa (2011) mentioned, “Though there are distinctions regarding long-term versus short-term sojourners, sojourners do not include those who must leave their home countries out of necessity, such as refugees” (p. 291). In the case of refugees, they may have an intention to select a country to move to, but no choice of going back to their home country. They must find a way to survive in the foreign country because of conflict or natural disaster. Therefore, refugees are commonly excluded as a category of international sojourners.
In summation of those characteristics of international sojourners, for the purpose of the current project, I define the term, \textit{international sojourner} as people who temporarily reside in a foreign country for a certain purpose such as academic achievement or a job opportunity, without permanent residency in the host country, excluding individuals who have no possibility of going back to their home country.

\textit{Identity}

In social and behavior science, the concept of identity has been centrally applied to understand individuals’ thoughts and behavior in certain situations. (Jung & Hecht, 2004). In general, identity was either conceptualized as a means of expressing self-image to others (Hogg, 1993; Tajfel, & Turner, 1979) or, as a social being, understanding how one’s position in the society influences an individual’s self (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Schlenker, 1985; Trepte, 2006). The former perspective explores one’s chronic identities and identities revealed in interpersonal interaction, while the later perspective pays attention to social-cognitive processes through inter-group activities (Thoits & Virshup, 1997). Even though the meaning of identity is different for different scholars, depending on how they emphasize individual self (who I am) or social self (who we are), both approaches consider identity as a connection between one’s role and behaviors that confirm one’s roles (Ju & Sandel, 2018; Thoits & Virshup, 1997). For the purposes of the current study, I utilize the definition of identity which emphasizes an individual as a social being, and that individuals behave and play roles in accordance with their position in the society.

\textit{Cultural identity}

Ferguson, Nguyen, and Iturbide (2017) considered cultural identity as a distinctive aspect of social identity. Cultural identity is deeper and narrower than social identity that encompasses rules and ideals as a member of a society. Cultural identity is only shared and claimed by a specific cultural group, adding more layers of norms and values (Schwartz,
Montgomery, & Briones, 2006; Umaña-Taylor, 2015). For example, Korean American women are expected to behave in a certain way within the Korean community, adding to the expectations they experience as women in the United States. Ferdman and Horenzyk (2000) also explained cultural identity as referring the concept of social identity. According to them, individual’s cultural identity emphasizes one’s identity as a member of a cultural group, featuring their actions, beliefs, ideals, and rules that can connect them with the cultural group. In summation, one’s cultural identity has been constructed by communication with cultural group members, and the communicative construction includes meanings that are shared only by the members of the cultural group. As a member of a cultural group, an individual constantly learns norms and values of the group, often unconsciously and usually performs those norms and values directly and indirectly as a mean of displaying their cultural membership. The current project explores East Asian sojourners’ management of identity in the process of cultural adjustment. Considering the purposes of this dissertation, cultural identity is defined as “one’s identity that has been formed by interacting with members of a cultural group, learning norms and values that are passed by those members.”

Given those understanding of sojourners, identity and cultural identity, in the following chapter, I describe how scholars have understood and explored East Asian international sojourners’ identity management from various perspectives.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Experiences of international sojourners’ cultural adjustment in a new environment and their identity management have been explored by various researchers from different perspectives. In this chapter, I review previous research and theories focusing on international sojourners’ cultural adjustment and identity management to see how previous researchers understand those concepts and build a basis for research questions for this project. First of all, I examine the connection between cultural identity and communication. Several scholars have described the influence of communication in the formation of identity and cultural identity (Goffman, 1959; Hecht, Warren, Jung, & Krieger, 2005; Ting-Toomey, 1998). Then, I review the concept of norms and values, and how these work in a society. The next section explores previous studies about international sojourners’ cultural adaptation in the host country including their difficulties and experiences in the process of adapting. Though the cultural adaptation process has been explored from different perspectives, there are still some areas to be examined. This section includes subsections that are the most commonly utilized concepts and theories; culture shock, the integrative theory of cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2001; Lysgaard, 1995), anxiety/uncertainty management theory (Gudykunst, 1988), and cultural adjustment and identity. The following section of the literature review pays attention to East Asian international sojourners’ cultural adjustment experiences. Considering the population of East Asian sojourners in the U.S. and the distinctiveness of their culture, it is worthy of being explored in detail. The last section focuses on co-cultural theory (Orbe, 1998).

Cultural Identity and Communication

In addition to perspectives that explain the definition of identity, scholars have paid attention to the role of communication in expressing and forming one’s identity. Goffman’s
(1959) research on identity has been frequently referred to by scholars, centering communication as a major tool for expressing and forming one’s identity. Goffman argued that people present themselves in daily life through communication with their surroundings. This means that identity is not inherited, but people develop identities by interacting with others in society. In the process of communication, people define and construct themselves, answering the question, “Who am I?” or “Who are we?” Also, an individual as a communicator engages some degree of their personal identity when they interact with others (Goffman, 1959). Therefore, communication is essential for both building and performing identity.

Recognizing communication as a means of constructing one’s identity and displaying identity also implies that identity is not static, but flexible. Most individuals have encountered various social groups and cultures in their life. By interacting with them, people learn norms and rules of behaviors and in this process, one’s identities emerge (Goffman, 1957). Taking this perspective, communication scholars pointed out the relationships between communication and identity and explained its flexibility. Hecht, Warren, Jung, and Krieger (2005) described identity as a tool that connects an individual and society, and identity development can be achieved through communication with others in their society. People have learned meanings that are projected from others and those meanings become a code for an individual to define him/herself as a member of the society. Even though an individual has a core identity, his or her identity is not fixed, as one’s learning process is ongoing and emergent through communication with others.

Ting-Toomey (1988) also emphasized the importance of communication and social interaction with others who share one’s identity. Ting-Toomey argued that people build their identity through social interaction and communication with others. According to her, the first social interaction is with one’s family. Starting from there, individuals encounter various
groups and cultures in the society and the social interaction brings about changes in their identities. That is, communication with others is highly related with building identities. The interaction through communication with various social groups encourages individuals to transform their identity in accordance with social norms and behaviors.

The role of communication in identity formation connects to another characteristic of identity: an individual holds multiple identities. As many scholars pointed out, individuals directly or indirectly interact with surroundings (Baraldi, 2015, Goffman, 1957; Hecht, Warren, Jung, & Krieger, 2005; Ting-Toomey, 1988, 2005). In the process of interaction in one’s daily life, they learn social norms and behaviors following the social norms (Ju & Sandel, 2018). Those norms are related to someone’s role as a member of a society. For example, students are expected to be prepared and actively participate in a class. Starting from a small group, normally family, people interact in many social groups and learn roles in those social groups, such as being a daughter, a student, father, a lover, a husband, and so forth. Depending on the social groups that an individual interacts within, they acquire multiple roles and statuses, and it connects them to build a multifaceted identity in the society. It does not mean that an individual has identities that are extremely different. The core identity that defines an individual him/herself is centered their own concept about him/herself; however, situations and contexts that the individual faces let him or her enacts their identity in accordance with the situation and context (Hecht, Warren, Jung, & Krieger, 2005; Ting-Toomey, 1988).

One’s formation of cultural identity is in close connection with communication. As explained above, individuals’ identities are built over time through communication with others and their surroundings. One’s cultural identity is often revealed when an individual is exposed to different cultures or individuals who are from a different culture (Imahori & Cupach, 2005; Ju & Sandel, 2018). Being exposed to a new culture or people from different
cultural backgrounds encourages individuals to think about their own culture and the identities that have been formed within their own culture (Baraldi, 2015; Ju & Sandel, 2018). When individuals recognize cultural differences from these encounters, they try to manage the cultural differences both emotionally and cognitively (Bennet, 1993). In this process, individuals may learn more about their cultural identities and, at the same time, they negotiate their cultural identities through communication with their surroundings (Imahori & Cupach, 2005; Kashima & Pillai, 2011). The recognition of cultural identity includes understanding of oneself as a member of cultural group. From this perspective, cultural identity aligns with a social identity that represents the self as a part of a society, defining “who we are,” including symbolic features of a social category, which explains unique characteristics that the social group has (Ferdman & Horenzyk, 2000; Ju & Sandel, 2018).

In summation, one’s identity is built by interacting with others in their society and communication plays a vital role in this process. Also, people form multiple aspects of their identities depending on the social groups that they interact with and their roles within those groups, thus identity is not rigid, but flexible. In the case of international sojourners who come to the new environment, they are intentionally and unintentionally exposed to people who have different cultural backgrounds from themselves. While they communicate with those people with different cultural backgrounds, they often need to develop and perform their identities differently in accordance with the cultural groups that they encounter.

Norms and Values

One’s identity formation is closely related to interaction with their surroundings (Ting-Toomey, 1988). Being placed in a new culture or environment may lead people to re-explore their identities, as they start learning norms and values of the new society in the process of interacting with people from the new culture and the environment (Crane, 2002; Taylor, 1994). International sojourners at the beginning of their residence likely do not have
much knowledge of behavioral and cultural norms of the new culture (Lewthwaite, 1996). In order to fit into the society and achieve their goals, the newcomers attempt to learn norms and values of the society (Ye, 2005). Norms and values are associated with each other in large part because both values and norms are intertwined. Values refer to what an individual or people think to be significant and worthy, while norms show how people need to act or not to act (Gudykunst, 2004; Hall, 2005; Teilanyo, 2015). Based on people’s opinions of what is worthwhile or not, they will make rules for what one should do or should not do.

It is also important to mention that both norms and values are collectively built through communication among the members of a society (Hofstede, 2001; Hogg, & Reid, 2006). Hofstede (2001) defined values as the “collective programing of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” (p. 9). Norms are “shared patterns of thoughts feelings, and behavior” (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p.8). Norms in a society have been formed by members of a group (Hogg & Reid 2006; Hogg & Tindale, 2005). People in the group communicate with each other implicitly and explicitly about how other people behave and talk. Through the communication process, they share information about behaviors and actions, and with the implicit agreement about which of those behaviors and actions are normal. This means that norms and values can be gradually changed since they are not rigid, but flexibly formed with the implicit agreement of the members of the group. For instance, in the past, the norm of marriage was a union between a man and a woman. Marriage between people of the same-sex was not allowed or was treated as deviant behavior. However today, same-sex marriage has become normalized in the United States and some other countries. This indicates a change of values over time. In the present, many people put more value on individuals’ choice of a romantic partner than social pressure to be a heterosexual. Frese (2015) suggested a clear differentiation between norms and values using the concept of inside and outside orientation. According to him, norms direct group members’
behaviors. Once norms are determined by agreement from members of a group, individuals in the group are expected to act following the norms. In other words, norms are identified externally. On the other hand, values are perceived internally. A member of a group gets the concept of ideals from the group. They reach an implicit consensus on what should be prioritized in terms of idealized behaviors and attitudes; however, those ideals do not need to directly connect to practice. For example, wearing a white dress in a wedding is a norm for a bride in American culture, whereas, choosing a design of the white dress is a personal choice, that may be influenced by personal and cultural values. Guests of the wedding would expect a bride to wear a white dress. If a bride does not wear a white dress, they would question why the bride did not wear white dress because it is a norm for Americans. Traditionally the value represented in the white dress was purity (virginity). Today, many brides are not virgins, but still wear white wedding dress following the norm.

Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, and Grube (1984) suggested a similar argument about the definition of values. They argued that values are the main element to build individuals’ personality and their self-esteem, which means that an individual’s behavior following their values is more of self-oriented not from outside. For example, an individual watched a documentary film about how meat in the market is processed, and they were impressed by the film. Then, as a result, they put value on animal rights and banning animal cruelty and as a consequence, changed their behavior to become a vegetarian and an animal rights activist. Even though the individual was influenced by media, which is an outside source, it was their own decision to become a vegetarian and animal rights activist.

As norms and values are constructed by the tacit agreement among group members, it is mandatory to learn them in order to fit into the group and to be accepted as a member (Chang, 2015). People frequently judge other individuals’ attitudes and behaviors based on their own cultural norms, which may be very different from the norms from the group that the
other individual belongs to (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Values, on the other hand, offer individuals a standard to judge their own or others’ verbal and nonverbal actions (Klopf, & Ishii, 1987). People evaluate what is important or unimportant and what is worthy or not worthy. Therefore, understanding and performing norms and values are an important process for identity formation and reinforcement in people. International sojourners, who enter a new environment without being familiar with its norms and values, may experience the process of learning those norms and values that may be very different from their own.

Cultural norms and cultural values are terms that are relevant to the present study. As mentioned above, norms and values are patterns of behaviors, beliefs and actions shared by a group of people and have been formed collectively (Hofstede, 2001; Hogg & Reid, 2006). Term “cultural norms” and “cultural values” define the characteristic of the group – the group of people who share the same culture, layering meanings and characteristics of being in a cultural group. For example, having three meals a day is a norm in American society, whereas, choosing a dish or mealtime for each meal is an individual choice that can be influenced by individual values and needs. The cultural norms and values add more layers to one’s behaviors or attitude. If an individual is a Muslim living in the United States, their cultural norms might be different from others since their choice of meal would be shaped by their culture and religion. Therefore, their meals would likely not include pork. Applying cultural values to meals, a Muslim individual may spend more mealtimes with family members than is typical in the United States, because Muslim culture is more collectivistic putting a strong value on a family connection. Grønkjær, Curtis, Crespigny, and Delmar (2011) defined cultural norms as deciding rules and normality of attitudes and behaviors by people in a particular group. Gudykunst (1997) stated that individuals accept values in the process of socialization, influenced by the culture and cultural values that leads individuals to decide what are acceptable behaviors in different situations. In other words, cultural norms
and values are generated gradually within the cultural system that a specific group of people share. Individuals who are in the cultural group would usually understand the cultural values and norms and attempt to behave following those to intentionally and unintentionally express their identity as a member of the cultural group (Baraldi, 2015; Ferdman, & Horencxyk, 2000; Jensen, 2003).

International sojourners, who are new to the host country, learn cultural values and norms of the host country through communicating with others and their surroundings. They may perform those newly learned cultural values and norms when they interact with people in the host country. However, at the same time, they may communicate with people from their same cultural background in the host country. The current project explores how international sojourners negotiate the performance of identity between their home culture and the host culture when they communicate with people from both groups.

International Sojourners’ Cultural Adjustment

From a short trip to another region to permanent immigration, millions of people relocate themselves to a different environment for various reasons, this includes refugees, business- persons, international students, missionaries, and others (Kim, 2005). The entry to a new place results in an individual having to face a new culture and adjusting unfamiliar environment (Kim, 1988). To fit into the new culture and environment as a member of society, most individuals attempt to learn and adapt to those differences (Grushina, 2005). One’s competence to adjust to a new culture or environment varies from person to person depending on their skills, attitudes, and knowledge, but cultural adjustment is an unavoidable process for those who enter the new culture and environment unless they are isolated from any interaction with the new culture (Deardoff, 2006; Kim, 1991). The transition to a different place and being exposed to a new culture has become more common with the development of technology, which has allowed a lot more people to experience adjustment to a new culture.
Following this trend, researchers have explored entry to a new environment and its influence on an individual with various perspectives (Grushina, 2005).

**Culture Shock**

The concept of culture shock has been frequently mentioned in the studies of cultural adjustment across various academic fields such as communication, anthropology, and psychology (Sumner, 1906; Church, 1982). Being located outside of one’s culture does not simply mean a change of location. Arriving in a new environment accompanies many things that the newcomers need to get through with the change of location. When individuals are in a new culture, the contrast often allows them to be able to see unseen things that they have taken for granted back in their home culture, such as a set of rules and values. In the new environment, individuals notice not only differences in the new culture, but also discover aspects of their own culture. From the moment that people find those cultural differences, they may face difficulties, since they need to learn new behavioral and conceptual rules and follow them to thrive in the new environment (Flanja, 2009; Noesjirwand, & Freestone, 1979). Many scholars assume that “culture shock” occurs at the moment of realizing cultural differences and the process of overcoming those (Bennett, 1998; Flanja, 2009; Oberg, 1960; Ruben, Askling, & Kealey, 1977; Triandis, 1994; Zapf, 1991). Trandis (1994) argued that culture shock appears when individuals communicate with others from a different culture and cannot understand their behaviors and actions. Then, they lose control in communication as they do not know how to interact with people of the different culture properly. While individuals experience culture shock, they may face both physical and psychological issues such as stress and depression, and physical consequences, like headaches (Trandis, 1994). The process of lessening culture shock and pursuing successful communication with others in the host culture is the main focus of cultural adjustment. Centering on the concept of culture shock, some scholars have suggested models and theories of cultural adjustment.
Lysgaard (1955) considered cultural adjustment as a long-term process, going through four stages. His cultural adjustment model, called the U-curve model is the most frequently mentioned by scholars. Lysgaard (1955) investigated 200 Norwegian students who came to the United States, focusing on changes in their emotional states while they stayed in the United States. Those Norwegians experienced four stages of emotional change, which he labeled the honeymoon, cultural shock, recovery, and adjustment. Cultural adjustment starts when an individual is placed in an unfamiliar environment and experience culture shock oriented from the difference between their original culture and the new culture (Paige, 1993).

In the beginning, the international students felt positive about entry to the host culture. Even if the international sojourners felt anxious and stressed due to the gap between the home culture and host culture, positive feelings such as interest, excitement, positive expectations, and idealization were present before those negative feelings. This stage is called the honeymoon stage. After the honeymoon stage, those positive feelings disappeared because of culture shock. Individuals realized difficulties in living in an unfamiliar environment, which created depression, loneliness, anxiety, and anger. Over time, people communicated with others in the host culture and learned how to cope with the cultural differences, recovering from the culture shock. In the recovery phase, people became more comfortable and emotionally stable compared to the “culture shock” stage. Finally, individuals felt fully comfortable with the host culture and reached the adjustment phase. This change of international students’ emotional status draws a U-curve; continuously coming and going culture shock and recovery stage. A few years later, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), further developed the U-curve model and proposed the W-curve model, adding international students’ re-entry of the host culture. Though international sojourners achieved a certain level of cultural adjustment to the new culture, they would experience the U-curve of their emotional status again after they visited their home country and re-enter the host country.
While the U and W-curve models are useful in understanding the experience of sojourners in the host culture and their process of cultural adjustment, these researchers did not examine the social pressure that individuals experience in the process of cultural adjustment and the status of their identity in the host country. International sojourners’ identity in the process of cultural adjustment is worthy of being explored since it is closely related to the result of cultural adjustment and their social status in the host country. Among the stages of U- and W-curve models, the “culture shock” stage likely includes plenty of communicative experience that international sojourners might share related to their cultural identity since, at this stage, those newcomers face the biggest challenge in the process of cultural adjustment and it may cause transitions in their identity.

*Integrative Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation*

Kim (2001) argued that culture shock causes stress to newcomers and the stress becomes the motivator to adjust to the new environment. She explored individuals’ cross-cultural experiences and their cultural adjustment to the host culture, focusing on immigrant groups. According to her theory, the integrative theory of cross-cultural adaptation, cross-cultural adaptation naturally happens when an individual enters a new culture, starting as a stranger to the new culture at first and then becoming reliant on the host culture. Eventually, those immigrants keep communicating with the host community group, while not losing connection with their own cultural group. In the process of adjustment, individuals experience stress from the tension between their home culture and the host culture. While immigrants communicate with their surroundings in the host country, they inevitably face an unfamiliar culture, which may make them feel uncomfortable. Even though those immigrants may want to stay in their comfort zone, their home culture, they often cannot be in the comfort zone as they need to learn how to work and live in the new culture. This dialectical tension causes individuals stress and leads them to adapt to the new culture or to develop new
ideas and behaviors that fit into the new culture. Over time, those immigrants ideally get to know how to manage that stress and become competent in the host culture.

Kim (2005) argued that the environment of host culture in regard to immigrants may affect cultural adaptation, suggesting three environmental conditions in the host culture (host receptivity, host conformity pressure, and ethnic group strength) that influence newcomers. *Host receptivity* refers to whether the host country offers an accessible and open environment to strangers. Host receptivity varies by location and by the groups of aliens who visit the locations. For example, German tourists would feel more well received in neighboring European countries such as England and France, compared to Korea because of the cultural similarity and the shared history. *Host conformity pressure* indicates the pressure that society puts on strangers to conform to social expectations and norms. It is also different by community and place as well. For instance, in Saudi Arabia, which has strong Muslim community, people may expect foreign visitors to conform with their rules related to food restrictions and clothing following their religious regulations. However, people in metropolitan areas such as Riyadh in Saudi Arabia would have fewer expectations for foreigners to conform with their culture, as the environment there is more friendly to outsiders because of the tourism and business there. The last condition is “*ethnic group strength.*” This condition refers to the presence and power of the strangers’ ethnic community. Ethnic group strength can have both negative and positive influences on strangers adjusting the host culture. At the beginning of the cultural adjustment period, having members of their home culture is helpful for strangers in adjusting the new environment, as they can get emotional, informational, and material support from members of the home culture (Clark, & Obler, 1976). However, in the long term, a strong ethnic group can interrupt their adjustment if they are too attached to their ethnic group and may lose their motivation to conform to the host environment.
Kim (2005) has explored various cultural groups experiencing adjustment in a foreign country such as refugees and immigrants in the United States, international students in a Japanese University, and expatriates in the United States and South Korea. Her theory focuses on the stress that newcomers experience in the process of cultural adjustment, and how it functions as a stimulant for personal growth and learning of cross and intercultural competence through the communicative experience in a different culture. For instance, she investigated international students in the United States, comparing Asian students and European students, and why Asian international students experience more difficulties (Kim & Kim, 2016). The study indicated that Asian students in an American college feel more stressed and experience culture shock because of their lack of ethnic proximity with American culture. Interpersonal interaction with members of the host culture could be a key to overcoming stress and culture shock.

Another study (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2013), targeting non-native individuals in the United States, also indicated that social engagement and interaction with individuals in the host country is positively related to adjusting to the host culture and lessens the stress form the adjustment process. Using both qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, they explored the experiences of international sojourners who are relatively well educated, testing Kim’s integrative theory of cross-cultural adaption theory. The results showed that (a) mediated interpersonal communication using email and internet service was the primary means of contacting their family members and friends in their home country; (b) participants interacted interpersonally more with people in the host country than people in their ethnic community; and (c) the more they were engaged in interpersonal communication with the host-culture members, the better they were functionally and psychologically in the host country. Therefore, the authors argued that continuing interpersonal engagement with members of host community is beneficial in adapting new culture.
Kim’s theory (2005) describes the pattern of newcomers’ cultural adjustment and results of it, considering one’s cultural identity as being able to be developed. This perspective offers an overall understanding of the development of one’s cultural identity and predicts the results of adjustment, suggesting possible factors influencing that development including ethnic proximity, the environment of the host country, personality, and preparedness for change. The current study will explore international sojourners’ lived experience and how that influences their identity in the process of cultural adjustment. Kim’s theory, on the other hand, attempted to figure out the patterns of newcomers’ culture adjustment as a whole, using mainly quantitative methods. Therefore, this study will be able to fill the gap of Kim’s study that might have missed the details in the description of international sojourners’ cultural identity in the host country.

Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory

Similar to Kim’s theory, Gudykunst (1988) also describes culture shock as stressful, considering it as an emotional reaction. When individuals arrive in a new environment, they are not able to predict or understand social behaviors and communication patterns in the host environment. Gudykunst (1998) called them strangers who newly encounter intercultural situations. Becoming a stranger in a new culture causes negative reactions such as anxiety and insecurity. These uncomfortable feelings are a big part of culture shock. According to him, newcomers attempt to get rid of those uncomfortable feelings and to minimize misunderstanding in the new culture or new environment. To achieve those goals, effective communication is needed. Becoming an effective communicator indicates that individuals are able to engage in proper behaviors with members of the host culture, resulting in mutual understandings between a stranger and a member of the host culture. By managing uncertainty and anxiety from being in an unfamiliar culture, individuals can culturally adjust to the new environment. Gudykunst (1988) suggested anxiety/uncertainty management theory
to explain the process of achieving effective communication for strangers in an unfamiliar culture.

Anxiety and uncertainty are dual threats that disturb effective communication and cause intercultural misunderstanding and culture shock (Gudykunst, 1998); therefore, those two must be managed. Generally, uncertainty in a new culture accompanies anxiety and vice versa, but Gudykunst (1998) explained differences between those two; uncertainty is cognitive, while anxiety is emotional. Uncertainty refers to one's doubts about their ability to anticipate the reactions of interacting with strangers and about behaviors that have been done in the past. When individuals encounter strangers, who are outside of their own culture, both of them do not know how to behave adequately so they do not know the outcome of their behavior (predictive uncertainty). At the same time, people have a moment to look back on other behaviors in the past and may be unable to figure out why they acted in that way (explanation uncertainty). Therefore, uncertainty in his theory is cognitive. On the other hand, anxiety is one’s feeling when they bump into a new culture or strangers. As Gudykunst mentioned, anxiety and uncertainty are twin threats that interactively work with each other. When individuals encounter an uncertain situation with strangers and new culture, they feel uneasy, uncomfortable, and pressured as they do not know how to act or behave in the situation. Gudykunst (1988) did not directly mention the level of uncertainty and anxiety depending on the culture. However, the axioms of his theory indicated that the larger the gap between the strangers’ home culture and the host culture, the stronger uncertainty and anxiety both strangers and host members will experience.

