



5-2005

## **East Asians' Experience of Sojourning in East Tennessee: A Phenomenological Investigation**

Yoonmi Kim

*University of Tennessee - Knoxville*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk\\_graddiss](https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss)



Part of the [Psychology Commons](#)

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Kim, Yoonmi, "East Asians' Experience of Sojourning in East Tennessee: A Phenomenological Investigation. " PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 2005.  
[https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk\\_graddiss/2157](https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/2157)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact [trace@utk.edu](mailto:trace@utk.edu).

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Yoonmi Kim entitled "East Asians' Experience of Sojourning in East Tennessee: A Phenomenological Investigation." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Psychology.

Mark A. Hector, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Kathleen L. Davis, P. Gary Klukken, Howard R. Pollio

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Yoonmi Kim entitled “East Asians’ Experience of Sojourning in East Tennessee: A Phenomenological Investigation.” I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Psychology.

Mark A. Hector

Major Professor

We have read this dissertation  
and recommend its acceptance:

Kathleen L. Davis

P. Gary Klukken

Howard R. Pollio

Acceptance for the Council:

Anne Mayhew

Vice Chancellor and  
Dean of Graduate Studies

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

EAST ASIANS' EXPERIENCE OF SOJOURNING IN EAST  
TENNESSEE:  
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

A Dissertation  
Presented for the  
Doctor of Philosophy Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Yoonmi Kim  
May, 2005

Copyright © 2005 by Yoonmi Kim  
All rights reserved

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, whose unending love and support encouraged a desire to learn, and to my husband, whose has always believed in me. Without their sacrifice, completing this dissertation and this degree was not possible.

Thank you.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Kathleen Davis, Dr. Gary Klukken, and Dr. Howard Pollio, who all became my role-models as teachers and scholars, for their support, advice, ideas, and guidance over the years. I am especially grateful to Dr. Mark Hector, my advisor and mentor, for helping me complete my degree, for teaching me the value of phenomenological research, and for his generous support, encouragement, and advice for this project.

I wish to thank my family and my friends in Korea, for their love and support through all these years. I have been blessed with many good friends I met during my sojourn in America. I am thankful to many professors and classmates including Kylie, Rob, Vicky, and Mellisa, who have helped and guided me through the graduate school process. I am also thankful to Mrs. Dr. Hector, Heather, Lydia, Paul, Jane, Soo-Ryun, Jung-Im, Young-A, and many good people I met in Knoxville. With their help, support, and friendship, my sojourn in America was more meaningful and joyful. I want to extend my thanks to Julie, Megan, Jill, and many good people I met in Louisiana who welcomed me, taught me the meaning of southern hospitality, and shared with me their wonderful friendship which made my time in Louisiana full of warm and fun memories.

I want to express my special thanks to my special friends, Connie and I-Wen, who became my adopted sisters in America, for their smiles, hugs, encouragement, and being there for me through the good days and the bad.

I am deeply grateful to all of the participants in this research project for giving me their time, for trusting me, and for generously telling me their life stories. Their courage to share made this project possible. Thank you all from my heart.



## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to understand the experience of sojourning in East Tennessee by individuals from East Asia. Understanding the experience of these individuals is achieved through the descriptions of their own experiences in their own words. A qualitative method was used to understand the experiences of individuals who came from East Asian countries: China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, and who have lived in East Tennessee.

In phenomenological interviews, sixteen participants described their experiences of sojourning in East Tennessee. These interviews were audio-taped, transcribed, and then analyzed by an interpretive research group to identify common themes within and across transcripts. Interpretive analyses revealed five themes of the experience of sojourning in East Tennessee. Themes that emerged in this study were contextualized and grounded by the theme of Changes Over Time. From the ground, five themes emerged: (a) Differences, (b) Difficulties, (c) Coping, (d) Relationships, and (e) Findings in Me. The ground of Changes Over Time represented the context of time and its continuous flow where individuals found differences between the home and host culture, faced difficulties of living in a foreign country, and developed their strategies to cope with

these difficulties. The ground is also the context where the participants experienced changes in their perception of self and others and obtained an understanding of the host culture and adjustment to a new environment.

The first theme, Differences, encompassed the participants' observation and understanding of the differences between their home and host culture. The second theme, Difficulties, reflected the participants' awareness of difficulties when they entered the new environment. These difficulties include weak language skills, lack of cultural background, emotional distress, food and financial problems, getting sick, uncertainty of the future, and limitations of being foreigners. The third theme, Coping, conveyed the participants' descriptions of how they coped with the difficulties and how they learned coping skills. The fourth theme, Relationships, reflected the participants' relationships with people including family, friends, and romantic relationships. The fifth theme, Findings in Me, conveyed the participants' perception of changes in themselves and values, and future plans.

The findings of this study illustrate and describe the experience of sojourning in East Tennessee by sixteen individuals from East Asia. These findings provide an understanding of the cross-cultural adaptation process and the meaning of living in a

foreign place from the perspectives of sojourners from East Asian countries. The sixteen participants' rich descriptions of their experiences of sojourning help us to understand that cross-cultural contact is often an opportunity for personal and professional growth.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
<b>I. INTRODUCTION &amp; REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....</b>	<b>1</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	1
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	4
Part One: International Students' Cross-Cultural Adaptation.....	5
Historical Perspectives on International Students.....	5
Models and Theories of Cross-Cultural Adaptation .....	7
A Key Concept of Cross-Cultural Adaptation: Acculturation.....	7
Models and Theories of Acculturation .....	8
Summary of Part One.....	14
Part Two: Empirical Research on International Students .....	16
Factors Influencing Cross-cultural Adaptation .....	16
Cultural Similarity.....	16
Language and Communication Skills .....	18
Personality.....	19
Contacts.....	19
Difficulties Faced by International Students.....	20
Emotional Distress .....	20
Academic Problems.....	22
Loss of Social Status .....	23
International Students and Counseling .....	23
Client Variables .....	24
Therapist Variables .....	27
Summary of Part Two .....	27
Summary of Chapter I .....	28
<b>II. METHOD .....</b>	<b>30</b>
Part One: Philosophical Assumptions .....	30
Existential Phenomenology .....	30
Hermeneutics .....	32
Part Two: Data Collection and Analysis .....	35

Bracketing Interview.....	35
Participants.....	37
Informed Consent and Interview .....	38
Data Analysis .....	39
<b>III. RESULTS.....</b>	<b>43</b>
Introduction .....	43
Bracketing Interview .....	44
Ground: Changes Over Time .....	45
Theme One: Differences .....	46
Theme Two: Difficulties .....	47
Theme Three: Coping .....	49
Theme Four: Relationships .....	49
Theme Five: Findings in Me.....	50
Description of