Even though both uncertainty and anxiety are the main problems of effective communication between strangers and the members of the host culture, those are not always bad (Griffin, 2012). Slight uncertainty and anxiety can be helpful to motivate individuals to communicate effectively. Feeling anxious and uncertain in an unfamiliar culture is caused by
one’s concern about being incompetent in communication with strangers, which also indicates that one is aware of other cultures and attempting to overcome cultural gaps (Griffin, 2012). From this perspective, mindfulness can reduce uncertainty and anxiety between ingroup members and strangers. By being mindful of strangers’ behavior and culture, an individual learns and change themselves for better communication and eventually, ideally achieves effective communication with members of a host country, which is intercultural adjustment.

Gudykunst (2005) suggested his theory be applied to help strangers to adjust to new cultures and that it be used in building training programs for intercultural adjustment. Following his suggestion, scholars have tested this theory. Hammer, Wiseman, Rasmussen, and Bruschke (1998) tested his theory with international students in the United States, who were in an intercultural adaptation process. After they categorized the 16 variables from anxiety and uncertainty management theory (AUM) into four fundamental factors, they conducted a survey of 291 international students. The results supported AUM theory and further, suggested that a strong bondage among people, who share same culture, may increase uncertainty in the interaction with the host culture.

Another study examined AUM theory in a different cultural context. Duranto, Nishida, and Nakayama (2005) explored how avoidance works in intercultural encounters, using the concepts of anxiety and uncertainty management theory. The authors intentionally chose Japanese participants, as Japanese culture is a high context culture that emphasizes harmony with ingroup members and also emphasizes that deviant behaviors and uncertainty should be avoided to keep harmony. Comparing how Japanese people communicated with other Japanese and foreigners, they examined the influence of uncertainty and anxiety on avoidance. The results showed that participants experienced uncertainty and anxiety when they interact with strangers. Also, uncertainty and anxiety may cause people to avoid
interacting with strangers. Different scholars (Hammer, Wiseman, Rasmussen, & Bruschke, 1998; Neuliep, 2012; Stephan, Stephan, & Gudykunst, 1999) who have explored intercultural adaptation using AUM theory quantified possible factors of causing uncertainty and anxiety. The importance of effective communication was found to be less salient than other factors in intercultural adaptation (Yositake, 2002). The present study pays attention to the communication between newcomers and the host culture and its influence on one’s cultural identity, analyzing their lived experience. Therefore, this study is expected to fill the gap that the AUM theory missed by adding international sojourners communicative experiences in the process of their cultural adjustment and development of their identity.

Based on previous studies of international sojourners’ cultural adjustment, entering to a new place and the process of adjusting to the new culture may provide challenges to individuals and might cause a transformation of their identity to fit into the new community because the process of cultural adjustment accompanies learning new behavioral rules and values in the new environment which is related to the formation of one’s identity.

**Cultural Adjustment and Identity**

As mentioned in the previous section, arriving in a new environment and interacting with the culture and people there may impact someone’s identity (Cox, 2004; Gudykunst, 2005; Kim, 1988; Ward, & Searle, 1991). When individuals move to the new culture, their new journey may start to re-define them in various ways since their social position is not clear in the new environment (Komisarof, & Leong, 2020). Depending on their own goals in the new place, newcomers may attempt to fit into the destination community as a member. By interacting with others and their surroundings in the new culture, most people can learn proper behaviors and communication rules that are appropriate in that society. This means that the process of cultural adaption can have an influence on changing one’s identity, as identity is the result of communication with your surroundings (Komisarof & Leong, 2020).
Interacting with others and cultures that are new to an individual, therefore, would likely lead them to build a new or transformed identity, reflecting on themselves in the new environment. This means that the new identity would be more likely to follow the norms and values of the new culture and environment. However, it is hard to anticipate the result to one’s identity after cultural adaptation because it is a dynamic process that newcomers go through in the host environment.

Traditional scholars such as Kim (2001) and Gudykunst (1988), who explored the phenomenon of cultural adaptation assumed that newcomers would attempt to learn the rules and communication styles of the host community and comply with them (De La Garza, & Ono, 2015). For them, successful adaptation would be to become a member of a host community talking and acting the same as others in the host community. As far as being accepted by other members and functioning as a member of the group is concerned, newcomers should build their new identity, assimilating into the identity of their surroundings. This perspective understood cultural adjustment as the social inclusion where an individual is fully adapted as a member of society and feels belonging in the community (Komisarof & Leong, 2020). Therefore, successful cultural adaption means that newcomers are absorbed into mainstream culture in the host community. The most prominent and foundational theory taking this perspective is Kim’s (2001) Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation, described above. Targeting long-term residing foreigners, Kim assumed that it is natural for strangers to adopt the host culture whether they desire to or not, but generally they want to be competent in communication with the host culture. She also assumed that newcomers adapt the host culture for social prosperity and ideally assimilate into the host community. In other words, the ultimate goal of cultural adaptation is assimilation and conformity into mainstream culture. In this theory, maladaptive foreigners are people who fail to functionally fit into the host community, are psychologically
unhealthy, and lack social competence with the member of the host community. The worst case of maladaptation is to refuse to assimilate into the host culture but be likely to engage with people who are in their own ethnic community. To overcome the stress of assimilation and successfully settle down in the new environment, strangers need to actively communicate with members of the host community and culture so that they minimize the aspect of their original culture. On the contrary, close and frequent engagement with people from the foreigners’ original culture is considered an obstacle to achieving successful cultural adjustment. Therefore, newcomers’ identity ideally complies with the host community, which follows the mainstream culture at the end of the cultural adaptation process to completely permeate the host community and properly function in society.

Newcomers’ identity is expected to assimilate into the host country’s culture and some scholars assume that the goal of cultural adaptation is assimilation (De La Garza, & Ono, 2015); however, assimilation does not necessarily connect to stable and successful settlement to the host community. Considering active ethnic communities around the world such as Chinatowns, Koreatowns, and Little Italies, people can build up a new identity in the new environment without forsaking their original identity. Also, newcomers who refuse to comply with the host country’s culture and have a strong home identity may segregate themselves and try to keep their original identity (Anderson, 1987; Lee & Park, 2008; Moon & Park, 2007; Vo & Danico, 2004). In other words, there are other goals and ways of adapting the new culture and managing newcomers’ identities. De La Garza and Ono (2015) pointed out the pressure that international sojourners would feel in the process of adaptation and suggested that they may influence the host culture and change the host society. They criticized the pre-existing intercultural adaption theories together with two dialectics, (a) universality versus specificity and (b) individual versus society. By doing so, they suggested another way of understanding cultural adaptation and international sojourners’ identity. The first dialectic
refers to the complexity of the cultural adaptation process. This dialectic indicated three problematic assumptions that traditional perspective on intercultural adaptation make: (1) newcomers only pursue becoming model immigrants, (2) cultures are disconnected, isolated, and unchanged, (3) international sojourners desire to be a part of mainstream culture. The process of intercultural adaptation for newcomers is complex and diversified, since their experience before and after relocation to the new environment are different. For example, a newcomer may get help from an organization or not depending on their location and context. An individual who did not have much knowledge of the host culture might reach out to an organization that helps international sojourners adjust to the new environment and eventually settle down in the area successfully with the help. On the other hand, even an individual who was comparatively well-informed about the host culture might still have trouble with communicating with local people, if they cannot connect with an organization or get help in other ways. That is, the level of knowledge about the host country would influence newcomers’ cultural adjustment. Therefore, De La Garza and Ono (2015) argued that scholars need to pay attention to international sojourners’ specific experience in their adaptation process, rather than to attempt to universalize their experiences.

De La Garza and Ono’s (2015) second dialectic concerns the relationship between society and individuals in cultural adaptation. The traditional theoretical perspectives infer that society influences individuals to change their identities to functionally fit into society, forming a vertical and one-way relationship. This assumption closes the possibility of individuals’ influence on the destination community and denies that culture is changeable. Unlike, traditional adaptation theories that view ethnic communities in the host society as a result of maladaptation, the authors included it as part of the regular process of adaptation. In addition, they also argued that the interaction with ethnic groups in the host environment would be a key to help newcomers gain the social ground in the host country, rather than an
obstacle for successful settlement to the host community. Based on the two dialectics, De La Garza and Ono (2015) proposed differential adaptation theory (DAC). International sojourners do not necessarily assimilate to the host country during the process of cultural adaptation; however, they choose their own strategy to adapt the culture and manage their identities in the process of cultural adaptation.

As DAC is relatively new, there is not much research that has been conducted using this theory; however, there are two notable research studies (Chen, & Lawless, 2018; Martinez, 2017). Both studies paid attention to a minority group in a society where they were pressured to assimilate to the mainstream culture. Martinez (2017) explored Mexican Americans’ choice of options to deal with depression. Within their ethnic community, the perception of depression is negative, so they are not likely to choose biomedical treatments to manage depression. Rather, social support from family members is preferred, even when insurance covers biomedical therapy. This research applied DAC to understand the decision-making process of handling depression in the U.S. — how U.S.-born Mexican Americans culturally adapt to the American biomedical system and fundamentally refuse to integrate while communicating with their ethnic community. The result indicated that Mexican Americans rated social support from members of their ethnic community to be superior to biomedical treatment because of the perception of depression in the ethnic group. Therefore, visiting a psychotherapist is often a last resort.

The other research study utilizing DAC targeted female immigrant faculty members in the U.S academy (Chen, & Lawless, 2018). Interviewing 26 immigrant faculty members, the authors collected stories of their lived experience in colleges and universities while they adapted to American culture. The analysis of collected interviews shows that they faced stereotypes while they interacted with people in the academy and felt pressured to follow social norms to fit in the community. To overcome that social pressure, they strategically
chose to be ambiguous when they encountered some cultural situations and resisted assimilating those cultural norms. Based on the results, Chen and Lawless (2018) suggested micro/macro-adaptation that newcomers ordinarily and cumulatively adapt to the host culture by negotiating and resisting changes with surroundings.

Before and after individuals enter a new culture and engage in cultural adaptation, they interact with others in the host community and cumulate experiences from those interactions. In the process of cultural adaptation, newcomers have various experiences depending on aspects of the host culture that they are exposed to, such as their physical location, prior knowledge about the host community, purposes of relocation, and environment of the host country (Ang, Van Dyne, Koh, Ng, Templer, Tay, & Chandrasekar, 2007; Kim, 1988; Ruben, & Kealey, 1979; Ward, & Searle, 1991). Those experiences influence newcomers to shape their new identity in the host community; however, because of the dynamic and complex nature of the cultural adaption process, it is hard to anticipate international sojourners’ cultural identity development. In the present research, I assume that international sojourners’ ultimate goal of cultural adaptation in the host community is successful settlement so that they can achieve their planned goal; however, they may use different strategies to achieve the goal. Their identity, in this assumption, would be developed depending on the strategies that the newcomers take to fit into the host community. As traditional scholars (e.g. Kim, 2001; Gudykunst, 1988) have argued, international sojourners attempt to comply with the host culture as closely as possible and change their identities accordingly. However, assimilating to the host culture is not everyone’s goal in cultural adaptation. In some cases, international sojourners try to keep their original identities from the home culture or even fortify their home identity so that they can influence the host community or remain connected to the home culture. For instance, the increasing number of Muslim immigrants in European countries has led members of that culture to work to modify
their system and surroundings. In Germany, the agenda of recognizing the Muslim holidays officially has been discussed in the German legislature (Noack, 2017). The amount of halal food consumed has been increasing in France (Chazan, 2010). Rather than complying with the host culture, members of the Muslim community decided to actively communicate with the ethnic groups in the host country and intentionally separate themselves from the mainstream culture. Eventually, they encouraged the host community to leave a space for them. Therefore, scholars need to keep in mind that individuals, who just moved to the new environment, may utilize different strategies to achieve successful settlement and manage their identity.

This study aims to explore international sojourners’ strategies to adjust to the host community. In the process of cultural adjustment, they communicate with the surroundings and members in the host community and make choices about how to manage their identities. However, given the dynamic and complicated nature of identity management, it is hard to anticipate their strategies. Therefore, the present study is based on interviewing newcomers’ about their lived experiences of interacting with others and host culture. By doing so, I explore how newcomers develop and perform their identity in response to communicative experiences that they face in the process of cultural adjustment in order to successfully communicate with others and surroundings.

East Asian Sojourners’ Cultural Adjustment Experience

The term, East Asians refers to people who are from the eastern part of Asia such as Korea, China, Japan, Mongolia, and Taiwan (Shvili, 2020). The population of East Asian countries is the largest in the world, so they have a significant presence internationally. Also, a lot of East Asians have chosen the United States as the destination of their immigration. According to Radford and Budiman (2018), the foreign-born populations in the United States is 43,681,654, and 26.9 % of them are from South and East Asian countries. Specifically, East
Asian people are 9.4% of the total foreign-born populations. The number of Asian people in the United States is expected to increase and they are predicted to become the largest foreign-born group by 2055 (Budiman, 2020). In accordance with the increasing numbers, their influence on U.S. society is projected to be significant. Therefore, their experiences of cultural adjustment and identity management in the United States need to be actively explored.

In addition, Asian Americans and East Asian sojourners have experienced anti-Asian discriminations both verbally and physically since COVID-19 spread around the United States (Gover, Harper & Langton, 2020; Tessler, Choi & Kao, 2020). Adjusting to a society with the elevated sense of distrust or prejudice against Asians may require more works in cultural adjustment as they get through more layers of racial discrimination. Studies of East Asian international sojourners’ cultural adjustment in pandemic era needs to be added more to help their adjustment in the host country.

East Asians’ experiences in America in terms of cultural adjustment is difficult and time-consuming because of the cultural distance between East Asian cultures and American culture. The large degree of cultural distance requires international sojourners to put effort and time to adjust to the new culture if they want to become part of it (Ye, 2005). Hofstede’s (1980, 2001) work on cultural dimensions is the most referred to by scholars who study the differences between cultures. He suggested categorizing different cultures by evaluating them based on a number of variables, including their relative individualism or collectivism. The idea of individualism and collectivism was originally proposed by Kluckhohn (1949, 1951). His definition of values includes distinctive characteristics of an individual or a group (Kluckhohn, 1951) as one aspect of influencing an individual to behave in a certain way. His principle was operationalized by Kluckhohn and Strodbeck (1961), who suggested different dimensions exploring individuals’ value orientation influenced by cultural group that they
belong to. They proposed five types of human value orientations by culture. Relationships between humans was one of the value orientations describing how people put value on individual orientation or collective orientation. Hofstede (1980, 2001) extended their study, investigating people who worked for IBM branches around the world. Based on survey data collected from different nations, he explored each country’s values and norms in the workplace. Hofstede’s (1980, 2001) initial five cultural dimensions categorized national cultures by their system of thinking and social action: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, and long-term-short-term oriented. Among those five cultural dimensions, the individualism-collectivism dimension refers to the degree to which people are likely to be incorporated within groups and how they get along with other people whether they put values and norms of the group before their own best interest. Hofstede (1980, 2001) explained the difference between individualism and collectivism in this way,

Individualism stands for a society in which the ties between individuals are loose: Everyone is expected to look after him/herself and her/his immediate family only.

Collectivism stands for a society in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (p. 225).

In short, people who are influenced by an individualistic culture tend to stress the importance of individuals’ value, and decision making rather than their groups’ values, whereas people influenced by collectivistic cultures tend to prioritize their group identity and put value on group harmony.

Other researchers (e.g., Cozma, 2011; Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995; Hui, 1988; Rothwell, 2016) have explored the characteristics of individualism and collectivism as well. Diener, Diener, and Diener (1995) found that people in individualistic cultures see themselves
as being responsible for their own lives and their own well-being, prioritizing the individual’s success. Similarly, Rothwell (2016) stated that individualistic cultures stress the value of achievements that an individual has made. Also, people from individualistic cultures rationally evaluate their relationships with others, considering advantages and disadvantages of those. Cozma (2011) added that people with individualistic cultural backgrounds are more likely to maintain personal relationships when it is beneficial to them.

On the other hand, for people from collectivistic cultures, relationships with others are broader and more important (Hui, 1988). Collectivistic cultures emphasize individuals’ responsibility as a member of a group and puts a value on group harmony (Brewer, & Chen, 2007). Even if an individual’s will is against the community’s interest, the individual is expected to follow the group’s interests. Also, people from collectivistic cultures are encouraged to take care of each other and to get help from other community members, stressing dependence and cooperation.

Masuda and Nisbett (2001) explored the cognition systems in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures. The results indicated that people influenced by collectivistic cultures paid greater attention to context and were more concerned about their surroundings and relationships than people influenced by individualistic cultures. As those scholars found, individualism and collectivism have dissimilar characteristics. Hofstede (2001) considered them as two distinct cultural patterns that are bipolar. Even though several scholars (Kim, Lim, Dindia, & Burrell, 2010; Lim, Kim, & Kim, 2011) critiqued Hofstede’s (2001) classification of culture, arguing that he over-generalized national culture and divided East and West starkly, his work is still valuable comparison to understand cultures generally as it offers broad understanding of diverse cultures. According to Hofstede’s work (2001), American culture which is the highest ranking in the individualism index is very different from East Asian cultures that are highly collectivistic cultures. The pressure and stress that
East Asian international sojourners feel during cultural adjustment is likely to be more severe than for people from other countries.

Some studies have explored how East Asian international sojourners described their experience of cultural adjustment. Ye (2005) investigated the relationship between East Asian international students’ stress from the cultural adjustment process and their use of the internet. The author assumed that the large cultural gap between American culture and East Asian culture would lead East Asian international students to use internet, either in English or in their native language, to relieve their acculturative stress. The results showed that East Asian international sojourners used more English-language internet services than their native-language internet services. The researcher identified three motivations for internet usage: information seeking, amusement, and social utility. When East Asian international students perceived discrimination and experienced fear, they explored the internet to entertain themselves or find social support. Chen (2016) explored Taiwanese students’ use of given and English names and their identity management in the U.S. The author interviewed 10 Taiwanese students in an American college, paying attention to their motivation of using either their given or English name while they interacted with other people in the U.S. The results indicated that using an English name was not a just personal choice but originated from Taiwanese private educational institutions. In order to adjust and acculturate to American culture successfully, they felt pressured to use an English name in the U.S.

Lee (2018) explored the cultural adjustment process of those in the Korean ethnic community, testing Kim’s (2001) theory of cross-cultural adaptation. Mentioning immigrants’ difficulties in adjusting a new culture, she paid attention to the effectiveness of ethnic networks in the host country. This study assumed that immigrants have different experiences in the host culture depending on their interaction with members of their ethnic groups exchanging support for each other. The author formulated five hypotheses, testing
relationship between ethnic engagement, host-community language competence, and interpersonal communication norms of the ethnic and host communities. The results showed that Korean immigrants’ English proficiency was negatively related to ethnic entrainment. That means that Korean immigrants’ host-country competence was low if they engaged deeply with their ethnic community. Also, Korean immigrants who actively interact with their ethnic community were not likely to engage with mass communication sources in American society. Finally, Korean immigrants with large ethnic entrainment communicated more with other individuals in the ethnic community. In summation, engaging with the ethnic community in the host country strengthened participants’ ethnic identity and lessened connection to host-culture mass media.

Hommadova and Mita (2016) talked about the social challenges that Japanese international students faced during the cultural adjustment in the U.S. campus. They conducted open-ended surveys and focus-group interview with Japanese students who came to the U.S. for educational purpose. The results indicated that the Japanese students experienced struggles in social interaction with local Americans because their expectations did not meet reality. They expected American students would be more friendly and easy to communicate with, however, local students showed little interest in interacting with Japanese students and had little knowledge of Japanese culture. Their unmet expectations were not helpful for participants to actively communicate with American students. Also, the authors pointed out that Japanese youth culture does not encourage students to actively engage with class activities. Their unmotivated behaviors in the American classroom did not fit within American college cultural norms and led them to be less successful in their academic achievement.

I examined how people who go to a different country adjust to the new culture and develop their identity in the process of cultural adjustment. Considering the population of
East Asian sojourners in the United States and the large cultural gap between East Asian culture and American culture, East Asian international sojourners are worthy of being explored in their cultural adjustment process and resulting identity management.

Co-cultural Theory

The position of international sojourners can be marked as “under-presented” or “marginalized” in the host country as their voices are hardly heard in the society. Co-cultural theory (Orbe, 1998) explains how marginalized group like international sojourners communicate in society, paying attention to the communicative practice of those individuals. There are two core theories that co-cultural theory was built on: muted group theory (Ardener, 1975) and standpoint theory (Harding, 1982). Both of these describe the non-dominant group’s ignored and marginalized voice in a society. Each of these will be explained here along with their connection to co-cultural theory.

*Muted group theory.* Muted group theory (Ardener, 1975), originated from anthropology scholars who suggested the nature of language in the society is that some group’s language is often minimized or ignored while others’ is centered (Wall & Gannon-Leary, 1999). The theory offered the main idea to co-cultural theory that people in dominant groups in the society have more power to build language, reflecting their experience, and more control over media, governmental, and other institutions (Bie & Tang, 2016; Kramarae, 1981). On the other hand, non-dominant group members comparatively cannot as easily share their experience to the society and so their voices are traditionally muted. Ardener (1968) firstly recognized that women frequently need to synchronize with words that mainly reflect men’s worldview (Ardener, 2005; Orbe, 1998). Ardener (1975) and Ardener (1978) argued that every society has a certain form of social hierarchy that allow some groups to have more power over other groups. Because of the power that these groups have, they have more opportunities to share their experiences and see them as normalized. The social structure that
skewed mainly toward men reinforces the idea that other group have to follow the dominant manner and message. Ardner (2005) mentioned that muted groups are not only restricted to women, but other groups may also be muted. In communication studies, Karamarae (1981) conducted research, targeting specifically women and Orbe (1994b) focused on African American’s muted voice in the society.

*Standpoint theory.* While muted group theory talks about the reflection of experience from a specific group in the society, standpoint theory gives a notion about positionality of a certain group (Harding, 1982). Standpoint theory was developed from the main concepts of Marxists that the oppressed and privileged classes have different access to knowledge and it makes a gap between them (Grasswick, 2006). This perspective influenced feminist scholars who explored the disparities between men and women, and how they were connected to men and women’s inequality of knowledge in 1970s. Their view is related to epistemology, which examines where knowledge is from, emphasizing that knowledge is socially situated. (Quine, 1969). Rooted from epistemology, feminist studies, and Marxism, Standpoint theory assumed, “knowledge is socially located and arises in social positions that are structured by power relations” (Hallstein, 1999, p. 32). Individuals who have a certain position in the society acquire knowledge depending on their social position (Smith, 1987). This acquired knowledge affects how people understand and see the world, reflecting their social position. That is, the differences in social position gives people access to different types of knowledge and the differences are related to the differences in ways of thinking. To survive in any society, people who do not have power need to consider both their own standpoint and the dominant group’s standpoint; however, members of the dominant group can more easily perceive the world from within their own standpoint because they do not need to worry about others’ issues in the society (Allen, Armstrong, Riemenschneider, & Reid, 2006). Also, standpoint theory explains one’s layered understandings based on the notion that individuals
have multiple social identities (Hekman, 1997). Individuals have built multiple identities throughout their lives by interacting with others and learning social norms. Those multiple identities overlap to build one’s unique standpoint, including race, gender, sexualities, and so forth. In the case of marginalized people, they need to understand the multiple layers of their identity and knowledge related to their identity in addition to the identities and knowledge of people in power as a matter of survival (Hekman, 1997; Stoetzler, & Yuval-Davis, 2002)

These two theories, muted group theory (Ardener, 1975) and standpoint theory (Harding, 1982) posit a critical view that pays attention to the power relations between social groups in society. Scholars with a critical view think that some social groups have more power than other social groups in every society. Therefore, the dynamic of power and those who have less power need to be studied, including how people in marginalized groups survive in the society with limited agency and relationships between social groups. In co-cultural theory, Orbe (1998) chose to call social groups who are traditionally marginalized, “co-cultural groups” (p.50). Based on the belief that multiple cultures exist in the American society, Orbe (1998) argued that using the word, “co-culture” embraces all existing culture in the society, not giving a notion that some cultures are superior to others. Multiple cultures equally co-exist in a society; however, some cultural group take a dominant position in the society over time. Then other cultural groups that are not in the dominant position become marginalized. Orbe (1998) utilized co-cultural theory, which is rooted from muted group theory and standpoint theory, also explored groups that are socially marginalized and takes a critical view.

Co-cultural theory builds on five epistemological assumptions (Orbe, 1998). Orbe stated that he drew some assumptions from muted-group theory and some basic truth of marginalized group from standpoint theory. These fundamental concepts of co-cultural theory help readers to understand the theoretical framework of this theory, which connects to the
current research. First, people in a dominant group have privilege and it allows society to have an implicit ranking system. For instance, privileged groups in American society are men, Whites, heterosexuals, financially middle or upper class, and those with physically abled bodies. Second, depending on the position of each dominant group in the society, some groups have more or less power. The power for each group evolves over time, which means the entrenched power can be changed by time and events in history. For instance, in the United States, White heterosexual men generally have more power than White gay women. That does not mean people in dominant groups cannot have the same experience, but they will have fewer barriers. Also, not everyone in that group experiences this in the same way. In other words, people from less dominant groups will have less automatic access to power. Another example would be the status of LGBTQ people in a society. In the past, it was rare to see openly LGBTQ people on media or public. Now, it has become more common for them to reveal their sexuality and raise their voices in public. Also, people in a dominant group consciously or unconsciously use power. With power, privileged people construct and sustain a public communication system, sharing their communication experience. Thirdly, the public communication system built by individuals with power directly and indirectly interrupts under-presented groups in reflecting their communication experience to the public system. Fourth, people in groups that have relatively low social status share similar experience within the dominant social structure. Fifth, in order to defy suppressive social construction created by people with power and achieve success, members of co-cultural groups adopt specific communication styles and behaviors strategically, so that they can survive and adjust to and excel the public communication structure.

Co-cultural theory (Orbe, 1998) directs attention to those marginalized groups’ communication experiences in the society. To explore socially under-represented group members’ experiences, co-cultural theory takes a phenomenological approach.
Phenomenology pays attention to explore how human beings understand the experience and change those experiences into consciousness (Manan, 1990). Therefore, one’s lived experience is the most important point in phenomenological approaches. Phenomenology is the study of the lifeworld as we immediately experience it. It attempts to describe and interpret meanings in the ways that people emerged and are shaped by consciousness, language, out cognitive/non-cognitive sensibilities and by out pre-understanding and presupposition of world so that researchers can gain the deeper understanding of the world and lived experiences (Adams, & Manen, 2008; Patton, 2015; Schwandt, 2000). Phenomenological investigations often take three steps: (a) researchers collect descriptions of lived experiences from a certain group; (b) the collected lived experiences are categorized and cut down into crucial themes; (c) researchers interpret the themes hermeneutically (Manan, 1990). By using this process, Orbe (1998) attempted to discover the lived experience of co-cultural group members in communication within the dominant group. For instance, in Orbe’s early research (1994), he explored African American men’s social interactions with non-African Americans at a predominantly White university. The results of this study indicated that African American college students often learn communication strategies while they communicate with non-Black Americans. Based on their experiences, they may communicate directly to non-African Americans, observe others, and undergo trial and error. This research also showed that African American college students negotiate their interactions differently between European Americans and African Americans. They may need to earn recognition from European Americans to survive in the institution without appearing disloyal to other African Americans.

As a result of analyzing co-cultural groups’ communication experience, Orbe (1998) found six factors that influenced under-represented groups’ communication; (a) field of experience, (b) preferred outcome, (c) situational context, (d) perceived cost and reward, (e)
ability, and (f) communication approach. These six factors also intervene and affect each other. The first factor (Orbe, 1998) refers to co-cultural group members’ past experiences. Through communication with others and surroundings, people in under-presented groups have accumulate knowledge how they should act in a certain situation. The important point of this factor is that no one has identical experiences, which means members of co-cultural groups make a choice of effective or appropriate communication based on their own experiences (Matsunaga, & Torigoe, 2008; Orbe, 1998). Therefore, experiences of co-cultural group members are similar, but not exactly the same. Communication tactics of co-cultural group are the product of their past experiences and their tactics have been changing depending on their social position and interaction with dominant groups. Preferred outcome indicates that members of co-cultural groups consider the outcome of interaction with dominant groups. They consciously or unconsciously think about their communication behaviors and possible results from their behaviors. Even though the preferred outcome would be different by individuals in marginalized groups and situations that they face, Orbe (1998) suggested three primary outcomes: assimilation, accommodation, and separation. The details of each outcome will be explained in following paragraph. Considering the nature of co-cultural theory that individuals' position in a society influences their communication, it makes sense that situational contexts would influence co-cultural members’ communication. When a member of a marginalized group encounters a communicative episode, they select the most effective and appropriate behaviors that suit the episode. For example, revealing one’s sexuality to others is difficult in most situations. However, the intensity that people would feel between coming-out to family members during family gathering and to colleagues in a social event is different. The fourth factor refers to anticipated costs and rewards. Based on accumulated experiences, marginalized group members evaluate costs and rewards of their communicative behaviors and they choose the best options that they can have with same
practice (Gates, 2003). In other words, members of co-cultural groups strategically act in a certain ways considering efficiency. No matter how individuals try hard to fit in to the society, there are some barriers that they cannot overcome. The fifth factor explains inevitable limits, which is ability. For instance, a female international student in the United States might attempt to participate in a social gathering event with other local students. However, she may not easily be able to go to the event because of the language barrier and because she does not have enough time to catch up on her schoolwork. Members of marginalized groups select communicative tactics within their ability. The last factor is related to the second factor – what communication approach that co-cultural members choose to achieve their goal. Orbe (1998) set the spectrum of communication approaches from nonassertive to aggressive.

Then, Orbe (1998) paid attention to communication strategies of co-cultural group members to adjust to the public communication structure built by the dominant group: (a) preferred outcome (assimilation, accommodation, and separation) and (b) communication approach (non-assertive, assertive, and aggressive). As mentioned above, these two factors are closely related. Marginalized group members strategically select a communication approach considering their preferred outcome. There are three types of outcomes that co-cultural members may wish to achieve in their interaction with dominant group members. First of all, assimilation refers to attempts by co-cultural group members to get rid of their unique characteristics and minimize the cultural difference between them and dominant members (Matsunaga, & Torigoe, 2008; Orbe, 1998). By doing so, they can fit more into the dominant culture. Accommodation is the preferred outcome for those who insist that dominant group members reinvent communication structures so that each co-cultural member can be incorporated into the public communication structure. Therefore, from this perspective, cultural pluralism is the main goal. While they are willing to adjust to the host culture in some level, they are not willing to leave their own culture behind. The last
preferred outcome, separation, aims to build separate communication structures that are distinct from dominant structures in order to maintain co-cultural identity. Rather than following or negotiating dominant communication structure, marginalized group members create their own rules and draw a line between them and the mainstream. African American fraternities and sororities are example for this case.

To achieve those preferred outcome, co-cultural members tend to select communication approaches ranging from non-assertive to aggressive (Orbe, 1998). Non-assertive communication practices represent non-confrontational activities toward dominant groups. With soft-spoken style, co-cultural members attempt to accomplish their goal in dominant structure. For example, “I agree with you, but…” or “what you said is true, however I think…” The end of continuum is aggressive. An aggressive communication approach includes actions that actively promote their opinion and express their feelings. Strong communication styles such as attacking, and confronting are used. Commonly, co-cultural members take this approach when other approaches were not effective in the past. The assertive approach is the midpoint between non-assertive and aggressive approach. Within this approach, non-dominant group members try to deliver clear messages while not bothering others.

Applying co-cultural theory (Orbe 1998) to a person who works in an organization, an individual may set different goals and take different communication approaches in accordance with different goals. For example, an Asian woman may decide to assimilate to a company’s culture to be successful and get promoted. To achieve that goal, the Asian woman may undertake an aggressive communication style that mirrors how people in higher positions behave. However, if the same woman is working in an organization in which there are many employees from different cultural groups, she may not feel the need to assimilate and instead may accommodate them. In another case, if she does not care as much about the
job (e.g., if she plans to leave that organization), she may decide not to take too much effort to assimilate to the culture there.

Scholars have applied co-cultural theory to various co-cultural groups and their communication practice in certain context. Rudick et al. (2017) compared Hispanic students’ communication behaviors in a predominantly White institution and a Hispanic serving institution. They found that communication strategies of Hispanic students are similar in both institutions, however, they are more likely to accommodate the communication structure in predominantly White institution. Sanford, Rudick et al. (2019) also explored Hispanic students’ communicative behaviors in Hispanic serving institution when they communicate with White institutional members. The results indicated that Hispanic students chose to follow White norms even though they were in a Hispanic serving institution. Some researchers navigated other marginalized groups in organizations (Herakova, 2012; Razzante, 2018; Zirulnik, & Orbe, 2019). Each organization has their own dominant culture that people follow to fit in the organization. In the case of male nurses, they are an under-presented group in the organization because the number of male nurses is low compared to female nurses (Herakova, 2012). The research showed that male nurses need to negotiate their masculinity as a minority in the organization and as a dominant group member in a society.

Razzante (2018) also explore one’s dual positionality in an organization. Administrators of color in a predominantly White institution are placed in a situation where they are privileged from their social position in the organization, but they are marginalized due to their ethnicity. The author explored how they strive for diversity and inclusion in the organization depending on a context. The results indicated that they develop their privilege by using their identity as a co-cultural member when they communicate with individuals from other dominant groups, whereas, they lessen their privilege in mentoring contexts when they communicate with other co-cultural group members.
LGBTQ groups’ lived experiences have also been explored by some scholars. Bie and Tang (2016) explored Chinese gay men’s identity management in China with a co-cultural perspective. In traditional Chinese culture, it is hard for men to reveal their homosexual identities in public; therefore, they strategically choose their communication orientation and coming-out plans, considering the traditional Chinese cultural values. Fox and Warber (2015) paid attention to LGBTQ individuals’ identity management on social media. The study indicated that people who publicly revealed their queer identity silence the voices of the dominant group; on the other hand, people who were not out silenced their own voices. Another research study done by Ju (2017), which navigated a blog from an organization of homosexual individuals also showed that the online environment may help gay people to openly communicate and reveal their identity.

There are some research studies that specifically targeted international sojourners’ communicative experience in a foreign country using co-cultural theory. Urban and Orbe (2007) analyzed international students’ essays, describing their feelings while they were studying in the United States. Referring to five premises suggested by Orbe (1998), the analysis of essays from international students indicated their position in the United States as members of a co-cultural group. The result of the research also suggested that international students are more likely to assimilate to American communicative structures that they idealized. Several sub-themes showed their experiences while they attempt to assimilate to the dominant structure in the US. Those themes include international students’ using prior knowledge about the US culture, their labeling as outsiders, the recognized limits of assimilation, adaptation of new communication approaches, locating themselves in different contexts, and obtaining various perspective outside of classroom.

Another study (Matsunaga & Torigoe, 2008) indicated that positionality as an outsider in a society influences the communication practice of marginalized groups. Matsunaga and
Torigoe (2008) conducted research on Japan-residing Koreans’ identity, finding that Korean residents in Japan faced challenges to their identity because of their position in Japanese society. They are commonly placed in a dilemma in that they are not fully accepted in either Korean or Japanese society. Even though they were born in Japan or had been residing in Japan for a long time, they were not recognized as Japanese in Japan because they did not have a Japanese citizenship. In Korean society, they were treated as Japanese since they are not familiar with Korean culture. Therefore, they are outsiders in both countries. This ambivalent position in both countries led Japan-residing Koreans to utilize certain communication strategies to emphasize either their Japanese identity or Korean identity. Through a co-cultural lens, the authors described participants’ communicative experience as a Japan-residing Koreans and their communication strategies to fit into Japanese society. Depending on their preferred outcome, participants utilized different communication strategies; however, the salient factor was that they decided to undertake a certain communication strategy to overcome their ambiguous identities in the society.

International sojourners’ communication experience varied depending on the culture of the host country. In Han and Price’s research (2017), immigrant wives in South Korea tended to take an accommodation approach, in contrast with previous research that found a lot of immigrant individuals chose to take assimilation approach. In Korean society, there are five large groups of immigrant wives: Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, Filipino, and Cambodians (Ministry of Justice, 2016). Each group experienced different stereotypes and prejudices based on their nationality. In order to avoid those stereotypes and successfully adjust to Korean society, most participants described deliberately choosing accommodation. For example, one participant from Japan shared that she deliberately contacted Korean parents when she had a problem with them because of her child. Instead of being silent and keeping a distant with other Korean parents, she called the school and let them know the
problem with her kid so that they could solve the problem. Also, the lack of language
proficiency and understanding Korean culture were salient factors that led them to adapt to
the mainstream culture of Korea, rather than assimilating.

The current research explores international sojourners’ communication practice in the
host country. International sojourners are often considered to be an outgroup in the society,
being classified as “alien” and “different” and are often excluded from the mainstream
(Brewer, 1999; Schmitt, Spears, & Branscombe, 2003; Spencer-Rodgers, 2001; Suzuki,
1998). As an outsider in the host country, most international sojourners attempt to
communicate with people in the host country and surroundings. In this regard, co-cultural
theory is an appropriate foundation to explore those groups that are socially marginalized and
their communication patterns when they interact with the dominant groups.

Even though some scholars have explored international sojourners as a minority
group in a society describing their positionality and identity management, those studies do
not fully describe the experiences of the current population of international sojourners. The
research from Urban and Orbe (2007) was conducted more than ten years ago. The
technology of media has been developed continuously since then (Yue, 2020) and it helps
people to consume various and recent information about foreign countries. This may change
the knowledge and image sojourners have about their host country, which is one factor of
influencing international students’ communication. Also, technology may also be a factor for
the sojourners in terms of their adjustment to a host country. Technology lets individuals
connect to others with similar interests or situations and they can get social support through
the connection (Sparks, 1992; Ye, 2006). By sharing their experience and information in the
host country, sojourners may feel less stressed about adjusting the new environment. For
instance, Ye (2006) reported that Chinese students who are actively engaged with their online
ethnic community experienced less acculturative stress and pressure from surroundings. In
addition to the social support from others who are in similar situations, international sojourners are able to interact with friends and family in their home country more frequently with advanced technology. Frequent interactions with people in the home country through cyber communication can lead international sojourners to sustain their identity and culture (Cemalcilar, Falbo, & Stapleton, 2005). Therefore, a study reflecting the recent trend for international sojourners is needed.

Studies from Matsunaga and Torigoe (2008) and Han and Price (2017) explored international sojourners who have been residing in a foreign country that is comparatively close to their home country. The cultural gap between host country and home country may give more social pressure to international sojourners and it may lead them setting up unique communicative strategies in a foreign country.

Co-cultural theory (Orbe, 1998) offers a framework for researchers who explore members of marginalized group’s negotiation and communication experiences in the dominant social structure, focusing on how marginalized people communicate in a specific context (Orbe, 1996). In the process of cultural adjustment, East Asian international sojourners have a chance to interact with various groups in the host country. Those groups include not only people from the host country but also people from their same cultural background. Even though they are in a foreign country, it is almost impossible to be completely separated from their home culture as they also get a chance to communicate with people from the same country. In this case, those international sojourners may be placed in communicative situations that they need to negotiate with another dominant culture which is their home culture. The original co-cultural theory (Orbe, 1998) does not address the dynamic where members of the marginalized group can be placed in the two dominant social structures and have to negotiate multidimensional aspects of their co-cultural identities. Orbe (1998) originally explained co-cultural communication as communication between people.
from the various group in the United States. Studies of co-cultural communication (Dixon, 2001) reveal the communicative experiences of the underrepresented groups in life by exploring interactions between the dominant group and non-dominant group. However, one’s identity development is complex so that revealing co-cultural identity in their communication also become complicated (Orbe & Spellers, 2005). For example, in the interaction between a Latino woman and African American man, it is hard to decide who is more marginalized and who becomes co-cultural group. Therefore, it is a natural process for scholars to put efforts to understand the complexity of co-cultural identities in communication.

Orbe and Roberts (2012) stated that co-cultural communications occur when an individual recognizes one aspect of their identity to be disadvantaged in the interaction with others. Individuals develop multiple identities while they interact with their surroundings and they often prioritize one of their identities depending on the situation and context that they face (Hecht, Warren, Jung, & Krieger, 2005; Ting-Toomey, 1988). As international sojourners interact with people from their home country in the host country and are influenced by those all their experiences, they cannot simply a switch within their identity to communicate with others in the host country. Instead, they negotiate with both the dominant cultures in the host country and the dominant home culture to successfully communicate with others in the host country. Therefore, it is not a binary switch that goes from one to the other, but an evolving process. The negotiation process of their identities happens simultaneously during their cultural adjustment. By exploring East Asian international sojourners’ communicative experiences with others in the U.S., this research can extend co-cultural theory by understanding co-cultural groups’ complicated situations in the host country, addressing the positionality of their identities between the home culture and the host culture, and how they negotiate their “in-betweenness” of being simultaneous a part of host culture community and home culture community in the host country. Analyzing East Asian sojourners’
communication practices will be helpful to understand the complexity of their identity management and development in the host country while they adjust to the culture of the host country.

The current research targets international sojourners in the United States without permanent visas. This implies that they are likely to return to their home country at some point. Including their positionality in the American society and their perceptions of international sojourners from the members of host country, I expect to explore other events and lived experience from international sojourners to influence their identity in order to better understand more marginalized group in the United States. Also, in the host country, international sojourners communicate with people from various cultural groups, including individuals from their home country. This means that they would need to negotiate their identity between the host cultural group and home cultural group in order to successfully communicate with both groups. Therefore, for this project I collected international sojourners’ experiences related to these negotiations.

Research Questions

Based on reviewing the literature on international sojourners, norms and values, cultural adjustment, and identity, two research questions are presented. These questions mainly focus on understanding international sojourners’ lived experiences of cultural adaptation and identity management in the host community. There are various strategies to adjust to the host country and manage newcomers’ identity, but each individual utilizes available communication strategies to fit in the host society while they communicate. Rather than generalizing certain groups’ experiences in the host environment, these research questions focusing on individualized experiences. By doing so, my goal is to understand international sojourners’ experience in the host country during cultural adjustment in a fuller manner.
The first research question addresses international sojourners’ negotiation and performance of identity as they adjust.

R1: In the process of cultural adjustment in the host country, how do East Asian international sojourners describe negotiating and performing their identities when they communicate with others?

The second research question includes the tension that East Asian international sojourners experience when they communicate with other people in the host country and how they negotiate their identities as they do so.

R2: How do East Asian international sojourners negotiate tensions, if they experience them, between their home culture identities and host culture identities?

The next chapter explains the methods that are used to draw answers from these questions.
CHAPTER 3: METHOD

Justification of the Methods

Human communication can be explored in multiple ways. Based on the purpose of the research and research questions being set, both qualitative and quantitative studies can offer new insight into the human communication phenomena. The current study aims to hear international sojourners’ lived experiences in the host community and their perceptions of their own management of identity in the process of cultural adjustment. In order to obtain insight into the international sojourners’ identity management in the host environment, I used qualitative research methods. I interviewed people who moved to a new cultural environment and are in the process of cultural adjustment. Considering the purpose of the present research project, qualitative research methods were suitable. The details of the method are explained in this chapter, focusing on justification of the methods, the researcher’s perspective on human communication (the role of a researcher), data collection, participants, procedure, protocol, and data analysis.

Unlike quantitative research that aims to investigate generalized facts on phenomena with two dimensional and an objective view, the purpose of qualitative inquiry is to get insightful and individualized comprehension of local phenomena (Donalek, & Soldwisch, 2004; Patton, 2014). The goal of qualitative inquiry is to describe a phenomenon as thickly as possible so that people can understand the phenomenon (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2018). Using quantitative inquiry for exploring the world would miss some points because it does not focus on the micro-level of a phenomenon such as a participant description of the phenomenon. Rather than reaching out to cover a larger population as much as possible, qualitative research
targets a certain group of people and attempts to explore with thick description, portraying participants’ situations and emotions related to the phenomena (Potter, 1996).

Also, qualitative research is useful to examine the context of a certain phenomenon: why a person or people act in a certain way, influenced by their surroundings (Tracy, 2012; Patton 2014). Tracy (2012) explained the relationship between people’s behaviors and the communication systems that people belong to, by using the term the duality of action and structure. Individuals’ actions cannot be separated from the influence of structure, and these are repeatedly bound together and affected by each other. One’s use of language and communication styles cannot be independent of how society generates and regulates knowledge (Du Gay, 2007). Using qualitative methods, researchers can explore actions through precise and deep observation of people’s daily communication. Qualitative researchers simultaneously investigate a structure that offers norms, rules, and expectations for individuals who belong to the structure (Tracy, 2012). Taking a naturalistic view that collects data from individuals’ daily practice, qualitative research attempts to understand the context which is achieved by examining the relationship between action and structure (Owen, 2008). Patton (2015) suggested seven contributions of qualitative inquiry to observe phenomena and to generate knowledge about phenomena:

(a) illuminating meanings, (b) studying how things work, (c) capturing stories to understand people’s perspectives and experiences, (d) elucidating how systems function and their consequences for people’s lives, (e) understanding context: how and why it matters, (f) identifying unanticipated consequences, and (g) making case comparison to discover important patterns and themes across cases. (p. 65)

By focusing on a relatively small group of people, qualitative research contributes to understanding them and phenomena they are engaged in.
In the present study, interviewing international sojourners about their experiences in the host country potentially contributes to understanding their actions in managing their own identities during the intercultural adjustment process, by understanding their perceptions of their everyday interaction with their surroundings. Qualitative methods provide the opportunity to connect international sojourners’ choices (developing their identity based on the host environment) within the host community (expectation toward international sojourners). By doing so, researchers can understand the context for international sojourners’ behavioral choices. The research questions designed for this study, asking about participants’ own experiences of everyday life and their identity management in the host country can be answered by asking them to share their perceptions of specific event and/or contexts in the process of cultural adaptation. Through in-depth interviews, I collected international sojourners’ stories in order to describe their lived experience and perceptions about the context and events they have experienced.

Researcher’s Perspective

The current research was conducted based on my underlying assumptions and world view as a researcher, which is consistent with social constructivism and the interpretative paradigm. Those two perspectives reflect how I understand international sojourners’ identity management during the cultural adjustment.

Social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) focuses on how people build a structure of knowledge in a society. Knowledge and reality have been implicitly constructed by members of the society, interacting with each other. Given that, scholars should trace the origin of knowledge, meaning, and the nature of reality (Gergen & Gergen, 2008). For social constructivists, knowledge is the product of a given community of agreement, so, it aims to trace the origin of knowledge, meanings and the nature of reality to a process generated within human relationships. That is, generated knowledge is communal rather than based on
some ultimate truth; therefore, social constructivists question the authority of traditional
“objective” research methods and challenge to the presumption of “truth.” For them,
scientific knowledge such as Western medical science is a cultural tradition. Language in
social constructionism is placed in the center and it is the social origin of knowledge. The use
of language is connected to certain activities working as a rule-like fashion. This concept
connects the politics of knowledge. Each community forms a certain construction that makes
knowledge that reflects the values of the community. That is, the knowledge that people
know is not the ultimate truth, but rather just the social agreement – a pragmatic conception
of knowledge. In this perspective, knowledge is generated and is inherited by people who
share same culture. Individuals communicate with others, performing their own identity, and
identity is socially constructed by interacting with other people in the society. Therefore, the
culture that the individual learns is not absolute, but is a social agreement by group members.
In order to explore one’s performance of identity in communication, researchers should focus
on a certain group and explore them in detail so that people can understand how one’s
behaviors are historically and culturally agreed to and socially constructed.

My understanding of culture aligns with interpretivism. Scholars who take
interpretative perspective think that multiple, socially constructed worlds exist (Ryan, 2018;
Tracy, 2012). Since there are more than one view of reality, it is impossible to perfectly
“know” the world, rather, scholars try to understand multiple views of the world. Knowledge
and reality are formed by communicating with others, sharing meanings among the members
of the societies and within societies. Therefore, understandings of the world vary by society.
In order to understand the world, researchers should describe phenomena in as much detail as
possible so that the phenomenon is displayed concretely without misleading (Geertz, 1973).
In this process, a researcher’s voice can be engaged and reflect on the research because the
researcher also has their own view of a phenomenon. Since interpretivists attempt to describe
the perspectives of their participants, the level of describing a phenomenon is the main criteria for evaluating research. Researchers should portray a phenomenon with detailed and thick description; therefore, qualitative methods are a useful tool to explore understanding of a world. By observing and interviewing people, scholars get an opportunity to describe communication behavior in a certain situation. The text of communication behaviors can be interpreted, deconstructed, and understood by people who share the same culture, and can also be analyzed and presented as themes. In the process of the research, the scholars’ voice can be included. Also, with interpretivism, the size of population is not considered as an important factor of a study, as long as the small population is meaningful and informative to be explored (Boddy, 2016). Rather, researchers should select a targeted population and describe the characteristics of the population as thickly as possible so that people can understand the specific group of people. In the field of intercultural communication studies, scholars with interpretive assumptions attempt to disclose and understand culture by observing and describing cultural behavior in the natural context (Hua, 2016). The main assumptions that interpretivists in intercultural communication research share, include (a) culture exists in its entirety and is built up by communication behaviors with meanings and relationships among groups, (b) detailed inspection and thick description can reveal and uncover culture and cultural norms, and (c) the main role of researchers is to attempt to interpret and understand culture holistically.

The current study takes interpretivism as a research paradigm. From my perspective, the experiences of sojourners are best understood based on their own narratives and researchers should interpret those narratives to understand them. I assume communication between international sojourners and those in the host culture influence newcomers to learn meanings and cultural norms in the host community so that the interactions lead international sojourners to behave a certain way. Therefore, international sojourners’ experience of cultural
adjustment process and their management of identity in the process is best studied in detail through qualitative interviews.

Data Collection: Interviews

The primary method for data collection was interviews. Interviews are the most suitable data collection method for this project because the researcher can have the opportunity to collecting participants’ narratives and comments about their lived experiences during the cultural adjustment process (DiCicco-Bloom, & Crabtree, 2006; Warren, 2001). Qualitative interviews consist of conversations between researchers and participants including questions that a researcher asks and comments from the participants (Kvale, 1996; Warren, 2001). Seeing participants as meaning-makers, the participants take an active role in the interview in describing their lived experience during a conversation with the researcher (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). When researchers conduct interviews, they use prepared questions asking about interviewees’ perspectives and experiences of a certain event or activity regarding the topic, based on the research questions. In order to get richer and detailed data from the respondents, open-ended questions are primarily asked. Rather than giving options of answers to participants, open or broader questions let respondents describe the context about their experience (Sabee, 2017). Also, follow-up questions based on open-ended questions help researcher to get detailed and more precise answers that can deeply explore participants’ perspectives.

Qualitative interviews are particularly appropriate for asking international sojourners to describe their experience in the host country. For individuals who arrive in a new environment and are adapting to its culture, it is common for them to share their cultural experience with people around them. In particular, in-depth interviews, which last comparatively longer than other interview formats, allow interviewers to collect deeper and more detailed information from participants (Johnson, 2001). In-depth interviews are
generally conducted through face-to-face interaction between a researcher and a participant. Through the interaction, an interviewer and an interviewee can build intimacy leading to self-disclosure so that a researcher can collect deeper information and knowledge.

Taking advantages of conducting interviews as a method of collecting data, for this research I interviewed international sojourners, asking open-ended questions. Following section explains participants, the interview protocol, the interview procedure, and data analysis.

Participants

All participant recruited for the present study are international sojourners whose home country is one of the East Asian countries (South Korea, China, Japan, and Taiwan) and who are currently living in the United States. These participants are purposefully selected because they their experience in the U.S. would be likely to be different from in their home culture due to the cultural gap between Eastern and Western cultures, which could be beneficial in responding question for the interview. In addition to the cultural traits that they share, people from East Asian countries form a pan-ethnic identity in the United State, sharing some experiences and structural factors (Lopez & Espiritu, 1990; Okamoto, 2003). Even though they are from different countries that have distinctive traditions and their own language, they are often categorized as simply “Asian” in the United States (Le, Arora, & Stout, 2020; Rhoads, Lee, & Yamada, 2002). Since they are placed in this pan-ethnic category, they have similar experiences in the United States. Therefore, I expect to collect their lived experiences they go through in the process of cultural adjustment. I initially sought interviewees from personal friends. As an international sojourner who has lived in the United States for about six years, I have had a lot of chances to make connections with other international sojourners. Also, I deliberately choose East Asian international sojourners who reside southeastern region of the United States, excluding large metropolitan areas where sojourners are likely to have
limited contact with large existing East Asian communities in the U.S. Nearly half of Asians in the United States dwell in metropolitan areas in the West and Northeast, such as California and New York (Lopez, Ruiz, & Patten, 2017, Zhou, 2004). Those metropolitan cities have Asian ethnic enclaves that have an infrastructure for their own ethnic community such as cultural institutions and language support programs (Carr, 2003; Morey et al., 2020; Zhou, 2004). In the ethnic enclaves, they are intentionally and unintentionally exposed to their home culture more often than in other locations. Therefore, they may feel less pressure to follow the mainstream culture. East Asian international sojourners who live in the Southern part of the U.S. have comparatively fewer opportunities to access their ethnic community and may face more situations where they need to negotiate their home culture identity and re-build their identity in the U.S. At first, I contacted those I knew and scheduled interviews with them. Then, I asked them to recommend other participants that I could possibly interview. This type of sampling is called snowball sampling, a technique that researchers use to recruit participants through their personal networks and reach out other participants (Given, 2008). Even though participants were not randomly recruited, selecting interviewees from a personal network increase the degree of trust and intimacy between a researcher and participants as the researcher and the participant both know the referral. The established familiarity eventually results in deeper and sincere interviews (Frey, 2018).

The current project particularly targets East Asian international sojourners who do not have permanent residency in the U.S. Snowball sampling is useful to access hidden populations in the society (Browne, 2005). East Asian International sojourners who are commonly considered as minority in the society do not always present themselves in public and may be hard to reach out without direct connection. By using snowball sampling, I reach participants who I would otherwise be unable to engage in the research process (Sadler et al., 2010).
Some scholars have expressed concerns about using snowball sampling strategies (Allen, 2017; Frey, 2018; Miller & Brewer, 2003; Sadler et al., 2010). The main deficiency that scholars commonly addressed is the lack of diversity and selection on choosing participants (Kaplan, Korf, & Sterk, 1987; Van Meter, 1990). Since interviewees are recruited based on one’s personal network and inter-relationships, all participants would possibly have similar perspectives and experiences. Therefore, data collected through the snowball sampling strategy may have similar patterns and be biased so that it is hard to represent the group (Allen, 2017; Griffiths et al., 1993). Given (2008) suggested one way defend this issue that a researcher chooses the diverse participants as much as possible for the first cycle of snowballing. With maximized diversity of the initial interviewees, the following links of those interviewees can bring more diverse participants. Accepting this suggestion, I reached out to the initial set of interviewees in my personal network with diverse backgrounds, considering their home country, gender, occupation, and visa status. Also, I asked interviewees to recommend other possible participants to expand my reach in their diverse communities.

Another potential concern about snowball sampling is face saving. As snowball sampling is a recruitment method based on one’s social network, each participant has prior connection. Because of the prior relationship between a reference and a referee and the need to protect their reputations for each other, the participants may not be fully honest or may not share their entire experience (Naderi & Hirst, 2018). In order to prevent this issue and get detailed data from an interviewee, I explained the confidentiality rule of this research and vulnerability of participating in this research before I start an interview process. By explaining the rule, participants would be more likely to feel safe and comfortable sharing their communicative experience, not considering the relationship with them and their recommender.
Considering the goal of this research, semi-structured interviews were utilized. Qualitative interviews can be categorized in various ways by its purposes and goals; however, those are roughly differentiated as unstructured, semi-structured, and structured (Sabee, 2017). When conducting a structured interview, a researcher prepares a confirmed set of questions and from time to time, participants need to choose an answer from options that the researcher offered (Tracy, 2012). Also, the prepared questionnaires are used repeatedly in the same manner and order for the entire interview session (Fontana & Frey, 2008). On the contrary, unstructured interviews allow more flexibility during interviews (Sabee, 2017). Similar to the structured interview, researchers ask questions to participants during interviews, however, those questions are usually broad and open-ended questions. For instance, a researcher who conducts an unstructured interview may ask respondents’ feelings about an event or a situation, “How do you feel about changing your name in America.”. With those flexible questions, an interviewer can be creative when they conduct unstructured interviews and also, can add follow-up questions based on respondents’ answers. Therefore, the content and order of questions would be slightly different in each interview.

Semi-structured interviews take mid-point between structured interviews and unstructured interviews. When researchers prepare semi-structured interviews, they build a list of questions and set up an interview protocol like structured interviews including interview schedule and location (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). However, semi-structured interviews allow researchers to conduct interviews in a conversational manner with open-ended questions and ask follow-up questions so that they can elicit more detailed and in-depth answers from participants (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Longhurst, 2003). By taking this approach, researchers can focus on questions related to the research topic by controlling directions with a predetermined protocol, but at the same time, they can collect
data from interviewees that are generated with their own words by allowing follow-up questions. For the current research, semi-structured interviews are suitable because this type of interview offers interviewees a chance to be in a comfortable environment during interviews in a conversational manner, yet simultaneously to be consistent with the type of information that an interviewer needs (Leech, 2002). The present project planned to explore international sojourners’ personal experience in the host country which may include private and sensitive information. The conversational manner during the interview increases intimacy between an interviewee and an interviewer while conducting an interview and it is possible for a researcher to elicit more detailed and fruitful information from the participants. Also, the interview protocol is helpful for researchers to keep from getting off the topic and get the information needed to answer the research questions. Considering research questions for the current research, I developed a set of semi-structured interview questions so that I could collect international sojourners’ experience in a detailed and in-depth manner. The list of interview questions is designed to delve into international sojourners’ identity management before and after they arrived at the host country (See Appendix A).

Interviews were conducted in English regardless of participants’ nationality in order to ensure consistency. As a result of screening participants’ language ability, many of the participants had earned a degree in the United States. While some participants were more proficient than other in their English speaking skills, they were all able to communicate with me about their experiences in the United States. Even though I am a native Korean speaker, I did not to conduct interviews in Korean with Korean respondents. Considering the cultural norms in the Korean expatriate community, it was sometimes awkward to speak in English, however, interviewing Korean participants in Korean might have resulted in different answers (Ervin-Tripp, 1960). Sometimes, in the interviews, the interviewees referred to Korean cultural norms using the Korean term. For example, one interviewee talked about specific
jargon indicating the communication ways of being polite to elders which is called “jon-dae-
mal” Those terms are used following Korean pronunciation and then, I explained meanings of
those terms.

The interview protocol consisted of four sections: background, the cultural adjustment
in the U.S., communication in the U.S., and identity in the U.S. Those four sections led
participants to think about their identities before and after they arrived at the host country and
eventually how they managed and negotiated their identities in the host country. The
questions in the first section asked the participants’ length of residence in the U.S. and
motivation to come to the U.S. These questions were helpful for the researcher to understand
the participant’s background so that they could build rapport in this section. Gaining rapport
during interviews is important because a lack of intimacy between the interviewer and the
interviewee can elicit shallow and uninformative answers from respondents (Leech, 2002;
Lindloff & Taylor, 1995). Starting with questions that interviewees could answer easily,
compared with other questions, the researcher and the participant could build a sense of trust
as well.

Next, the second section referred to participants’ cultural adjustment in the U.S. The
first question in this section asked about the participant’s experience of recognized cultural
differences. This question can give insight into the participant’s degree of culture shock when
they just arrived at the host country and guess the difficulties that the respondent faced. The
following questions asked about their perceptions about themselves in America in terms of
cultural adjustment. With this section, I collected background knowledge about interviewees
and eventually answer RQ1 by asking them about recognized cultural adjustment and the
negotiation related to cultural differences. Those questions would remind participants
thinking about their current identity and the difference between the past identity in the home
country and current identity.
The third section was about participants’ communication activities in the U.S. The series of questions asked participants to recall their interactions with members of the host country and members from their own ethnic community in the host community. Also, they were asked to describe the frequency of their communication with Americans and people from the same country, as well as the level of comfort they felt while interacting with both groups. By comparing those experiences, I obtained information about how participants understood their performance of their identity with different groups and assimilation levels toward the host culture. Those questions offered data for RQ1 by offering international sojourners’ communicative experiences of identity management while they interact with others in the host country. Also, this section provided data to answer RQ2 about the differences in their communication experiences when they communicated with different groups of people in the host country and how they performed their identities and negotiated tensions between two identities.

Questions in the last section referred to international sojourners’ identity management in the United States. The first two questions in this section asked about recognized changes in their life and communication experiences in the U.S. Addressing changes in interactions and behaviors in the host country and home country led interviewees to recognize the difference in managing and performing their identity in the host country. The last question in the fourth section delved into an interviewee’s identities as they perceive them from a third person’s perspective. As identities change gradually as people are interacting with their surrounding (Gao & Gudykunst, 1990), they may not necessarily have recognized their changes in identity by themselves but may have experienced comments based on other people’s perceptions of their changes. With the last question, the researcher got a glimpse of the participant’s identity management indirectly through a person who has interacted with the interviewee. An individual who has a connection with the participant may have insight into the changes since
they are comparing as a snapshot past with a snapshot present. Therefore, the perspectives of people who had interacted with the participants in the home country were relevant. With interview questions from the fourth section, I collected data for RQ1. Asking interviewees about the changes of themselves after living in the U.S., I was able to better understand how their current identity had been developed and how they performed their identity in the host country. At the end of each interview, participants answered questions about their age and education background in order to report demographic data. Lastly, I asked them to share additional experiences or opinions about the life in the U.S. beyond those questions. Then, I finished the interview session.

*Interview Procedure*

I recruited participants until the data for this study met saturation. Theoretical saturation indicates the data collection is sufficient when the newly collected data adds little value for the research (Glaser, & Strauss, 1967). Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggested when to stop collecting data for researchers:

(a) no new or relevant data seem to emerge regarding a category; (b) the category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions demonstrating variation; and (c) the relationships among categories are well established and validated. (p.212)

Following their suggestion, I stopped interviewing new people once the data collection met saturation. In the initial round of recruiting, I interviewed eight East Asian international sojourners in my personal network. Then, they recommended more individuals who were from one of the East Asian countries and had different visa status. These additional participants shared similar experiences and patterns. Finally, to be certain I had reached saturation. I conducted additional interviews including more diversity in the sample. I stopped interviewing new people when I was confident I had reached saturation; no new
themes had been presented in the last several interviews and participants’ answers were continuing to repeat similar experiences and patterns.

Each interview was conducted using the program of videotelephony. As the interviews were conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, attention was also given to physical safety. After the Covid-19 pandemic started, people sought an alternative platform of face-to-face interaction to keep social distance (Lobe, Morgan, and Hoffman, 2020). Among remote communication platforms, Zoom became one of the most common and popular platforms, chosen by many organizations and individuals (Serhan, 2020). Gray, Wong-Wylie, Rempel, and Cook (2020) addressed several benefits of using Zoom for video communications. First of all, participants of Zoom meetings do not need to have an account of Zoom or download the program. Simply clicking the Zoom link that the host of the meeting sent to a participant, they can join the meeting. Secondly, Zoom has a function of sharing screens. Using the function, the host of the meeting can notify an interviewee about the research, displaying informed consent. Thirdly, the host can set up passwords for joining the meeting. This function is helpful for both interviewees and interviewers to increase confidentiality. Lastly, Zoom allows users to save meetings in two forms: audio-only and both audio and video files. Audio-only file is comparatively reduced size than a video file and it can save the capacity of computer storage. Additionally, the audio-only option can enhance confidentiality that participants’ faces would not be recorded in a video. Considering those benefits, I interviewed participants through Zoom. For the online interviews, the interviewees are requested to locate themselves to be in a place where they can be away from interferences and be separated from other people who may influence their answers.

The average time for each interview was 61.9. The shortest interview took for 40 minutes and the longest interview lasted 96 minutes. Those interviews were recorded through a voice recording device. After interviewees agreed to participate the current study, they got
general information about the project and complete an informed consent before they did their interview (Appendix B). The informed consent asks interviewees to participate the study and to give a permission to record video and voice of the interview. Two participants did not turn on the camera by their choice.

Afterward, I transcribed interviews with Zoom. Zoom offers a service that can automatically transcribe and document interviews. Using the service, I initially transcribed each interview. As English was not the participants’ mother tongue, I reviewed their interviews and transcript for accuracy. In the process of cleaning up the data, I called back to two of the interviewees to confirm the meanings and the use of words during their interview. After the confirmation, I printed each interview using Microsoft Word for the analysis and keep them in binders. The physical copy of interviews was helpful to highlight and leave a notes for deeper analysis. Those binders were stored in locked and a secure room. Electronic version of the interviews was stored in UA Box. UA Box is a protected and cloud-base system that allows users to store, share and collaborate their documents. All names of interviewees in the transcripts were pseudonyms so that participant’s confidentiality can be ensured. I decided to choose an English name for each participant to avoid any prejudice toward East Asian sojourners from readers and focus on their experiences in the host country.

*Interviewees in the Current Study*

For the present study, I purposefully chose participants who are from East Asian countries (South Korea, Japan, China, and Taiwan) and have temporary residency in the U.S. There were 26 participants. The population of participants was diverse in several ways. The proportion of female and male participants was 6:4 with 16 female and 10 males. I interviewed 10 South Koreans, seven Chinese, four Taiwanese, and five Japanese. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), researchers should stop collecting data when the analysis achieves saturation. Considering the population of East Asian sojourners in the United States,
participants were recruited until the saturation was reached to assure the representation of the four East Asian countries.

Most interviewees were engaging in higher education with different roles: three Assistant professors, nine doctoral students, five master students, one undergraduate student, two instructors, one post-doctoral faculty member, and one faculty member. The participant who was a faculty member worked as a health professional at the University for student-athletes. Five participants worked at U.S. companies. The participants' job reflected the participants’ educational backgrounds: Four had finished a doctoral degree, 12 had master’s degrees, nine had completed an undergraduate degree, and one had a high school degree. The temporary residency that they have were F1 \( (n=14) \), H1B \( (n=5) \), and OPT \( (n=6) \). When they did the interview, six of the participants were in the process of getting permanent residency in the United States.

Geographically, most participants were residing in Alabama \( (n=12) \). Other participants were in diverse locations in the United States including Louisiana \( (n=2) \), Pennsylvania \( (n=1) \), Texas \( (n=1) \), Michigan \( (n=1) \), Washington \( (n=1) \), Indiana \( (n=1) \), North Dakota \( (n=1) \), New Mexico \( (n=1) \), Tennessee \( (n=1) \), and Nebraska \( (n=3) \). In the case of the participant who was living in New Mexico, she had temporarily returned to China for a medical procedure when she participated in the interview. However, all interviews were conducted through Zoom, considering the safety of interviewees and interviewer due to the COVID pandemic situation. The average time for each interview was 61.9 minutes. Those recorded interviews were transcribed in Word document. There were 506 pages. The following table shows the detailed information of each participant (See Table 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Visa</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Interview time (min)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
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<td>H1B</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Visa</td>
<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>46</td>
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<td>Worker at a company</td>
<td>OPT</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
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<td>China</td>
<td>Worker at a company</td>
<td>OPT</td>
<td>1996</td>
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<tr>
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<td>F1</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>74</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
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<td>OPT</td>
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<td>Assistant professor</td>
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<td>F1</td>
<td>1998</td>
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<td>Master student</td>
<td>F1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Master student</td>
<td>F1</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis

An emergent thematic analysis was employed for analyzing the transcription of interviews. An emergent thematic analysis is suitable to explore hidden meanings by comparing the data with open coding (Tracy, 2012). By doing so, researchers can uncover the relationships between ideas and concepts that are repeatedly shown within the data (Alholjailan, 2012). Applying an emergent thematic analysis, scholars get through the process of identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within the interview data (Braun, & Clarke, 2006). An emergent thematic analysis offers detailed and rich perspectives to individuals’ subjective experiences, taking the inductive approach (Williams, 2008). An inductive approach refers to the strategy of data reduction and analysis (Ayres, 2008). From the qualitative data set, which is complicated and rich, researchers summarize and reconstruct the data set of experiences and figure out the patterns of those, including the researchers’ investigative insights and questions. The present study aimed to explore East Asian sojourners’ personal experiences of cultural adjustment in the U.S. Smith, Jarman, and Osborn (1999) stated that data containing individuals’ personal experience and perspectives need to be analyzed through the process of interpretative exercise to understand data since it is difficult to comprehend participants’ experiences in its wholesome as a third person. Therefore, an emergent thematic analysis is helpful to arrange and categorize the patterns of East Asian international sojourners’ private experiences that are complex.

The analysis started with reading the transcription repetitively to fully understand international sojourners’ communicative experience in the host country. I read the transcriptions multiple times to understand international sojourners’ expressions and description on their experiences revealing themes, putting memos on a side note. After I
gained a holistic understanding of the transcripts, I read the data constantly for open coding. Open coding refers to the process of identifying concepts, discovering characteristics of those concepts and developing categories based on those characteristics (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Through open coding, researchers can explore ideas, thoughts, and meanings, emerged from raw data and build explanatory and initial framework for the later analysis (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011; Khandkar, 2009). The most common way of open coding is line-by-line analysis that researchers examine every sentence and word in the data constantly until patterns of descriptions come out (Glaser, 2016; Khandkar, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). With an interpretative view, I paid attention to primary ideas and meanings under what international sojourners elaborated about their identity and communicative experiences. In the process of data immersion, I examined the transcription of qualitative data and get the overall sense of the data.

Then, I identified rough themes relevant to the topic and inductively manages those themes. Coding was accomplished by using paper and colored highlighters with different symbols and colors to take a note on my thoughts and possible themes of the data. The possible emerged themes were written in the separated note so that I can organize those easily. Meanings and thoughts that are repetitively mentioned were identified as themes. In addition to it, some meaningful or significant remarks were checked, even if those are not recurred by multiple participants. Finally, the data is reorganized and interpreted following each emerged theme. The constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006) was used throughout the analysis process. I constantly compared data, checking to be applicable to each theme.

The current research attempted to qualify “rich rigor” (p.841) that enhances the quality of qualitative research, as suggested by Tracy (2010). She suggested checking the richness and accuracy of the following to check the rigor of qualitative works: (a) theoretical
constructs, (b) data and time in the field, (c) sample(s), (d) context(s), and (e) data collection and analysis process. First, the samples of the present research were selected carefully to ensure the diversity of the participants based on their nationality, gender, and visa status and to attract interviewees who are in marginalized groups in the U.S to achieve the goal of the current study. Also, I repetitively reviewed the voice records of each interview to ensure the accuracy of transcriptions, adding details of participants’ characteristics and their backgrounds. In addition, the process allowed me to discover hidden meanings under answers from interviewees. Finally, open coding with line-by-line analysis led me to describe participants’ experiences abundantly.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The current study aimed (a) to give more attention to the increasing number of international sojourners in the U.S. and (b) to understand international sojourners’ dynamic identities that evolve by interacting with others in the host country. In this chapter, I describe the findings, answering the research questions.

The Process of Cultural Adjustment

The first research question asked about the identity negotiation and performance of East Asian international sojourners in the host country as they communicate with others. While international sojourners reside in the host country, they have a chance to interact with multiple groups including Americans, other foreigners, and those from their home country. Therefore, the answer for this research question is described with three categories based on the groups that East Asian sojourners interacted with and general performance that they did in the host country: (a) interaction with home-culture group, (b) interaction with host-culture group, and (c) performance across audiences of identity. Then, each category is explained with themes. Lastly, all themes were analyzed to determine how East Asian sojourners negotiated their identity between the home-culture and the host culture. The result of the data analysis is presented in the following section.

Interacting with Home-Culture Groups

Even though the participants were in the host country, they were not completely disconnected from their national group. Intentionally or unintentionally, they interacted with others from their home country while they lived in the host country. The following seven themes describe communication behaviors and strategies of East Asian sojourners when they interact with members of their home-culture group: (a) avoiding home-culture group, (b)
showing their American side, (c) approaching cultural informers, (d) experiencing instant connection, (e) de-emphasizing Americanness, (f) being extra polite, and (g) sharing home culture. Each theme is described in more detail below.

Avoiding the Home-culture Group. Avoiding the members of the home-culture group and its community was frequently mentioned by participants of this study. More than half of the participants said that they purposefully avoided interacting with the members of the national group. Eden, who is now an assistant professor at a University in the United States, retraced her past communication strategy when she was an undergraduate student. “There was the point that I try to avoid interaction with Korean members.” She said that she wanted to improve her learning skills and language proficiency in the United States, so she avoided hanging out with Koreans. She was afraid that she might not successfully adjust to American culture if she mingled with Korean people so much. She continued, “The parents have sacrificed their lives to support me financially and I don't want to waste my time mingle with the Korean friends when they could read more language you know the skill.” Her goal of being in the United States was to improve her language skills and get a degree. Therefore, she deliberately decided to study in a rural area to be away from a Korean community and effectively developed her English proficiency. Sarah also mentioned her purpose for being in the United States. She said her only concern being in the United States in the first year of her master's program was to improve her English. “I think I spent most of my time just in my apartment to read the articles all time like from 8 am to 8 pm, every day.” To successfully adjust to American culture and focus on her studies, she isolated herself from the home-culture group.

Tom also tried to stay away from this home-culture group to succeed in the United States at the beginning of life in host country. Tom currently worked for American tech company with a stable visa status. When he was a student, he purposefully hung out only
with Americans except for his girlfriend, who is also from the same country. He said, “I have to adjust to myself to American culture to be around with American friends… I deleted my identity as a Korean.” Both he and his girlfriend wanted to focus on studying and adjusting to American culture. Other than going to necessary participating in Korean events or interacting with other Korean people, he minimized the interaction with Koreans in the United States. He spent a lot of time studying and did part time jobs on campus. They thought engaging with the home-culture community was not helpful for his goal of staying in the U.S. In addition, they experienced conflict within the home-culture group. As their American campus was in a small town, their home-culture community was also very small. Being a part of the conflict caused them a lot of stress because they needed to see other community members in their daily lives. To avoid unnecessary drama and expenditure of emotion, they decided to stay away from the home-culture community.

Jack had the same opinion on engaging Korean people in the United States. For him, interacting with his national community was a bother to his schoolwork. He explained, “There are so many things that I need to think so… I know people like to judge people and they don’t, they want to talk about others, so I don’t want to interact with them much.” Because of social norms and rules that he needed to follow when he interacted with members from the home-culture group, he stayed away from his national group. Kevin also mentioned, “The reason I came here is to study the athletic training and not make Japanese friends. So, I don’t need a Japanese.” Some interviewees thought that engaging with people from home-culture communities was not helpful to achieve their goal of being in the United States, rather it was an obstacle to adjust American society successfully. Therefore, they chose to avoid communicating with their home-culture community.

Showing Their American Side. Some participants answered that they communicated with their home-culture group, showing their communication styles and behaviors that they
learned in the United States based on their understanding of American culture. For instance, Jack said that he tried to be polite and respectful when he talks with younger people and treat them mutually. For instance, he asked younger people’s opinion about making decisions such as choosing a dinner menu. Based on his experience, he was surprised that he barely felt hierarchy coming from the age gap or social status unlike in his home country. He said that he could casually play sports with his academic advisor and faculty members without thinking about cultural rules and norms that came from the social hierarchy between a student and a professor. However, in Korea, there are cultural rules and norms when people have a conversation with elders in terms of language usage and conversation topics. He felt impressed that people mutually respected each other even between students and advisors, so he decided to take it intentionally when he interacts with younger people from Korea.

Cathy also purposefully showed her American sides to people from her home country. She said, “I started like argue with the guys like talking about my opinion and I started seeing like you’re wrong and I talked to my dad and uncles like that you should cook your food by yourself.” Before she came to the United States, she thought she needed to behave in a certain way as a woman, for example, always smiling, not being angry, cooking for men, wearing humble clothes, and not laughing too loud. While she has adjusted to American culture, she realized that she does not need to follow those gender norms and started to confront her relatives whenever she faced what she saw as an unfair moment. She described the moment of her confrontation with her family members. During her family gathering in Korea, there were unspoken rules that women prepared for food and cleaned up these dishes, and she felt it was necessary to help them. Cathy, who was married to an American husband, explained to her Korean family members, “My father-in-law, he is good at cooking and likes to cook for all our family. Also, I saw when he got to work, he packed his lunchbox by himself.” However, they did not believe it and complained saying, “you became aggressive and so
Americanized.” Even though she did not need to argue with them, she intentionally raised her voice to her relatives and actively showed her American side.

Some interviewees talked about unintentional behaviors. For example, Anna described the moment when she accidentally acted like an American when she was with her mother in Japan. “So I went to Japan, I throw away like Starbucks cup with ice to a trash can, but my mom got mad at me.” In Japan, the coffee cups, the coffee holder, and leftover food need to be thrown out separately. However, her mother got upset since she did not follow the norms for recycling trash in Japan. She did not intend to do so, but it happened all of sudden without thinking. Although she preferred the Japanese way of disposing of rubbish, considering the environmental issue, she got used to the American way of disposal and it became a habit. She said she felt sorry that she totally forgot how to throw things away correctly in Japan.

Julie also described her interaction with her Chinese friends. She said that she found herself making a big smile when she posted a picture of her on a social network website. “One of my friends in China, like she was a comment on one of my posts on Wechat. She's like your smile are really American now, like, I’m all your white teeth out and smile really big.” She was indifferent about her friend’s comment, but she was surprised that she did not realize she was making a big smile showing her teeth when she took the picture. Another participant mentioned a similar situation when she was with her mother. Cathy said, “It just happened. I just danced in public.” She went shopping with her mother and her mother bought something for her. She was happy about it and start dancing unintentionally. She did not realize she was dancing until her mother slapped her to make her stop dancing. She said, “my mother was like, stop dancing! This is not America.” Either purposefully or not, several interviewees kept the American ways of communication styles and behaviors when they interacted with people from their home-culture group.
Approaching Cultural Informers. For some East Asian international sojourners, people from their home country who came to the United States earlier than them were good informants to get help and get information about the U.S. or their residential districts. Kate contacted an individual who is from the same country and went to the same program in the United States. She asked for information about the university that she was supposed to go such as about the best cellphone carrier company, transportation, and Asian markets with details as much possible.

Nate also sought out help from his home-culture group like Kate when he first arrived at the location where he was going to work. He answered, “Oh I did, but at the same time, I did not want to. It’s kind of weird but I may be that to get some more information.” He thought that connecting with the Korean community in the United States was not necessary. Hanging out with Koreans is great, however, he was not desperate to interact with them and become friends with them. For him, connecting with Korean people was not for a social interaction, but just for getting information about living in that place. He continued,

I mean I believe that there’s some information that I can only get in some community or group about things. So, I think those are one of those like where can I get the Korean foods or where can I get their ingredients or where can I get stuff like that.

When he just got to his new working place, he made a post on the Korean community page on Facebook, asking about local restaurants, ethnic grocery markets, and some facilities that he could use.

Sarah and Jennifer also actively use an online ethnic community to get help and information. There is a specific online community service, called WeChat. WeChat offers a service for people to form a virtual space for sharing information in a certain location or for people who share similar interests. Both of them joined the online community of people who reside in their area after they made a decision to stay at the location. When they look for
something that only the Chinese people may have or offer, they upload a post to ask about it. For instance, Jennifer asked a ride to get to the airport. It takes an hour to get to the local airport from her location. In her location, it is hard to get public transportation and the cost of public transportation is expensive. So, whenever she needs to get to the airport, she asked people in the online community for a ride even if she barely knows or has never met people in the online community. In the case of Sarah, she sold her stuff through the online community. Before she moved to the new workplace, she took pictures of her stuff that she could not bring to the new location and uploaded the photos so that she could sell the products to people who are from the same country. She also said that she bought something that she only can buy back in her home country through the virtual community.

Also, for John, connecting to his home-culture group in the U.S. was one communication strategy to seek help. When he just got to his university for his degree, he contacted people from his country. He said, “Because you know, they got used to living here. They helped me a lot I need to get more like stuff I need to for my house so.” They actually did not have a chance to meet each other often as they got busy after school started, however, they still stayed connected to each other so that they could share information about school life and news. He added, “because like, coming here is more challenging for us, so they tried to help each other.” Jake also contacted an individual who came to the U.S university earlier than him to get some advice. His advisor knew someone from the university and connected to him. After that, they kept in touch with each other and got assistance during the first year in the United States. Even though they could not meet each other in person because of their busy schedules, they still stay connected and help each other. For them, connecting to the home-culture group in the United States is one communication strategy that they helped them easily find information and sources in order to adjust to the new environment.
Experiencing Instant Connection. When participants interact with the home-culture group, some of them experienced instant connections and chemistry because of the shared culture. Most participants came to the United States themselves without their family members or friends. When they got a chance to interact with people from their country, they instantly felt the connection and easily communicated with them as they are from the same country and culture. Julie described the moment when she made a new friend. She said,

So, I met her at a hot yoga place so, and my gym and I went gym one time, and I went to the yoga class and she was there. I noticed her at first when I was in the class and it was like, man I have never seen an Asian for years. I got to talk to her.

After she recognized an Asian individual at the gym, she tried to approach her to make a connection. She purposefully put on her shoes slowly to say hello to her, then they became a friend after they spent some time together. She also mentioned that she felt comfortable talking to strangers if they seemed to be from the same country. She had another story of her talking to a stranger in a grocery shop that deals with Asian products. She explained,

If I see any Chinese, like if I see, like, Hi. Chinese New Year. Um. I went to H mart. There’s a food court over there and there a Chinese, like a Chinese family, like little restaurant and then I went there and then I was like Happy New Year, blah, blah.

Jennifer shared a similar experience as Julie. She said that it was easy for her to recognize someone’s nationality among a group. She went to university orientation and instantly recognized people from the same country. She did not know them personally, but she could guess they were from the same country. Also, possibly they might be connected through social media because most of Chinese people in the local area are in the online community. She said

We have the same friends or same group. All we sent to the same events so if you went to the orientation together, then you probably will be familiar with someone like
who’s stand by you or stand behind you … And you are both Chinese we were just like greeting each other and yeah then talk about something then probably adding friends on WeChat.

Briana also talked about the shared culture and connection that she had when she met someone from the Korean community. When she interacted with members of her home-culture group for the first time, it is different from her way of interacting with Americans. She explained,

With Americans, I usually go up and like just be friends with them. So that’s a little different but, once you get to be a really close friend to Korean your kind of your…it’s faster to get closer friends in a way.

By asking some questions such about the city that they used to live in back in the home country, the food they used to like, or their favorite singer, they could get better and quicker connection by sharing the same mother country.

Nancy explained the quick connection with people from the same country by comparing her interaction with Americans. She said that Americans are friendly and nice, but it was hard for her to become a friend. However, in the case of other Asian international sojourners, she could easily spend time with them together and felt comfortable around them even though they did not share the language. She also said, “I think it is easier, because especially when you’re both friends both students. So in the United States.” As they were in a similar situation and shared a similar culture, they could feel comfortable approaching each other and staying connected. In addition to Nancy, Briana talked about her instant connection due to their shared experience. She explained, “There is like an unseen bonding because we are here as a minority. we are here as a foreigner. I think there is this vibe that you’re like okay there is another Korean people. You kind of out bonding immediately or expected to bond.” The people in the Asian community went through similar experiences in the United
States with same cultural background. The shared experience and culture immediately let them feel connected and bonded.

De-emphasizing Americanness. Although East Asian international sojourners learned and perform in the American communication style, some of them purposefully hide their Americanness and try their best to communicate with the people from their country in home-culture ways. Sarah explained her opinion, saying “I think when people smile at you, you will feel good. So, I smile at them. I want to make other people feel good, so I will smile at them, but I will not smile at my Chinese friends, because we all grew up in China and a field that kind of strange and the people and they may think that the way you pretend to be Americans.” She continued, “People were thinking you are fake. You are just. Why we are all Chinese and actually we spend almost more than 20 years back in China. So why are we behaving that.” She thought it is okay to act like an American and mimic American communication style with Americans, but it is not okay to do so with her home-culture groups because she felt was fake. Since her home culture is dominant to her, it was strange to perform in American communication style with her home-culture group. Another participant, Mat also said that he only spoke his mother language when he communicated with people from the same country unless there was non-Chinese individual in the group.

Sarah also mentioned that some members of her home-culture group may speak ill of her to other members if she does not communicate in her language or in home-culture communication style. Denise also expressed her uncomfortable feelings with someone acting like Americans. She said, “I have friends who are trying to be 100% white person which I want to communicate with her. I would feel like this so uncomfortable thing, when we’re talking. Because I assume we’re under the same identity and from the same culture. We are having a lot of similar experience. We should understand each other.” She complaint that some Chinese people in the U.S. followed American communication style in a twisted way,
saying “They are trying to putting themselves as American or as part of them America but
they cannot get rid of their original Chinese identity. It is uncomfortable and weird.” After
she experienced this uncomfortable situation, she tried to stick with her Chinese way of
communication when she interacted with members of her national group.

Briana also de-emphasized her Americanness and followed Korean ways of
communication when she interacted with Korean people in the U.S. She said, “whenever I
meet with Korean people, I automatically kind of going to the Korean mode.” She explained,

She's Unnie (female friend who is older than the person) so every time i'm around her.
it's like I usually yield to her. And she's more of my authority. The ratio is never like
parallel it's like she's above me and I’m here, compared to other like my best friends
who are like older than I am that we are actually like in the same page equal
relationship…. Because it's like what Koreans do.

She thought that there is an expectation from the Korean group to behave in the traditional
way when they interacted each other. If she violates the expectation, the members of her
group would feel uncomfortable and may ruin the relationship with them. Therefore, she
stuck with the Korean way to enhance the solidarity with the Korean group.

Being Extra Polite. This communication strategy was another theme that was the most
constant and common for the current project. When interviewees communicated with people
from the same country, they attempted to be extra polite, following home-culture
communication norms and behaviors. Alex mentioned the cultural expectation when she
interacted with other Koreans. She said she considered specific communication styles,
especially language related while she communicated with Korean elders. “I was still used
honoring language to the older people or just simply adult people who are older than me.”
Recalling her interacting with Americans, she put more effort into her home-culture group in
terms of choosing a certain communication style since it is highly cultural-related. Andy also
described the pressure from the age gap and certain communication styles accordingly. For him, interacting with elders of his home-culture group was a pressure. He even commented, “One of the reasons that I came to America is age hierarchy. I do not like to be, I do not like to bow down to old people for no reason or because they’re just older than me.” Cathy experienced uncomfortable feeling as well when she visited a professor’s house. She recalled that she should follow the Korean communication rules at the place. She was invited to their house for dinner. As she is younger than the professor and his wife, she felt necessary to help them prepare dinner. “It is a... yeah, she has already, like the old culture, because she really expected a young girl will do like those like housework more or house like a kitchen like preparation.” She could not refuse to help her since she was younger, and it is impolite to ignore the favor. She continued, “with her, I try to be careful, like not to hurt her feeling or not to talk about the thing.”

Tom explained the formation of hierarchy when he met an individual from his country. On the first encounter with a member of his national group, they asked each other some questions to know each other – firstly name and then, age. Once they figured out how old they are, the hierarchy is instantly formed because of the age difference, and it is connected to the certain communication style that they should follow. He said he watches his mouth more. “If they are older than me, they might not understand why I talk like this like a certain joke… I would not crack a joke with Korean boss for instance.” In addition to Tom’s explanation, Nate described the consideration of word choice when he communicated with other Koreans. Compared to his communication behavior with Americans, he put more effort into his home-culture group. He said, “I think I made it more of the, I don’t have to worry about. I don’t have to worry about the word choice that I’m using in the sentence…. It is part of the South Korean culture.” When participants interacted with people from the same country, they felt an unseen hierarchy based on their social status. To maintain a good
relationship with them, they followed the communication styles and behaviors of the home-culture group.

Sharing Home Culture. Some East Asian participants intentionally contacted the home-culture group in order to share the cultural events and home-culture culture in the United States. Kate went to Chinese Church every year to celebrate Chinese holidays and events. She did not go to the Church regularly on Sundays, as she is not a Christian, but for the Chinese New Year, she always went there. She said, “I really celebrate all the festivals like used to do back home in Taiwan. Some people here, I think some Chinese people here, they kind of celebrated only, they only celebrate the festivals that they wanted to celebrate.” For her, the Chinese church is the place where she can participate in the Chinese cultural events in the United States. Jennifer also mentioned that she intentionally met her Chinese people to celebrate cultural events. She did not attempt to make new friend who are from the same country as she already had some connection with them. However, for a cultural event such as Chinese New Year, she went there to get food and share her culture with others in the home-culture community.

For Cathy, gathering with Koreans is rare except for national cultural events. She explained that going to those cultural events is one way of sharing and reminding of her culture. She said, “I can see like people like Korean people in the United States, like they, they're little bit lonely also they miss Korea, or they made like Korea culture, Korean people, Korean food is so.” She used to reside a small town where only a few Korean people were staying, and it was hard to find an Asian market or products. Those cultural events were one way that they could gather together and perform their culture by eating Korean food and have a conversation about their home country. Hannah also mentioned her feelings about celebrating cultural events with people from their home country in the United States. She said she often hung out with Chinese or Taiwanese people when there was a big event such as
someone’s graduation or national holidays of her home country. “We have Chinese New Year’s together and that really feels very good, because we, because it's a special day. Yeah, yeah and then I'm more like. More like, like family. yeah, because we have each other.” Studying in the foreign country was hard for her and her friends with the pandemic situation. However, she could survive those hardships by practicing her home-culture with her friends. In case of Andy, he said he internationally went to a Korean church because the religious practice of the American church did not touch his heart. He said, “I feel comfortable on when I listen to a sermon and it's not coming to my heart, I understand it, but it's not touching my heart that's that that that is the reason.” He continued, Although you like the let's say you read points One in English and Korean you understand it. If you don't know you look up vocabulary, vocabulary dictionary, and you know the meaning, but it doesn't touch your heart. Sometimes it touches but sometime most likely doesn't you understand it, but it's not yours. For him, the language difference was not an issue for going American church, but the manner of preaching and practicing religious events in the Korean church fit more with his religious faith. Connecting and interacting with their home-culture group members is sharing and practicing their culture in the host country. Interacting with Host-Culture Groups

As the participants have been residing in the United States, it is almost impossible to be away from Americans. In their daily life, they had a chance to engage with Americans, being at school, at the workplace, at grocery store, and other places. Interviewees shared their experiences of interacting with Americans. Nine themes were found in the analysis.

Following American Norms. In order to adjust American culture and environment successfully, some interviewees chose to follow American norms. They thought following American norms of communication styles and behaviors was the best way of being part of
American society. Eden thought that she needed to follow American norms as she is physically in the United Stated. She explained,

As I was back then, I think I try to think in English, I tried to act like, you know, it's not like, I want to be Americans in it like that, but I just try to put their…put myself into their shoes and try to learn as much as possible, so I will. Because I knew, everything is so different the way they think they the way they see the word from Americans perspectives.

When she just got to the U.S. for the degree, she saw necessity of improving her English and understanding American perspective to survive in the foreign country and achieve academic success. Andy also mentioned that he attempted to imitate the American communication style at first to adjust to the new environment. He said, “I try to think like them, mock [mimic] them.” He explained that he wanted to come to the U.S. in order to study and to improve, his English proficiency. To do so, he spent some time to hang out with Americans and copied their language and behaviors. He started his life in the U.S. in high school. He said that he played soccer with his American friends after school as much as possible and ate lunch with his American schoolmates.

Kevin behaved based on what he observed in his surroundings. In his daily life, he observed how Americans behave and followed them at the beginning of his time in the U.S. He said, “In my class, we use gym and and other students and professor and with the outside shoes I was surprised, but you know everyone did so…” Even though using the outside shoes at the gym does not fit his social norm in the home country, he observed what Americans do and followed it because he realized that it is culturally accepted. Also, as he just came to the United States, he was not familiar with those small rules and echoed those behaviors, after he observed how other American behaved in a certain situation. He also mentioned that he tried to copy the American way of respecting professor because he did not know how to show
respect to elders or people who have higher social status. In addition to his experience, Jennifer realized the American cultural rules that she may need to follow in the U.S. She described an example of a cultural communication practice when someone sneezes in the U.S.

In the office, so I sneezed though, one of my coworker um, that's I think that's probably the first week I got to the programming. And while a Coworker said, “oh bless you” that I don't know what's that. That was cultural thing that people do. So, I said, like, “oh sorry I’m sorry.” And I cover that then and they said. “oh, you don't need to say sorry.” You know let's just that's all-cultural thing with a see that, when they when they saw people sneeze something like that. yeah, I think that's one moment I realized okay Oh, there was some like traditional cultural rules I need to follow.

While she has been residing in the U.S., she naturally realized some cultural practice or norms of America and accepted it when she interacted with Americans. In everyday practice, those interviewees encounter American communication practices and behaviors, and they followed those rules since they are not familiar with those practices and behaviors. As one strategy of adjusting the U.S. culture, they observed others’ behaviors and copied those.

Experiencing Distance. When participants interacted with Americans, some felt distance with Americans and felt difficulties in making close connection with the Americans. Several interviewees thought the lack of shared culture such as pop culture caused them to have a barrier to build in closer relationships. Cathy shared the moment when she felt distance with Americans. She and her American friend watched TV shows together. Everyone laughed at jokes that the character made except her. She did not understand the joke, so she just pretended that the character was funny. Jennifer also had similar experiences. She said,
You know, it’s way talk about series or what happens so all even some small talk before the class there are talking about some new TV, New TV drama show or some old, old TV Drama show, so I think a lot my coworkers or like my classmates we talked about series they will using some TV programming this thought before and also, they will give me some examples of the celebrity over there, but I just don't know.

When she took a class, professors gave examples from American pop culture to explain some concepts and theories. Everyone in the classroom understood those and laughed together but her. In the classroom, she felt alienated and distant with other American classmates. In case of Briana, she was surprised by some Americans’ ignorance of world history. She said that she needed to explain background history of a global issues between Asian countries. She explained, “They generally ask some questions, but it never goes deeper than like, “oh we are from” and, “oh I know annyeong-ha-sae-yo,” or something like, “I have tried kimchi.” And I don’t usually try to talk about Korean history.” Since she and Americans does not share the culture, the conversation cannot go deeper but became superficial, asking general questions.

In case of Angel, using different language led her to experience distance with Americans. She explained the language barrier between her and her husband who is American. While they continued their relationship, they often encountered arguments or miscommunication because of the language barrier. She explained,

The culture is behind the language, so for example, I remember there is one time, he said something about, and I remember the whole thing in a different way, and then we have an argument afterward and we talked about it.

She also added that sometimes she cannot understand what he meant fully because of the language difference and felt a distance with him. Sarah thought language is one of the strongest factors that can help someone to feel connection with someone. She said,
I will say, the most important thing is the language and the culture. When it comes to friends with American people, it means that you appreciate each other or maybe you have something in common, but because of the language, because it doesn't have a lot of time to spend with each other, a lot, it is kind of hard to talk, something you in deep heart I mean it's still some personality or personal life also understanding about the life.

She had a good relationship with her colleagues and American friends, but it is hard for her to have deeper communication with them or laugh together, because of the language barrier. Jack also mentioned the distance between him and Americans, nothing that he did not to how to react or behave. In terms of language, he did not fully understand what the U.S. people said; therefore, it was hard for him to communicate with them. Also, Nancy mentioned, Sometimes communicating with them [Americans] is harder because I don’t know the vocabulary of that the things you know because we came to the United States at student. Our vocabulary is very school, academic oriented. So, when you talk about in daily life, talk about the part of a car, a plant, a kind of rock, so that’s a very hard thing to do to.

According to her, her English ability is specialized in the academic environment or school, therefore, when she interacted with Americans in daily life, it was hard for her to continue the conversation. Either because of the lack of shared cultural experiences with people from host country or the language barrier, some East Asian sojourners felt alienated from American people when they communicated with each other.

Communicating with Ease. Even though some participants answered that it was difficult for them to have closer connection with people from the host country, other participants accepted it as an advantage as they felt easy to communicate without strict communication norms that they needed to follow. As they felt less burdened to follow social
norms with them, they could interact with American with less pressure. According to Cathy, she could communicate with her American boss more actively as she did not feel as much hierarchy with him. She explained,

Like how I treat my boss, but in America like I know my boss is like older than me. But we are, like little more like friendly, we can like talk about, like, talk each other and I don't feel like nervous, like it will my personal thing, be okay with that because I’m sure you'll be okay. Also, it's okay, I can talk about my opinion like if this one is right or I don’t really hesitate to ask questions like to my boss, because he will not get mad at me.

Compared with her previous experience with a Korean boss, she felt easier to connect with Americans. When she was working in Korea, she needed to consider cultural norms in every situation, which made her feel stressed. However, in America, she interacted with her boss without feeling social pressure, and even making a joke with the boss.

Tom also shared his experience with his boss and colleagues in an American company. He said he felt comfortable with the boss and colleagues when he communicated with them about work and other topics. Also, he was able to complain about his work or suggest something to them freely without hesitation. He explained the moment when he needed to follow the boss’s order even though it was not fair. Tom said,

So, in Korea I guess it's not easy to complain about your working environment or working quality. For example, like you know you don't work over like 6pm or 7pm. But if you're boss where your team going to do over work. You gotta do it together because, like, I say the Korean culture is way more value on teams over individual. But in the U.S., he talked about the working hours with the boss and colleagues easily and they let him take a rest. Therefore, in terms of working environment, he preferred to interact with Americans. Adding to his experience, Angel also mentioned that she could make small
talk with her American boss; however, she never made a small talk with her boss back in her home country.

In case of Nate, communicating with Americans gave him more freedom. He explained, “more person to person-to-person conversation. More freedom in speaking a lot like freedom but yeah I mean it’s easier to talk to people here.” With people from the host country, he did not need to keep the formality or consider too much about the conversation topic. Regardless of age or social status differences, he could choose the communication topic and did not need to follow social norms too much. Anna also explained her connection with Americans. She said that it was better for her to build more intimacy with Americans since they can have conversation about their interest. Compared with her home-culture group, she was able to build deeper relationship with people from the host country. She explained,

When I talk with Japanese friends here, almost often times, we only share interest of learning English but no other thing. With American friends, share hobbies of like, example, I play table tennis and I made a lot of friends by playing table tennis with American friends so. I think I feel closer to talk to my friends.

When she interacted with the Japanese group, them being in the U.S. was the main topic of the conversation, however, when she interacted with Americans, she had a conversation including various topic such as sports that she enjoyed playing and food that she recently tried. Eventually she could make friends who share the similar interests.

Monica and Alex talked about the personal space that they can keep with people from the host country. Both of them feel more comfortable to interact with Americans as they do not need to get closer with them or share too much information with them. Alex explained that she can choose individuals who she wants to hang out and interact and choose to be distant with others. Also, people from the host culture do not ask details of private information. She said, “go over the personal boundaries, and they would not really ask about
personal things in details if I would, if I did not mention, so I feel like they are more respectful of personal space.” Monica had similar opinion about interacting with Americans. While she interacted with Americans in her working place, they have never asked personal issues. She mentioned, “I’ve been working here for years. But I’ve never asked about the personal relationship to my coworkers, and they never asked me about my personal relationship.” Unlike the conversation with her home-culture group members, she set up a boundary with people from the host culture and did not need to overshare the private information. Due to the personal space, she could communicate with Americans without pressure. For some participants, the low level of hierarchy and less social pressure with American led them to feel comfortable to communicate with them.

Avoiding Certain Communication Topics. While respondents have conversations with people from the host country, they tried to avoid certain communication topics that may cause uncomfortable situations with Americans. Angel tried not to ask personal questions to Americans as she learned they do not like to have conversations about private matters. She said, “for example, they eat a lot of shitty food. And they are fat. And they don’t care how fat they are. They don’t talk about how fat they are.” Even though she thought that obesity is a big problem in the U.S., and she wanted to start a conversation about the issue, she did not talk about it, as she know it violated their privacy and could lead to ruining their relationships eventually. Cathy also was afraid of violating someone’s private information, however, in her case, she did not want to share her private information with others. In her home country, having a conversation about coitus or sexual pleasure with others is rare and uncomfortable. After she got married, her husband often wanted to have a conversation about those taboo topics and she felt weird, though he was her American husband. She tried to avoid the topic, but her husband somehow pushed her to talk about the issue. She explained,
Like, I didn’t like the way he goes like to detail then, I just left. But he was like, why like we should talk about it. I’m like, I don’t want to talk about it. I don’t want to like it; I don’t want to think about it.

Whenever her American husband attempted to start a conversation about sexual intercourse, she changed the topic or physically left the place to escape the situation.

Jennifer intentionally avoided conversation topics related to political issues, considering the relationship between China and the United States. She explained her caution on political issues, saying

I think when I first got on America, that was US elections with Hilary and Trump, you know. And American friends talk about that in our office you know, then I work, working in that office. I don’t want to talk about that, so I put my AirPods on you know, like because I don’t think… I am an outsider so…

At the moment, she knew that the relationship between China and America was not great related to the presidential election, so she tried not to talk about candidates much. Also, when the topic of Taiwan or Hong-Kong came up, she just became silent as she did not want to be rude to them and to be offended by them. Matt had a similar experience as Jennifer. He did not want to make trouble, but keep his relationship with Americans, so he purposefully avoided talking about politics and social issues. He said, “In general, the American society and Chinese society like have different society and culture. So, you need to be careful with that.” Because of cultural differences they had with Americans, and the relationship between the host country and home country, some East Asians intentionally avoided certain communication topics so as not to ruin their relationship with Americans.

Becoming More Expressive. When respondents described their changes in communication styles, they answered that they became more expressive and raised the volume of their voice. Eden stated that she needed to raise her voice and expressiveness not
to be ignored or unseen in the society. When she was in her home country, she did not show her opinion about something unless someone asked her. However, she realized that she needed to express her feelings and opinion here not to be excluded. Unlike in her home country, she is in a minority group and that led her to became more expressive. She said, “I think it is a survival thing so ever since I came here, I think I realized how important it is to express what you want, what you need.” Monica described her experience of being active and expressive in a class. “For example, American students never up be shy, to say something sometimes silly questions to professors, or something. Korean students hesitate to ask some questions to my professors or discussion.” Considering the class culture in the U.S., she felt that she needed to add her opinion during the classroom, not withhold her opinion. If she did not tell her opinion or express her feelings, people may think that she is not engaging in the meeting and eventually have a bad impression of her. Briana also realized that she needed to raise her voice not to be ignored and get attention. Before she came to the United States, she expected that she would experience racism because she has heard about issues of racial discrimination in the U.S. back in Korea. When she encountered racism in the moment, she just accepted the situation because she thought it was a normal thing in the U.S. For instance, she just ignored people who yelled racial slur at her on the street did not confront them. However, at some point, she realized that she should raise her voice and express her feelings to people so that it would not happen again. She explained, “A lot of times yeah viewed as like oh, they are not going to do anything if you do this.” In order to break the assumption about Asians and to be visible, she decided to express her feelings and take an action. As an example of her action, she always corrected wrong information about Koreans and Asian stereotypes, such as eating dogs.
Cathy explained her change of communication style after she interacted with Americans. Before, she was not familiar with expressing her emotions to others, especially to her family. She said,

I think Asian culture or Korean culture, like we don't really know how to express our emotions like happiness, or like loving like how to love my family, and we like we love my dad, we got me really love our dad and mom brother, but I think, compared to American people, where we are little bit cold or we kind of hesitate to say like I love you hesitate to give a hug.

She realized that it would be great to express her feelings, either positive and negative feelings to others, and decided to do so, not only in her verbal way of communication but also non-verbal communication such as hugs. In the case of Jake, expressing his emotions with gestures was a way to fill the gap of his English proficiency. He said that he experienced the limitation of communicating with Americans as his English skill was not good enough to deliver his messages. Therefore, he became more expressive in his facial expressions and non-verbal communication to deliver his emotions and feelings to Americans. After people who reported being more expressive interacted with others in the U.S., they learned the communication styles of Americans, which are more expressive compared to their home culture, and adapted the communication style.

Keeping Their Home-Culture Way of Communication. Several interviewees chose to keep their original communication styles and behaviors from their home-culture regardless of who they are communicating with; however, for those interviewees, this was because they felt unable to follow American communication norms perfectly. Jack explained that he, at first, tried to follow American communication styles; however, he realized he would never be like them. Therefore, he just kept his Korean communication style when he communicated with Americans. He said,
To be honest, I don’t think I have to adjust to American culture. that’s why I don’t have feel like, I don’t have to act so I never act so that’s why, I think. When I first got here, I thought that I should act like an American. I realized it; it is not easy for me.

So, I realized, I cannot reach that point anyway, so I already gave up.

Therefore, he kept doing what he used to do back in Korea such as, buying food for American friends, or returning favors after he got help from his American friends. John, Kevin, and Anna also answered that they did not feel like acting like Americans, but kept their home-culture communication style since they did not feel the necessity of adapting it and it did not feel comfortable for them to follow the host-culture communication styles. Anna described,

I moved to America, and I wanted to adjust to American culture, but then I saw that people my roommate and my housemates really, like having parties and, um, did some crazy things and as I cannot be like them. I want to be like me, myself.

After she interacted with Americans, she realized that American communication styles did not fit her and she chose to keep her Japanese communication style. Sarah shared her opinion about communicating with others in English using the home-culture communication style. She thought that everyone has a different cultural background in an extended concept of culture, so she did not feel like changing herself to follow the American communication style.

As she felt a huge gap of cultural differences between her home-culture and host-culture, it was hard for her to avoid accepting the new culture and adjusting to the environment.

However, she chose to maintain her home-culture communication styles since the cultural difference can come from various ways including region, race, and cultural group. Jennifer also mentioned that people from the same cultural group even felt the cultural gap, therefore, it was not necessary to change herself in the host country.

In the cases of Monica, and Briana, they intentionally showed their home-culture communication style when they interacted with people from the host culture. Monica
revealed her identity as a foreigner to her students and colleagues and worked to maintain her home-culture identity. She said, “I cannot avoid that I am a foreigner, and I have like a language barrier.” She continued, “I mean the fact I am a foreigner, and I am from different culture, and I am an international faculty member, so I cannot avoid that.” Since it is impossible for her to hide her identity as a foreigner in the U.S., she rather opened up her identity as a foreigner and communicated with Americans as usual so that they can understand her. When she introduced herself to people, she always mentioned that she is from Korea. Briana also said that she maintained her communication styles regardless of interlocuter and even, brought up her culture in communicating with others as she could not hide her foreignness with people from the host country. She explained,

I’m just trying to share more of my culture like, oh in Korea, we will do this and anything that I might think it was, like all-embracing that was Korean culture, I am trying to push that to my friends, Like, sitting on a floor when my friend is cooking.

At the beginning of her residence in the U.S., she attempted to adapt American communication styles, however, at some point, she realized that her home cultural communication style had lessened. After she experienced several social issues related to minority communities, she decided to perform her home-culture identity with American people so that her home culture can be visible to Americans.

Changing their first thought of being America that they need to follow host culture communication style, the people who emphasized their home culture communication style decided to maintain the ways of their home country as they realized that they cannot reach the point of being adjusted perfectly to the host culture or that they cannot hide their social status, being a foreigner in the U.S.

Effort Driven Negotiation. Several participants answered that they determined their changes in communication styles and behaviors depending on the amount of effort they
needed to put into communication. They attempted to change their communication behaviors if they could afford the stress and pressure that they felt, caused by the changes. Denise described the negotiation of her adjustment in the U.S. “I think I'm observing how people are really interacting and what's the difference between my way and their way, But I didn't copy it, I just try to understand why they're talking this way that and why does this.” After this process, she considered whether those communication behaviors fit or not to her. Rather she accepted those behaviors right away; she put herself on the priority then decided to adjust or not, considering her feelings and usefulness. Angel also talked about her experience with her American husband. At the beginning of her marriage, she needed to get through a lot of negotiation with him because their cultural backgrounds and understanding of married life were very different. They both needed to change a bit of their behavior, but they kept the line of feeling acceptable and affordable effort for the change. She explained,

As I said, I came to the U.S. was 30 years old. So basically, my personality was all formed I don’t think, you know. I am not a teenager anymore, and I knew myself, I knew what I wanted, and I knew how to do whatever, and I cannot change that much.

Since she came here in her 30s, she thought that it was hard to change herself drastically following American norms. Therefore, she negotiated with others and made a decision, considering whether she can afford the change or not.

Jennifer and Nancy talked about their comfort zone of accepting new cultures. When Nancy started a new job in the U.S., she felt pushed to hang out with her colleagues such as going to social gatherings and personal meetings. At first, she tried to participate in all of those social events and socially engage with them. However, she realized that it took a lot of energy to follow all those. She described, “More I try, there a lot do to. I don’t feel comfortable. I don’t, it is consuming me.” Jennifer also explained her effort to follow
American communication norms, recalling her watching an American television show. She said,

So, I was watching the standing up show, but I feel like I’m, if I didn't know about the conditions, so the word behind that's. what's the meaning behind a word so some of them, they will make fun have some. History events or some characters, but I don't know, so it took afterwards, for you to learn more about that and also. I think you need a lot of help from the people around you who want to explain that to you, you know, I don’t think that's easy job and I don't. I don't feel like I want to take that effort you know, to go over all the yeah.

Therefore, she purposefully selected something that Americans would expect, then decided to change herself to fit in to the American communication style. For some participants, the different communication styles of their home country and the host country are something they need to negotiate to decide whether to accept them or not, considering their costs to invest for accepting new communication styles.

Strategically Interacting for Benefit. Taking it as one strategy of adjusting new culture and environment, some participants purposefully interacted with people from the host country to get some benefit for themselves. Most of them approached Americans or communities in the host country to improve their English and to get used to the host culture. Andy and John said that they purposefully interacted with people in the host country to improve their English proficiency. Andy’s goal of being in the U.S. was to improve his English, therefore interacting with Americans was his strategy to achieve the goal. He said,

I came to America because I wanted. for no reason, just because I just wanted to be here, then what should I get from here. Their cultures may be language, so let's say you have your best friend next to you, you meet them. all the time, maybe. The day after today you'll just talk like her or him; you'll use words that they use more often.
John also decided to interact with people from the host country more often for his English proficiency. Because of the pandemic situation, he had few chances to experience American culture and people in the host country. Therefore, he decided to actively engage in work and social events as much as possible. For instance, he decided to work more hours at the clinic that he works at so that he could communicate with colleagues and patients there. He explained,

You want to improve my English because communicating with them if you’re in the best way to improve my English, at the same time, of course, what, you know, develop my knowledge. It’s kinda I can do both at the same time.

Because of the situation that he was placed in, he purposefully went to his workplace to seek an opportunity to interact with Americans for his English practice.

In addition to practicing their English, Carl and Hannah intentionally contacted people in the American community to learn the culture. Hannah went to church to experience American culture. She described,

I think is a good practice for me to know more about American culture from this way just. It's a good starting point; if I cannot do that in my own college and I can do not outside of it, right, because the Christians and she is good because she is willing to listen to people, she's from church, but I think, if it's just a stranger, it is very hard to have a connection with, with an American guy. So from the culture as a beginner as a beginning part, I think it is one good way.

She thought people in the church were willing to introduce American culture and to listen to her story, therefore, it was beneficial for her to go there. Carl also visited a church to learn American Christian culture. He explained,

Yeah at the beginning, I want to learn English and Christian, the culture because you know, on both, I am not saying, and that’s the other state, but I would say, especially
in Alabama, the church is very important parts in their life. In the beginning, I just want to learn the Christian culture.

While he has been residing in Alabama, he realized the importance of Christian culture in the Southern part of the U.S. Then, he decided to go to church often to be part of the community and eventually practice the culture and English.

**Working to Make a Good Impression.** Considering their status in the U.S. as foreigners, some respondents described the endeavor to make a good impression on people in the host country. Due to social status as a foreigner in the United States, they think that their behaviors are a representative image of their country. In order not to ruin the image of their country, they attempted to do their best in every circumstance. Jennifer, Julie, and Eden shared their experiences in the United States, showing their concern. Julie showed her concern after the pandemic situation hit the U.S. She explained,

> Where, um, so I don't think people treat me different, it's just lately I kind of get there, like as a nation like as an Asian, the… because of the COVID thing. It kind of started making me feel like, oh, I'm an Asian. What if I go out and somebody hit me? You know, for no reason, like I kind of have that feeling like kind of scared me.

She felt mostly safe in the U.S., however, she tried hard to show her best so that she does not trigger others in the host country. Additionally, she was concerned that people in the host country may misunderstand her because of her English and they might end up having a negative impression of her. She thought people would expect something more as she is a foreigner. Jennifer also talked about her effort to be the best version of herself because of her social status as a foreigner. She explained it with example with her experience in Chicago. She visited her cousin in Chicago and drove there with her. While they were driving, they stopped in front of the light over the stop line as they did not notice the light is changed into
red light. Suddenly, the lady in the back yelled at them, saying that they should learn the rules. Jennifer described,

That’s really the time like embarrassing moment. Um, because they will think oh, oh the Chinese, they don’t do that they don’t get the rules, I just like, like I said, I think I always have that burden on my shoulder you know I’m not represent me.

If she made a mistake in the United States, people in the host country would think that all Chinese people would act like her. Then, they may have a bad impression of all Chinese people and further to all Asians. Therefore, she became extra aware of the rules so that she could minimize mistakes as much as possible. Eden said she attempted to be careful because of her visa status. She explained,

The citizen of the country versus here every time I do I have extra document to show that I’m eligible to stay here, and if there are any changes or any mistakes, I made can be quite detrimental to my status.

Even though she came here with a proper visa, her status of residency was unstable because it was temporary visa. Therefore, she was afraid of making mistakes that might affect her visa and she might be deported at worst.

Emily, John, Jack, and Kate did not want to be at a disadvantage as a foreigner and so they challenged the stereotypes. Emily shared her experience of teaching American students in a college. After she got several teaching evaluations, she realized that her being a foreigner may influence her career and so she decided to follow typical the American teaching style based on her advisor’s comment on her teaching. She made more jokes and asked more questions to students during classes so that she was more interactive with them. By following this style, she could water down her foreignness and make a better impression on people in the host country. Emily also worried about her performance in the classroom. She has taught some classes in a U.S. college. “When I first came here, you know, I always kind of worried
about I cannot communicate well and I think when I talked to them, so I tend to rehearse.” She was concerned that students or other faculty members could not understand her well because of her English proficiency, which might influence her teaching evaluations. Jack talked about his success in the classroom. As a foreigner, he did not know about the class policies or culture, however, he needed to follow them to get a better grade. By learning those rules and the culture of academia, he was able to make a better impression on others and eventually achieve his academic goal in the U.S. He explained,

I think that that can be culture, but that can be also classroom policy. I have to get good grades. Even though I don’t have, I don’t want to adjust American culture, but I have to participate in it to get better grade.

John described his experience at the workplace. He realized that American people expected Asian people to be diligent and hard workers. He said,

My preceptor now in that at the physical clinic he had international students, a couple of times, like a Japan or Korea and so that they know how like Asian people work, so he expected me to work really hard.

As his expectations toward Asian students was higher than other students, he worked hard to fulfill his expectations, if not he would not be able to make a good impression on his preceptor. Those interviewees were afraid that they will make a bad impression on people of the host country and that could eventually influence their careers in the host country, therefore, they tried hard to show the best version of themselves.

**Performance Across Audiences of Identity**

Regardless of the nationality of people they interacted with, participants of the current research performed differently in the host country. This section has three themes, which are actively interacting with diverse groups, being myself, and setting up a new identity.
Actively Interacting with Diverse Groups. Living in the United States offered interviewees a chance to be exposed to a diverse group including multi-racial groups and LGBTQ groups. Compared to their home country, various groups with different characteristics are more visible and had more opportunities to interact with them. Several participants mentioned their experience with diverse groups and their mindset of interacting with others in the U.S. Jack, Julie, and John talked about being open to strangers. Talking about his changes after he moved to the U.S., Jack said that he became comfortable having a conversation with strangers regardless of their cultural group. Even though he set up his own boundaries with people with who he interacted for deeper relationships, he had conversations with people who he just met with ease. John also stated that he became open to people including strangers. He was concerned that the language difference would be a barrier to having a deeper conversation, however, he loved to interact with people regardless of background. After he traveled to different countries including America, he enjoyed interacting with people from different backgrounds and said he would love to try more. Lastly, Julie said she became more open-minded as she felt people in the host country were willing to help and talk to people without reason. She has been reminded of her experience on the street when a stranger gave her a random compliment about her skirt. She said, “I think they’re always like willing to help you with anything. I’m like when I when I’m at work if I don’t know. Do something I don’t know how to do something it’s kind of like a culture different.” Unlike people in the home country who are afraid of talking to strangers and helping them, American people would be more open to strangers, and she assimilated to it.

Anna and Sarah mentioned that they can have a chance to interact with people from different nations and cultures in the American environment. Anna said that at home she only hung out with people in her group, for instance her classmates or people in the table tennis club. She explained,
I did not hang out with people who are outside of the group, but after I came here, I went to international even many times in my new friends from other countries, so I think I did not go to study abroad, I would never do other events.

As she came to a foreign country and had more chances to interact with people from different backgrounds, she became more active in participating in those events hosted by her university. Sarah had a similar experience. She explained, “I can interact with people from a different culture. And not. I have the ability to really appreciate and understand a different kind of things, so you can see a different perspective.” The U.S. campus environment allowed her to interact with people who are from different nations and cultural groups. Using the opportunity, she could interact with them and learn how to understand and respect them.

Three participants mentioned their experience with various social groups that they could not interact with back in their home country. After Jennifer resided in the United States, she got more chances to contact with the LGBTQ community. Her experience with the community led her to see more issues of the LGBTQ community in her home country. She explained, “For some examples, the LGBTQ like issues in China or something like that I can always be open minded and also trying to understand them and respect to their lifestyle, you know.” Further, she became more understanding of situations with different cultural groups and embrace the differences. In the case of Nate, he talked about the influence of his host family. He described,

How to say it isn't I think that's easier if I say like. When I the way I am looking at the LGBTQ people. I think it's gonna be a good example that my because my my my host parents are very open about it. They were supportive about it. You know they're more like human beings, a human being in that kind of stuff versus I and then that way I changed a lot, and I learned a lot and then, you know I learned how to respect them learn how to you know to do that and then versus I can, I can even think about it. If
my host parents were against it, then I probably I’m probably against the right now, I think. that's how it was, I think. I was influenced by them A lot.

Thanks to the host parents who were open to people with various cultural background, he was able to extend his view toward a cultural group that he was not familiar with and learned how to communicate with them. Briana also shared her experience of new learning about cultural groups and social issues with the increased chance of encountering them. She explained,

You learned about there might be some kinds of incidents that might happen to you So coming into America, I had that mindset as well and things happened to me that was very racism And I did not really process that well because I was like oh This is a normal thing it like where I was taught that this might happen So I think there was not really a room for me as international students having this experience and like there isn't that room to process it well because you're taught that's like a normal thing, yeah.

Before she came to the U.S., she thought that experiencing racist incidents is common as she learned in her home country. Therefore, she did not do anything about racial issues or LGBTQ issues. However, soon she realized that she should be more aware of those issues and actively engage with social issues. After the realization, she actively interacted with the diverse group and talked about issues with them. The environment of the United States that offered an opportunity to contact people with diverse backgrounds let participants interact with those groups and have a new perspective.

Setting Up a New Version of Identity. After respondents moved to the U.S., some of them decided to set up a new identity that did not fit into either home culture or host culture. As they started their new life in the foreign country, they set up a new version of themselves in the process of adjustment. Sarah and Jack mentioned that they purposefully build up a new identity as a strategy of cultural adjustment in the U.S. Since they came to America to achieve a degree in higher education, they thought that they need to cut off unnecessary contact with
people. Until they got used to the environment of the host country, they minimized their private contacts but solely focused on themselves and study. Jack said he intentionally became introverted, explaining,

I became introvert since I got here like I said before. I don’t want to be bothered by people because I got here because I want to focus more on my study. At that moment, I don’t want to deal with so many unnecessary things.

Sarah also said that she just stayed at her place and study the whole day unlike back in China to study hard.

Denise talked about her in-betweenness identity in the U.S. She said she was willing to open up herself to both Chinese culture and American culture and accept those two cultures. She explained,

I don’t really know somehow a feeling that, when I was in States, I try to keep my Chinese identity. But when I, but whenever turns China, I try to keep my American identity, even though I am not American.

While she pursued her degree in the United States, she has commuted between China and United States. By experiencing two nations, she built up an identity as the result of negotiation between two cultures. Nick and Angel also mentioned their identity after they traveled to multiple countries. In their life, they have multiple chances of visiting different countries. Because of their experiences in various countries and their culture, they got the ability to adjust to different countries easily and set up identities as an international sojourner. Denise described,

I just always have my, that I like to go everywhere, I went to Australia, and I went to China. And I stay in China for two to three years. And I think I think, I would not say I got totally blended in them because we're still different. But I think I just adjust
myself a lot to try to understand them and you. Try to think the things in their ways to be able to work with them.

In the case of Tom and Alex, they became independent after they got to the U.S. Since they came here without any connections with people in the host country, they had to figure out everything by themselves. If they were in the host country, they would be able to ask to help their family members or friends without hesitation. However, in America, they had to be active to get what they need. Tom explained,

More independent. Because in Korea, you know if I have. If I have issues, for example, issues with banking stuff. I can ask my mom or dad like I had an issue, but this would. Have you ever encountered this issue before Over 95% like, my parents or people around me good experience So they can you know gave me shortcuts to solve those issues. But here, you know when I come over here, and when I did the tax for the first time Nobody.

Alex also mentioned,

I'm being I'm being more independent even more because, like I don't have any family members or all relatives who can who can come physically in the help me when things happen so I'm being more aware of those things around me, so I care more about or I'm being more careful about things, so I, because I know that I, I have to handle everything happens so, that really makes me more independent and more Problem Solving person.

Being a foreigner in an unfamiliar situation without crucial social support led them to be independent unlike back in the home country.

Negotiating Tensions in Communication in the Host Country

In the following section, the second research question will be answered. The second research question aims to explore East Asian international sojourners’ negotiation of tension
between home-culture identities and host-culture identities while they interact with others in the host country. In the process of culture adjustment, East Asian international sojourners experienced different types of tensions while they interacted with others in the United States, and they negotiated those tensions with different negotiation strategies: pressure to selectively assimilate, less pressure in the host country, and tension between cultures.

*Pressure to (Selectively) Assimilate: Following American Norms to Be Successful*

Several participants talked about tension, caused by the desire of being successful in the host country. This tension came from their internalized desires. They said they did not feel the pressure from American society to assimilate the host culture, but they desired to not let their families down as their family members supported them in many ways. As East Asian sojourners invested their money and time to come to the U.S., they wanted to get the best result and achieve their goals successfully. Because of these desires, they felt tension to negotiate between home-culture identities and host-culture identities, then they decided to adopt norms of American organizations to achieve their goal for this time. For example, Jack mentioned that he felt pressure from himself in class to adapt American style of class culture because of his desire. He explained, “I got pressure a lot in U.S. class. I have to participate in discussions most of the time. So that’s I think most difficult I think things that I need to adjust.” He said that he did not feel tension to adapt to the host culture when he communicated with Americans in different settings. However, in the classroom, he had no choice but to follow those classroom norms to get a better grade.

Tension can also come from family expectations. In Eden’s case, her family’s sacrifice and support activated her tension. She knew that her family put a lot of effort into her study abroad experience both financially and mentally, and she did not want to let them down. Therefore, she assimilated to American communicative norms because she felt she had to in order to not to let her parents down and to be successful. For the negotiation, she decided to
mingle more with Americans, speak more English, and be separated from other Korean people.

Emily talked about her tension in the American institution and her change of teaching style because of social conformity. She said that she became more concrete, more interactive, and made more jokes with students. She explained, “People evaluate on how you communicate and then gradually realized, okay I have to conform the American standard, so I gradually change myself and change my style and talk more jokes.” However, her negotiation was limited to the classroom setting. Outside of the classroom, nothing pressured her to change her communication style. She mentioned that human behaviors are similar regardless of culture, therefore, people can communicate effectively if they are open to people from a different culture. Briana also talked about social conformity when she explained her negotiation of identity. When she just got to the United States, she felt tension to assimilate to American people in order to be a part of American society successfully. “American society” that she mentioned was the dominant culture in the U.S. She said “I was trying to adjust everything and trying to make all this culture as like mine. I was trying to be just blended as possible to culture.” As a negotiation strategy, she chose to assimilate to major cultures to blend in American culture well and be successful.

Tension Between Cultures: Code Switching Communication Styles Based on Audience

Some participants chose to switch communication styles as they negotiated the tensions they felt. Several participants mentioned that they felt social pressure when they interacted with people from their home country. In their culture, they needed to follow certain communication norms based on the age or social status hierarchy. Even though they were residing in a foreign country, the pressure continued since the people from their home country still expected them to follow those norms when they communicated. Therefore, they faced the tension between home-culture identity and host-culture identity. As a solution for the
tension, they switched communication styles in accordance with the groups that they interacted with.

Briana shared her moment of switching her communication style because of the social pressure from the home cultural group. She said that she felt expectations from the Korean community in the U.S. People from the home country expected her to respect elders and acted in a certain way to follow the social norms. However, she mostly took the American communication style as she went to an American university and interacted with Americans more. As a negotiation strategy, she instantly changed her communication styles when she communicated with Korean people in the U.S. She described,

Well, whenever I meet with Korean people I automatically kind of go to the Korean mode. Like, Do in Korean? Do I speak in English to them? Are they older than I am or are they younger than I am? So, there is that kind of searching moment when I meet them for the first time.

Denise also explained her changes in communication styles when she talked with Chinese people. She said that Chinese people might understand her personality differently as compared to Americans. When she interacted with Chinese people, she felt power difference and behaved in accordance with the power. When she interacted with Chinese people who are older than her or have more social power than her, she became quite and followed their communication rules. She explained,

Because Americans, they are more active and energetic. So, they kind of affect those energies and affect how I speak with them. But for Chinese who I speak with, like my friend, I would say, maybe in a calmer mood. Also, like my parents, we do have some power difference because I think parents always hold more power, so they also rule the communication.
As she felt different energy from the host-culture group and home-culture group, she acted accordingly to negotiate the tension from the communication style of the home-cultural group.

In Alex’s case, she felt tension from her home-culture group and decided to limit her communication with them as a negotiation strategy. When she interacted with Korean people, she experienced cultural expectations of behaving a certain way, especially with Korean elders. For example, as she was younger than those elders, she was expected to ask about her Korean advisor on Korean national holiday. In the United States, she experienced some uncomfortable situations with Korean groups. After those experiences, she decided to keep her personal space from them and limit their interaction with them. On the other hand, she could communicate with Americans without that social tension, which led her to be more expressive with them. She explained, “Because, we still don’t share cultural expectations, even though I am familiar with their relationship building, they don’t have any cultural background from Korea. So, they would not have that expectation.” As the Korean group and American group are in a different communication behavioral system, both groups have a different expectation of communication norms so, she behaved with these different groups. The tension of cultural expectation activated her to negotiate her communication styles between home-culture identity and host-culture identity in the United States.

Less Pressure: “Being Myself”

Staying away from their home country and being a foreigner in the host country let participants focus on themselves and behave how they want to be, being free from the social pressure they were used to at home. In the new environment, they could think about themselves without social pressure, and they could get a chance to negotiate the tension between home-culture identities and host-culture identities by their choice.
Three participants shared their experience in the U.S. Julie and Sarah talked about being free from the social pressure of their home country. Julie said that she felt pressure from the beauty standards back in China. She explained,

You know like in China, people used to use those kinds of… I still use it sometimes like the camera we call it like the APP like beauty camera or something they will edit your skin and make your face smaller and make your head smaller and like a post, the picture like from the camera. Pictures.

She used to have concerns about her look and following the beauty standards. However, in the United States, she could be free from those pressures and have a more natural look, which she preferred. Sarah also described her being herself in the U.S., saying,

The biggest thing is, we will be, I doesn't really care about what other people think, strange because, even though I in China, I still want to do that, but you know one person has a little power to really change that the bigger phenomena. Some don't want to care about that people still talk about that, and you accidentally heard about that from your friends or your family. I mean I don't know a lot I will not say I know a lot of people here, compared with the back in China so, I just want to be myself and it doesn't really want others to talk much about me and I really don't really care about what other people think about me I just try my best to be myself and I just know when that is enough for me.

Back in China, she was afraid of being judged by others and tried to satisfy others’ standards. However, in the U.S., she could focus on herself and set up her own version of herself, as she is away from her home country. In Nancy’s case, she said she became clear about herself after she moved to the U.S. She explained,

I think the one thing I have changed is. I don't want to sacrifice too much about myself, So I want to be I don't want definitely, I don't want to hurt anyone. I want to
prioritize myself. So, I will when we grow up, so probably you could understand, especially as women. So, we are taught to be nice. we’re being taught to really help others be caring to be like to others, so this kind of values So I think I I’ve become more careless.

She was not sure about the trigger of her change, however, she realized she wanted to put herself first and to focus on herself, not bothering or not being bothered by others. By being physically far away from participants’ home country, they were able to be free from society and get more opportunities to focus on themselves. In the process of negotiation between home-culture identity and host culture identity, they can choose identities that they felt comfortable with. Eventually, they could be the self that they wanted to be.

Conclusion

Based on the interviews in the present study, East Asian international sojourners developed their identities in the host country in the process of cultural adjustment, while they interact with home-culture groups and host-culture groups. Depending on who they interact with, the participants chose different communication styles and strategies as they interacted. Interviewees explained their experiences with both groups and their communication behaviors in accordance with the context and the cultural groups that they interact with. Also, East Asian international sojourners utilized certain communication strategies to achieve their goals and purpose in the host country. Regardless of the cultural groups that they interact with, they performed differently depending on all of these factors in the host county. In addition, when they experience tension in the host country, they used various communication styles to negotiate those tensions and adjust to the new culture and environment. In the next chapter, I discuss these results in detail, including the theoretical and practical implications and limitations of this research, and the future direction of the current project.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to explore East Asian international sojourners’ communication behaviors in the host country as well as their negotiation of tension in the process of cultural adjustment. In this chapter, I answer the research questions based on the results of the analysis in Chapter 4 and discuss the contribution to understanding East Asian international sojourners’ identities in the process of cultural adjustment and their communication behavior in the host country. I also talk about the theoretical and practical implications of this research as well as the limitations and future direction of this work.

Discussion of the Research Questions

In this research, I answered two research questions: (a) In the process of cultural adjustment in the host country, how do East Asian international sojourners describe negotiating and performing their identities when they communicate with others? (b) how do East Asian international sojourners negotiate tensions, if they experience them, between their home culture identities and host cultural identities? In this section, I briefly summarize the final results answering each research question, then I connect those answers to the theoretical and practical implications of East Asian international sojourners’ identity and their cultural adjustment.

Summary of Results

The first research question focused on the East Asian international sojourners’ communication behaviors of their identity while they interact with others in the host country. Analysis of interviews results was divided into three categories depending on the groups that East Asian international sojourners interact with and their performance regardless of cultural groups: (a) home-culture groups, (b) host-culture groups, and (c) their performance in the
host country across cultural groups. Themes related to communication with home-culture group revealed the following communication behaviors: (a) avoiding the home culture group, (b) showing their American side, (c) approaching to cultural informers, (d) experiencing instant connection, (e) deemphasizing Americanness, (f) being extra polite, and (g) sharing home-culture. Themes associated with interaction with the host-culture group showed nine communication behaviors: (a) following American norms, (b) experiencing distance, (c) communicating with ease, (d) avoiding certain communication topics, (e) becoming more expressive, (f) keeping their home culture way of communication, (g) effort driven negotiation, (h) strategically interacting for benefit, and (i) working to make a good impression. Finally, themes related to East Asian international sojourners' performance in the host country uncover the following communicative behaviors: (a) actively interacting with diverse groups, and (b) setting up a new version of identity.

East Asian international sojourners' communication behaviors with home culture groups are categorized into seven different themes. The most common and frequent communication behavior was avoidance of home-culture groups. Some interviewees said that interacting with the home-culture group is a barrier to adjusting to American culture in terms of practicing language and learning the host culture. Therefore, they purposefully avoid people from the home culture. Secondly, East Asian international sojourners actively show their American side to individuals from their home culture. After they got used to the life and culture of the United States, they intentionally or unintentionally perform their communication behaviors aligned with American culture. In the case of intentional behaviors, they realized that they preferred the American style of communication behaviors and decided to follow those behaviors. Next, some participants answered that they purposefully approached the home-culture group to get cultural information from them. Individuals from the home-culture group who arrived at the residential district before them have more
information about the district. As they are from the same culture, they knew what the newcomers knew so it was easier for them to get information and source to adjust to the American culture and environment there. Fourthly, East Asian international sojourners experienced an instant connection with people from the home culture. Since home-culture groups shared the same culture of them, they had a lot in common in terms of knowledge and interest. Compared to other groups, they can easily interact with individuals from their home culture and felt an instant connection with them. In contrast to the second theme, some participants answered that they de-emphasize Americanness when they communicate with the home-culture group. People from the same cultural group expect them to behave a certain way following home-culture communication norms and behaviors. If they do not follow the communication norms and behaviors, it would eventually ruin the relationship with the home-culture group. Therefore, they intentionally avoided communication behaviors following American communicative behaviors and follow home-culture communication performance. Next, some interviewees interact with the home-culture group, they attempted to be extra polite. This behavior is also related to the strategy of keeping a good relationship with the home-culture group. In their home culture, there are some communication norms and rules to respect elders and people who are of a higher social status. To maintain a good relationship with them, they strictly follow those home-culture norms and communicative behaviors. Finally, some East Asian international sojourners purposefully interacted with individuals from their home culture to share their culture. The host country offers a limited environment of performing culture, for instance, celebrating national anniversaries. By interacting with the home-culture group, they can perform the home culture and maintain their home-culture identity.

Interactions with American groups revealed nine categories of communication behaviors. Firstly, some East international sojourners follow American communication norms
to adjust to American culture and environment. As they are not used to the new environment, they thought they needed to perfectly fit the host culture rather than show their home culture. Secondly, some participants felt distant from American groups because of the lack of shared culture. People from the host country did not know much about their culture and East Asian international sojourners are also not familiar with the culture, therefore, they experienced a lack of connection when they interacted with each other. In contrast to the second communication behavior, some interviewees answered that they could communicate with host-culture groups with ease. People from the host country do not have social expectations toward East Asian sojourners as they do not share the culture. Taking it as an advantage, they can interact with the American people easily without feeling social pressure. Next, some East Asian sojourners purposefully avoid certain communication topics so as not to encounter uncomfortable situations. Considering the relationship between the home country and host country and cultural differences, they tried to be careful when it came to the communication topics. Fifthly, respondents explained that they became more expressive while they adjusted to American culture. They realized that they needed to express their feeling and talk about their opinion to people to achieve what they wanted and survive in the host country. Next, some participants answered that they decided to keep their home-culture way of communication style regardless of the people whom they interacted with. At first, they thought they needed to follow all American communication norms to fit in the host society, however, they realized that they cannot fully adjust to the American culture. Rather they attempted to fit into the host society impractically, they keep their home-culture way of communication style with people from the host culture. The seventh communication behavior was the effort-driven negotiation. Several interviewees decided to change their communication styles and behaviors per the amount of effort that they need to put into the interaction. If they needed to spend too much energy and time accepting the new culture, they
refused to adopt the culture. Next, several respondents explained that they strategically interacted with the American people to get the benefit. In an unfamiliar environment, they needed local people to practice English and get used to the host culture. Therefore, they purposefully participated in events hosted by Americans and attempted to hang out with them more often. Finally, some East Asian sojourners worked hard to give a good impression to people from the host culture. They thought that their images can represent the whole image of their home culture. Not to harm their reputation and to adjust to the host culture successfully, they attempted to achieve a good reputation and image among the American people.

Regardless of the people that East Asian sojourners interacted with, they performed certain communication behaviors with both groups in the host country. Firstly, some participants answered that they actively interact with diverse groups including other international sojourners and minority groups. Back in their home country, they did not have much chance to interact with multi-racial groups and LGBTQ groups. American environment offered them an opportunity to encounter diverse groups. Taking this opportunity, they actively communicated with them. Secondly, some respondents decided to set up a new version of identity in the host country. The new identity does not fit into both home culture and host culture but a new version of identity as the result of negotiation. In the next section, I turn to the second research question.

The second research question asked about the tension that East Asian international sojourners possibly felt in the process of cultural adjustment and the negotiation related to those tensions in the host country. The analysis of interviewees revealed two types of tensions, as well as a recognition that living in the liminal space between cultures resulted in less tension, and negotiation in accordance with those tensions: (a) Pressure to (selectively) assimilate – following American norms to be successful, (b) Tension between cultures by code-switching communication style based on Audiences, and (c) Less pressure – be myself
The first theme revealed the tension from the expectation. As many East Asian sojourners got both financial and mental support from their families, they expected to achieve goals in the host country, satisfying their families and themselves. To be successful in the United States, they felt pressure to assimilate into the American culture. Therefore, they experienced the negotiation of tensions between home-culture identities and host-culture identities. As a result of the negotiation, they decided to follow American communication norms to be successful. The next tension was from two cultures (home-culture and host-culture). In America, some participants intentionally and unintentionally interact with both American and home-culture groups. When they interacted with people from their home country, they felt pressure to follow the communication norms and behavior following hierarchy or age gap. Between those two cultural groups, they negotiated the home-culture identities and host-culture identities for better communication for both groups. As a negotiation of those two cultural identities, they took the code-switching communication styles. When they interacted with the home-culture group, they followed home-culture communication styles. With the host-culture group, they performed host culture communication styles. Finally, some participants answered that they felt less tension in the United States. Being away from their home country let some East Asian international sojourners feel less social pressure. As they navigated between the cultures, they were able to explore and focus on themselves more and behave how they want to be.

In summation, East Asian international sojourners experienced two types of tensions and an environment of feeling less tension: (a) pressure to (selectively) assimilate, (b) tension between cultures, and (c) less pressure. To negotiate tensions, they followed American norms to be successful, took a code-switching communication style based on their audiences, and focused on themselves. In the next tension, I will address theoretical implications and practical implications.
Theoretical Implications

The findings in the present study fit within two larger bodies of individuals’ cultural identity and communication (e.g., Goffman, 1957; Ting-Toomey, 1988, 2005), and international sojourners’ cultural adjustment in the host country (e.g., De La Garza & Ono, 2015; Gudykunst, 1988; Kim, 2001; Orbe, 1998). Other studies paid attention to the individuals’ identity and communication (Goffman, 1957; Ting-Toomey, 1988), or stress from the host society (Gudykunst, 1988; Kim, 2001), however, those researchers did not focus on individuals’ communication behavior in accordance with the cultural groups they interacted with and stress/pressure they felt their own. The present research addresses how East Asian international sojourners communicate with the home-culture group and host-culture group accordingly, and the inner pressure that they felt while they adjust to the new culture. This research makes a contribution to the understanding of individuals’ identities and communication and a larger body of theories including the integrative theory of cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2001), Anxiety, uncertainty management theory (Gudykunst, 1988), Differential Adaptation theory (De La Garza, & Ono, 2015), and co-cultural theory (Orbe, 1998). The following section addresses those contributions to East Asian international sojourners’ identity and theories of their cultural adjustment.

East Asian Intentional Sojourners’ Identity in the Host Country

As Goffman (1958) argued that individuals express and form their identities while they communicate with their surroundings and others, participants of the current study also developed their identities in the process of cultural adjustment and interacting with people in the host country. The analysis of interviews indicated that some East Asian international sojourners actively interacted with diverse groups and set up a new version of identity regardless of the cultural groups with which they communicated, in the host culture. The new environment let East Asian international sojourners exposed to diverse cultural groups
including racial groups and LGBTQ groups. After they interacted with those unfamiliar cultural groups, they expanded their perspective and paid attention to issues with different cultural groups. This also aligns with Ting-Toomey’s argument (1988) that individuals form their identity through social interaction and communication with their surroundings. Since East Asian international sojourners had an opportunity to interact with different cultural groups, they could gain new perspectives and adjust their identities based on the experience. Also, the results showed that some respondents set up a new identity in the host country.

Participants of this study are from East Asian countries which influenced by their collectivistic cultures. Collectivistic societies emphasize the groups' needs, harmony among members of the society, and emotional dependence (Hofstede, 1984; Triandis, McCusker, & Hui, 1990; Kim, 1994). After the participants moved to the United States, they could be away from the original culture, and that led them to focus on themselves. Eventually, they could build a new identity in the host country while they interacted with new people in the host country, being less influenced by the home culture as they are physically away from their home country.

The present study supports the previous perspective that the relationship between identity and communication re-defines, and individuals form their identity while they communicate with others in the host country. In addition, the current study adds a new perspective on individuals' identity and communication by categorizing the group that they communicate with. This research addresses the development of their identities in accordance with their cultural groups. Even though East Asian international sojourners moved to a new environment, they cannot completely be away from their home culture as they still interact with people from the home culture directly and indirectly. While they interacted with those two cultural groups, they prioritized different communication behaviors and performed their identities differently based on the cultural group they were communicating with. As previous
studies stated (Grønkjær et al., 2011; Gudykunst, 1997), interacting with a certain cultural group is also associated with the communication norms and values depending on the cultural identities that they perform. However, the results of the analysis showed the complexity of performing and developing identities in the host country. East Asian sojourners did not simply follow the communication behaviors depending on the cultural groups whom they interacted with. For instance, some East Asian international sojourners purposefully show the American side of their identities even if they interact with people from their home culture. Also, some of them kept their home-culture identity when they interacted with American people. This indicates that East Asian international sojourners do not strictly follow communication norms and behaviors that align with the cultural groups. Rather, they chose their own communication strategies and behaviors based on their goals and intentions in the host country. Therefore, the current study suggests a new perspective on East Asian international sojourners’ identity and cultural adjustment, which is different from the previous research. The participants built their cultural identities as the result of the negotiation of two sides of their identities: home-culture identity and host-culture identity.

*International Sojourners’ Cultural Adjustment*

The present study offers a number of contributions to theories related to international sojourners’ cultural adjustment in the host country. Firstly, Kim (2005) suggested the integrative theory of cross-cultural adjustment. She argued that the stress in the host country motivates individuals to adjust to the new environment and attempts to fit into a new culture by developing new identities and behaviors. The analysis of interviews supported the idea of the stress that stress triggers international sojourners to adjust to the new culture successfully. Some respondents answered that they experienced stress from their internalized desires and family expectations. As they came to the U.S. with the support and sacrifice of their family, they desired to adjust to the host culture and successfully achieve their goals. Because of the
stress, they chose to assimilate into the host country as they thought following American norms and communication styles would be helpful for them to be successful in the host country. However, the result of the current research suggests a different perspective on “ethnic group strength” in the host-country environment.

Kim (2005) argued that a strong home-culture community in the host country has both positive and negative influences on individuals' cultural adjustment in the United States. A strong home-culture community can be helpful for newcomers to adjust to the host culture by offering emotional and informational support, however, in the long term, the community limits international sojourners to fit into the host society. The results partly supported the idea that East Asian international sojourners purposefully approach the home-culture community to obtain information about the residential area and share the home-culture events. However, interaction with the home-culture groups does not necessarily connect to the success of cultural adjustment in the host country. The analysis showed that East Asian international sojourners set different goals and intentions to reside in the United States. Depending on the goals, participants strategically chose communication behaviors with the home-culture groups regardless of the strength of the home-culture community. For instance, some respondents intentionally avoided the home-culture groups to successfully fit into the American culture, even though they had a chance to interact with home-culture groups. On the other hand, some interviewees purposefully approached the home-culture community to get information about the residing area and share the home culture regularly while adjusting successfully to the American society. Therefore, the present study proposes that the strength of the home-culture group does not influence international sojourners’ cultural adjustment positively or negatively, but more on their communication strategy to adjust to the new environment.

Secondly, anxiety and uncertainty management (Gudykunst, 1998) explained the feelings that newcomers experience when they just arrived in a new environment. The current
study also found anxiety and uncertainty that East Asian international sojourners experienced. Some participants explained that they are not sure about American communication styles and feel anxious to be in an unfamiliar environment. AUM theory was critiqued because the theory minimized the importance of effective communication and did not suggest communication behavior to resolve the uncertainty and anxiety. The current project paid attention to East Asian international sojourners' communication behaviors to adjust to new culture and environment in response to the uncertainty and anxiety. Also, Griffin (2012) argued that uncertainty and anxiety in the new culture are not a barrier to effective communication but can motivate individuals to communicate effectively. My research supports Griffin's (2012) argument that interviewees responded that they actively chose communication behaviors and strategies to adjust to the new environment. In addition, the results showed that interacting with the home-culture community can be helpful for East Asian international sojourners to resolve uncertainty and anxiety in the host country. According to Gudykundst (1998), newcomers experience uncertainty because they cannot anticipate strangers' reactions due to a lack of information about them. At the same time, they feel uncomfortable with strangers because it is hard to figure out their reactions. Several participants stated that they purposefully interacted with people from the home-cultural groups to seek local knowledge and information about the host country. Also, they looked for home-culture groups to share their culture, for instance, celebrating home-culture events or making traditional home-culture food. By doing so, they could get emotional support from people from their home country. Therefore, the present study suggests newcomers can resolve uncertainty (cognitive) and anxiety (emotional) by collecting information and seeking emotional support from the home-culture community for effective communication.

Next, the current study contributes to differential adaptation theory (De La Garza & Ono, 2015). De La Garza and Ono (2015) opposed the perspective of newcomers’ cultural
adaptation that newcomers’ goals are for complete assimilation to the host culture. Traditional perspectives assumed that international sojourners’ goal for cultural adaptation is to completely assimilate to the dominant culture. Therefore, the successful cultural adaptation means that those newcomers absorb the mainstream culture, and their communication behavior and identities became as close as people in the host country. However, De La Garza and Ono (2015) proposed differential adaptation theory (DAC), arguing that studies need to focus on newcomers’ individualized experiences in the process of cultural adaptation, not universalizing their experiences in the host country. Based on their specific experiences in the host culture, they do not necessarily follow the dominant culture to adjust to the host country but choose their strategy to fit into the society. The current study supports the idea of the differential adaptation theory that East Asian international sojourners strategically select certain communication styles and behaviors based on their experiences. The result of the present study indicated that East Asian international sojourners chose their communication style based on their experiences and depending on the cultural groups whom they interact with. Some participants decided not to change their original communication style from their home culture as they could not behave just like Americans when they interacted with Americans. Some respondents explained that they purposefully showed their American sides to the home-culture group because they preferred the American communication styles. Also, several East Asian international sojourners addressed that they negotiated their communication behaviors based on the efforts that they needed to put into the change. If they think that they need to put much effort and time to change their behaviors, they would rather maintain the current East Asian version of their identity. Based on the analysis of interviewees, the study supports the claim of differential adaptation theory that they do not necessarily follow the communication styles of the dominant culture but choose their communication style to survive in the host country. In addition to it, the present study
contributes to the theory by giving examples of specific communication behaviors. The results revealed the East Asian international sojourners’ communication strategies and behaviors in accordance with the cultural groups that they interacted with, in the host country. Finally, the analysis of the interviews adds more examples of marginalized groups’ communication behaviors in the dominant society. Co-cultural theory (Orbe, 1998) explored traditionally marginalized groups’ communication behaviors. The present study targeted East Asian international sojourners’ communication practices in America. They are a co-cultural group in the United States based on the description of a marginalized group in the theory. Even though co-cultural theory assumed that each cultural group in the U.S. possesses a different level of power depending on characteristics that the individuals have, the theory did not differentiate communication based on the groups that members of the under-presented groups interact with. Other than that, those East Asian sojourners were the dominant group back in their home country. An interesting point is that the current study included interactions with people from the same culture in the dominant society. In the host country, East Asian international sojourners intentionally and unintentionally interact with people from the same culture. In this case, they may experience negotiation of communication behaviors as they do not need to follow dominant communication structures with each other. At the same time, East Asian international sojourners may also attempt to perform major communication norms and behaviors because they reside in the United States. Therefore, the current study suggests a new perspective on co-cultural groups’ communication behaviors interacting with multiple cultural groups in the dominant society.

The answers to the first research question suggest East Asian international sojourners' communication behaviors in the host country depending on the cultural groups that they communicate with, in the United States. In the case of Orbe (1998), he categorized communication strategies of co-cultural groups based on six factors: (a) field of experiences,
(b) preferred outcome, (c) situational context, (d) perceived cost and reward, (e) ability and (f) communication approach. However, the present study asserts East Asian international sojourners' communication behaviors ranging from home culture to host culture and then applied Orbe’s (1998) six factors. Depending on the cultural groups that East Asian sojourners communicate with, they selected communication behaviors that fit into home-

**Figure 1**

East Asian International Sojourners’ Communication Behaviors

![Diagram of communication behaviors](image)

Depending on situations that they encountered in the United States, the participants chose different communication behaviors, and based on their negotiations between their home culture and host culture, and their goal. Five communication behaviors follow the traits of home culture: (a) approaching cultural informers, (b) de-emphasizing Americanness, (c) sharing their home culture, (d) being extra polite, and (e) keeping the home-culture way of...
communication. The first four communication behaviors happened when they interacted with people from the home-culture groups. Some participants decided to approach people from the home culture as they needed to get information and benefits from the home-culture community. Secondly, acting like Americans may give a negative impression to home-culture groups since they expect them to perform home-culture communication norms. Therefore, some participants de-emphasized their Americanness to sustain a good relationship with the home-culture community. Next communication behavior refers to ability. If East Asian international students reside in a place where they cannot enjoy their home culture, they purposefully seek home-culture groups and share culture with them. The fourth communication behavior is also related to the relationship with people from the home-culture group. Some East Asian international sojourners decided to be extra polite with people from their home culture to satisfy cultural expectations and not to ruin their relationship with them. Finally, some interviewees kept their home-culture way of communication since they realized that they cannot follow the American communication style completely. As their ability to assimilate to the host culture cannot reach the level of perfection, they rather keep their home-cultural communicative behavior even with people from the host culture.

While following the cultural communication of their host country, there were also two communication behaviors that they still sustain their home-culture communication: (a) experiencing instant connection and (b) experiencing distance. These two communication behaviors were about the field of experience in the home culture. The first communication behavior happened when some participants interacted with home-culture groups. As they shared the same culture, they felt a connection instantly and became close easily. On the other hand, East Asian international sojourners experienced distance from American groups because of the lack of shared culture.
Two communication behaviors are placed in the mid-point between home culture and host culture: (a) effort-driven negotiation and (b) setting up new identities. The first communication behavior is related to the amount of effort that they need to put into the communication behavior when they interacted with people from the host culture. Some East Asian sojourners who chose the second communication behavior decided to set up a new identity in the host country regardless of cultural groups.

While still preferring the cultural communication of their home country, there were also five communication behaviors used when the participants wanted to branch out: (a) actively interacting with diverse groups, (b) communicating with ease, (c) avoiding a certain topic, (d) working to make a good impression, and (e) strategically interacting for benefits. Regardless of the cultural groups that participants interacted with, they actively interacted with diverse groups in the host country. Taking advantage of the environment in the host country, they did not hesitate to communicate with diverse groups including the LGBTQ community and other racial groups. The next behavior refers to the field of experiences.

Some participants thought that Americans did not have any cultural expectations from them and do not follow the home-culture communication norms. This led them to communicate with Americans easily. Thirdly, when several interviewees interacted with Americans, they avoided certain communication topics. Communication topics such as political issues may cause uncomfortable situations because of the relationship between the home country and the host country. Considering perceived cost and reward, they decided to avoid certain topics. Next, some East Asian international sojourners worked to make a good impression on the host-culture group and partly follow their communication behaviors. This communication behavior is also related to perceived cost and rewards. As East Asian international sojourners are foreigners in the U.S., they feel unstable in the host country. By making a good impression, they could hope to avoid unnecessary conflicts with Americans. Lastly, some
East Asian international sojourners purposefully interacted with the host-culture groups. In the new environment, they needed someone who could help them to practice English and learn the new culture. Interacting with Americans allowed them to get used to the American culture and adjust their behaviors.

Four themes are aligned with the host culture: (a) avoiding home-culture groups, (b) showing American side, (c) following American norms, and (d) becoming more expressive. Participants chose to avoid home-culture groups in the host country. Their preferred outcome was to assimilate into American culture so that they can fit into society. The second communication behavior directs to their preference for the behaviors. After they compared their original cultural behaviors and home-culture behaviors, they often preferred the American way of communication styles and decided to show American sides even to home-culture groups. Some East Asian international sojourners followed American norms with host-culture groups in order to adjust to American society successfully. The last communication behavior was to become more expressive. Some interviewees answered that they purposefully show their emotions and raise their voices while they interacted with Americans to survive in the host country. In summation, East Asian international sojourners performed communication behaviors following the host culture because of their preference of the behaviors between home culture and host culture and desire to fit into the host society.

The answers to the second research question aligned with the pressure that marginalized groups and the negotiation of the pressure (Orbe, 1998). Firstly, the analysis of interviews shows that East international sojourners selected their communication performance depending on the preferred outcome. Some participants explained that they want to be successful because they felt pressure from the expectation. The expectation was mainly from themselves because they knew their family sacrificed themselves both financially and supported them mentally. To fulfill their expectation, East Asian international sojourners
aggressively absorbed the communication behaviors of Americans and eventually assimilated into the host culture.

The next tension is between home culture and host culture. In the United States, they intentionally or unintentionally communicated with both home-culture groups and host-culture groups. Both cultural groups have their communication norms and behaviors, and they expect others to follow those norms and behaviors. To satisfy cultural expectations from both groups, East Asian international sojourners utilized code-switching communication styles based on the audience. When they interacted with home-culture groups, they performed home-culture communication behaviors. With American people, they utilized host-cultural communication styles.

Finally, some East Asian international sojourners were placed in an environment where they feel less tension from their home-culture society. In the host country, they could focus on themselves being away from home-culture norms that cause tension. Without the tension, participants could select communication behaviors based on their own decisions and preferences through negotiation.

International sojourners’ identities, integrative theory of cross-cultural adjustment (Kim, 2005), anxiety and uncertainty management (Gudykunst, 1998), differential adaptation theory (De La Garza & Ono, 2015), and co-cultural theory (Orbe, 1998) attempt to provide insight into international sojourners experiences in the host country and their identity management. The present study added to our understanding of this experience by centering East Asian international sojourners' experiences in the process of cultural adjustment in the host country and eventually help individuals and organizations to adjust to a new culture better. Taking into account the negotiation between the two cultures, this study reveals the importance of cultural groups that they interacted with in the host country and their goal of residence. In the next section, practical implications for this study will be addressed.
Practical Implications

Even though the pandemic situation slowed down the number of East Asian international sojourners coming to the U.S., the most prominent population of international sojourners are East Asian international sojourners in the United States (Institute of International Education, 2019; Pedersen, Neighbors, Larimer, & Lee, 2011; United Nation, 2017). The present research includes lived experiences of East Asian international sojourners in America while they adjust to the new culture. Their experience can be helpful for other East Asian international sojourners and for organizations that include East Asian international sojourners, by taking those as examples to prepare for the successful cultural adjustment. In this section, I address the practical implications of this study at two levels.

Implication for Individuals

For individuals, the present study offers several implications. Firstly, in terms of helping individuals' cultural adjustment, the findings of East Asian international sojourners' lived experiences may be helpful for them to prepare for the new culture. It is not easy to leave a country where people have lived for their entire life and start a new life in a completely different country. Many international sojourners struggle to get used to a new culture and some of them decide to go back to their home country. The results include how East Asian international sojourners find knowledge and information about American culture and how they learned communication behaviors of the host country. By offering the communicated experiences of East Asian international sojourners who have gone through a process of cultural adjustment, newcomers can keep in mind their strategies for adjusting to a new culture. Also, the lived experiences increased their sense of agency in making choice and eventually let them know that they have other choices. The current study explicitly acknowledges that there is not one path, but that their behaviors may vary depending on the context and their goals.
Secondly, the communication strategies described by the participants in the present study provide information for East Asian international sojourners' decision-making in their residential areas in the United States. The interviewees talked about their interactions with people from their home country and host country. They set up a strategy of interacting with each cultural group considering the goals of residing in the U.S. Almost half of Asian Americans live on the West coast of the U.S. (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). If an East Asian international sojourner wants to avoid people from the same country and interact more with people from the host culture, they can purposefully choose to live in other places.

The third implication for individuals lies in the hearing stories of others who experienced a similar process of cultural adjustment in the United States. The present study includes stories of East Asian international sojourners’ communicative experiences in the host country. There are a number of East Asian international sojourners who have been in America and went through a cultural adjustment. By hearing others' stories, they would feel validated by their experiences and empathy with other East Asian international sojourners' experiences. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) suggested that hearing the stories of others can develop one’s self-efficacy. Therefore, hearing other East Asian sojourners’ experiences would be helpful for them to understand and feel comfortable with their own behaviors.

Organizational Implications

The present study offers implications for organizations that include East Asian international sojourners such as global companies and universities. The answers to the first and second research questions provide examples of East Asian international sojourners' experiences in the United States and their communication strategies for cultural adjustment. If organizations desire to help newcomers adjust to the U.S. culture successfully, they need to pay attention to the actual experiences of international sojourners. Kim (2005) argued that the environmental conditions in the host country take a significant role in newcomers’ cultural
adjustment. Firstly, if the host country offers an environment that is accessible and open to strangers, newcomers are more likely to adjust to the host country easily and successfully. Based on East Asian international sojourners’ lived experiences described in the interviews, organizations can learn about East Asian international sojourners' behaviors and eventually form a welcoming environment for them and plan a support program to assist their adjustment successfully. Next, Kim (2005) mentioned the pressure that the host society put on newcomers to follow social expectations and communication norms. The answers to the second research question address the pressures and tensions that East Asian international sojourners felt and how they negotiate those. Using their stories as an example, organizations may be able to set up a plan to recognize and mitigate these pressures such as mentoring programs.

Limitations

There are several limitations to the present study. First, the results of the current research are based on interviews with 26 individuals mostly in the Southern part of the United States, and cannot represent the whole population of East Asian international sojourners. Even though interviewees agreed to participate in the current study, they were not randomly selected. The sampling method was snowball sampling in which a researcher initially selects participants, and those participants recommend other adequate participants through a personal network (Given, 2008). While this is an accepted method of recruiting participants in qualitative research, it can increase the potential that participants may have similar perspectives. Also, the occupations of interviewees were mostly related to higher education, and they are well educated; their experiences may be different from those who work in private companies, unskilled labor, migrant labor, and undocumented labor. However, many East Asian sojourners do come to the U.S. because of opportunities in higher education, so this is still representative of many East Asians’ experiences. In addition, each
interview was conducted one time and it depended on the participants' self-report, not direct observation. A longitudinal study with multiple interviews or observation could have showed different results.

Second, this research put four different countries in one cultural group as East Asian countries. Even though those four countries share similar cultures based on the concept of pan-ethnic identity, each country has its unique culture and language. Depending on the country participants are from, each interviewee may have a different perspective and experience. Also, considering the population of each East Asian country, some participants may have limited experiences with the home-culture community. According to Budiman and Ruiz (2021), Chinese Americans make up 24% of the Asian population and the Japanese American population takes 7%, which means Japanese international sojourners may communicate with their cultural groups less than other East Asian international sojourners, depending on the location. Therefore, some East Asian International sojourners’ communication strategies for cultural adjustment would be different by country.

Future Directions

There are a number of ways to develop this study for further study of East Asian international sojourners’ experiences of cultural adaptation. While the results of the current study answered each research question reflecting participants' experiences and perspectives, this study is just the beginning of further studies in many ways. Further analysis with additional interview questions and answers can provide more nuanced examples of East Asian international sojourners’ experiences. More specifically, the experiences of other international sojourners need to be explored. Each cultural group has its unique communication behaviors and norms, inherited from its culture. By studying various cultural groups in the United States, future studies can reveal similarities and differences in their communication strategies in the process of cultural adjustment depending on the cultural
groups whom they interacted with. Some specific groups such as individuals from Latino cultures might be beneficial as the cultural group takes one of the largest international sojourner groups in the U.S. Also, looking at East Asian sojourners in different country would be helpful to explore the influence of the environment in the host country. In addition, exploring Americans living in another country can be interesting because they become a member of co-cultural group in a foreign country.

Secondly, the findings of this research cannot be applied to all international sojourner groups because of the nature of any qualitative research, even though it would be beneficial to include diverse voices from participants. In order to understand the larger population of sojourners and gain a general understanding of this group, a future study may develop a tool to measure the level of assimilation to a certain culture or quantify the pressure that international sojourners may feel in the process of cultural adjustment so that scholars can predict their communication behaviors. Also, with measurement, researchers may be able to explore a large number of variables and how they influence the adjustment process.

Next, further study needs to consider the effects of images of the host country, learned through media and how the images of a host country influence East Asian international sojourners' communication behaviors with Americans. Before they arrived in a foreign country, sojourners research the country and its culture. Intentionally or unintentionally, they establish preconceptions of the country, based on the research and images from a media (Sokolik, 2015). Also, few participants mentioned that they anticipated their life in the U.S. based on the media and pre-knowledge about the culture. Therefore, the role of preconception of America and its culture needs to be more examined in future studies.

Finally, researchers who want to develop understanding of the experience of sojourners may consider longitudinal studies that observe the development of individuals’ thoughts and behaviors over time. Some interviewees of the current study addressed their
change of attitude toward the culture and communication strategy of assimilation. For example, one participant described that she thought she needed to assimilate to American culture at first, however, she changed her mind after she interacted with others in the U.S. Eventually, she decided to show more of her home culture identity. A future study may consider this: Why did East Asian international sojourners change their communication strategies of cultural adjustment and how did they change their attitudes over time.

Conclusion

When I planned my research, I was inspired by my own experience in a certain situation. As an East Asian international sojourner, this research offered me an opportunity to think about my own experiences in a process of cultural adjustment in the U.S. and to feel empathy for participants' experiences. One of the biggest struggles that I went through while I adjusted to the American culture was to identify and define who I really am. At the beginning of my cultural adjustment, I thought I should follow the communication norms and behaviors of the United States to successfully fit into the society because that was what I believed. As time went by, I felt like I was losing myself. In addition, interacting with people from Korea added another layer of cultural adjustment as they expected me to follow the Korean way of communication norms and behaviors. Therefore, I had to negotiate between two cultural identities to survive in the foreign environment and sustain good relationships with people from Korea.

At first, I thought it is an easy process. I assumed that other Korean people residing in the U.S. would have the same mindset as me. As we are living in the U.S., we have to follow the American rules and norms, and this applies to people from the same cultural background. However, my assumption was wrong. Even though we are in the United States, people in the home-culture community judge and evaluate people in the same cultural group based on home-culture communicative norms and behaviors. After I realized it, I tried to be extra
careful when I interacted with Koreans. On the other hand, I felt more at ease with Americans since they did not know much about my culture and communication norms and behaviors. With Americans, I could focus on myself and sometimes communicated in ways that I would never do in Korea because people here would never care about what I did.

Thanks to my research focus and experience as a graduate assistant in Louisiana, I had a lot of opportunities to interact with people from different cultures. While I had conversations with them, I realized that they also went through similar experiences of identity negotiations. While each international sojourner has unique experiences depending on their home culture and context, they also experienced these moments of negotiation. Through this project, I could hear other East Asian international sojourners' stories, and has affirmed my experience of cultural adjustment and identity negotiations in the United States. I hope that readers of the current project feel the same way and that this validates their feelings.
REFERENCES


Chen, Y. A. J. (2016). English name transition from Taiwan to the United States: A case study of Taiwanese international students. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature, 5*(4), 58-64. [http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.5n.4p.58](http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.5n.4p.58)


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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Tentative Interview Protocol

Background

1. How long have you been in the United States?
2. Tell me about your decision to move to the U.S.
3. (In case of student), why did you decide to study abroad in the U.S.?
4. Tell me about your first day of in the U.S.

Cultural adjustment in the U.S.

5. What surprised you when you first came to the US?
   • How did you feel about the cultural differences?
6. To what degree do you feel you have adjusted to American culture?
   • Why do you feel in that way?
   • How long did it take you to feel at home in the US?

Communication in the U.S.

7. Tell me about the closest relationships you’ve made since you came to the
   U.S?
   • Tell me about how you met them
   • Tell me about how you became close
   • Tell me about an example of casual communication with them
8. How much do you interact with Americans?
   • How often do you interact with Americans in a typical week?
   • Can you explain the relationship with them
• What do you normally do when you interact with them?
• What surprised you about interacting with Americans? Did they do something that you didn’t expect? Can you give me examples?
• How do Americans react to you as a foreigner?
  ➢ How do Americans change their communication when they talk with you?
  ➢ Tell me a typical story or example of a time when an American changed the way they communicate when they interacted with you
9. Do you interact with people who are from (participant’s home country)?
• How often do you interact with them in a typical week?
• Can you explain the relationship with them?
• What do you normally do when you interact with them?
• Can you explain me how do you interact with people from your home country? Looking back in the moment when you interact with people in the home country, how does it different?
10. How do you think you behave differently when you interact with Americans as compared to people from your home country? How and Why?
• Can you give me an example?
• Why do you behave/communicate with them differently?
• Which group do you feel more comfortable with?
• And why?

Identity in the U.S.

11. How do you think that you have changed after living in America?
• How has the way you communicate changed?
• Can you explain that change using example or story?
• How do you feel like you’ve been pressured or encouraged to change?

12. When you hang out with people in America, how much do you experience differences from your home country in the way you communicate?

• Can you tell me an example of story about these differences from your experiences?

13. When you interact with people who are in your home country, have they mentioned any changes in your behaviors?

• How did they talk about the differences?

• Tell me about your feelings when they told you about the changes?

Is there anything else you think I should know about your experiences living in the US and how it has influenced you?

Thank you so much for your help today. For my dissertation, I need to report some basic statistics about the people who I interviewed.

14. Can you tell me your age?

15. What about your education background?
Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT

Please read this informed consent carefully before you decide to participate in the study

Consent Form Key Information:

- Participate in a study about East Asian international sojourners’ identity management in the host country during cultural adjustment.
- Take 1-2 hours of individual interview
- No information collected that will connect participants’ identity with responses
- Research is for my dissertation and it may be submitted to a conference.

Purpose of the research study:

The purpose of this study is to explore how East Asian international sojourners manage their identity during the cultural adjustment process in the U.S. Also, I will explore whether they keep their original identity or change their identity to adjust American society. Hopefully this research is helpful for people to understand East Asian international sojourners’ experience in American society and the cultural adjustment process in terms of their identity management.

What you will do in the study:

Your participation will entail doing an interview lasting no longer than two hours. During the interview, you will be asked about their communicative experiences in the host country and identity management during cultural adjustment. The interviews will be recorded with Zoom, and I will write field notes of your interviews. I expect that approximately 30 students will participate this interview.

Time required: The study will require about 1-2 hours of your time.

Risks: There are no physical, psychological, social, or legal risks with this study.

Benefits: This information would be valuable for international sojourners who are thinking to study in the United States and for scholars who are interested in international sojourners' cultural adjustment and identity. There will be no direct benefits to participate in this interview.

Confidentiality:

I will protect the identities of participants through the use of pseudonyms in this and any future publication or presentations. You should understand that they might be quoted directly but that their names will not be used in any part of the report. The transcript of the interviews and field note will be stored in a locked and secure cabinet in my office. The audio record
will be saved in UA Box. UA Box is a secure, cloud-based system for file and data storage, sharing, and collaboration. Data is encrypted and maintained on domestic servers. Audio recordings will be deleted from the UA Box after I have completed analysis and write-up.

Voluntary participation: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The minimum age for the participants is 18 years old.

Right to withdraw from the study: Please understand that you have a right to withdraw from the study at your will, without prejudice, and at any time throughout the interview process that you begin to feel uncomfortable. Also, there might be some discomfort or embarrassment because of some interview questions that ask about personal experiences in the U.S. If you begin to feel uneasy and want to withdraw from the study, please let me know immediately and we will stop the interview immediately. There is no penalty for withdrawing. If you would like to withdraw after your materials have been submitted, please contact with the principal investigator or the faculty advisor.

Compensation/ Reimbursement: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

If you have any questions about the study or need to report a study related issue, please contact:

Eunhui Kim  
Doctoral Student  
Department of Communication Studies  
College of Communication and Information Science,  
(318) 547-8127  
ekim19@crimson.ua.edu

Mary M. Meares, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
Department of Communication Studies  
College of Communication and Information Sciences  
(205) 348-8072  
mmmeares@ua.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in a research study, would like to make suggestions or file complaints and concerns about the research study, please contact: Ms. Tanta Myles, the University of Alabama Research Compliance Officer at (205)-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066. You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach Website at http://ovpred.ua.edu/research-compliance/prco/. You may email the Office for Research Compliance at rscompliance@research.ua.edu.

Agreement:

☐ I agree to participate in the research study described above.  
☐ I do not agree to participate in the research study described above.  
☐ I agree to video (audio, photograph) in the research study described above.  
☐ I do not agree to video (audio, photograph) in the research study described above.
Please keep a copy of this informed consent form for your records.
Appendix C

Request e-mail

Hello, I am a doctoral student at the University of Alabama in the Department of Communication and Information Sciences. I am doing a research paper titled, “East Asian international sojourners’ identity management”. I am in need of individuals, who are originally from one of East Asian countries (Korea, China, Japan, and Taiwan) to participate in an interview for this research. For this research, I want to East Asian international sojourners’ experiences on identity management during the process of cultural adjustment in the U.S. Your participation will entail doing an interview lasting about an hour. The interview will be conducted by Zoom. There is no direct benefit or compensation to participation.

If you are willing to participate this research, please send an email to me to schedule an interview (Eunhui Kim, 318-547-8127; ekim19@crimson.ua.edu)

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me (Eunhui Kim, 318-547-8127; ekim19@crimson.ua.edu) You may also contact UA faculty advisor, Dr. Mary Meares at (205) 348-8072; mmmeares@ua.edu if you have any questions.

Thank you so much,

Eunhui Kim
Appendix D

Request Email – Personal network

Hello, this is Eunhui Kim. I am doing a research paper titled, “East Asian international sojourners’ identity management”. I am in need of individuals, who are originally from one of East Asian countries (Korea, China, Japan, and Taiwan) to participate in an interview for this research. For this research, I want to East Asian international sojourners’ experiences on identity management during the process of cultural adjustment in the U.S. Your participation will entail doing an interview lasting about an hour. The interview will be conducted by face to face, Zoom or Skype, depending on your preference. There is no direct benefit or compensation to participation.

If you are willing to participate in this research, please send an email to me to schedule an interview (Eunhui Kim, 318-547-8127; ekim19@crimson.ua.edu)

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me (Eunhui Kim, 318-547-8127; ekim19@crimson.ua.edu) You may also contact UA faculty advisor, Dr. Mary Meares at (205) 348-8072; mmmeares@ua.edu if you have any questions.

Thank you so much,

Eunhui Kim
July 14, 2021

Eunhui Kim
Department of Communication Studies
College of Communication & Information Sciences
The University of Alabama
Box 870172

Re: IRB # 20-12-4183-A: “East Asian International Sojourners’ Identity Management”

Dear Eunhui Kim:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has reviewed the revision to your previously approved exempt protocol. The board has determined that the change does not affect the exempt status of your protocol.

Please remember that your protocol will expire on April 13, 2022.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the assigned IRB application number. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Carpentato T. Myles, MSM, CIP, CIP
Director & Research Compliance Officer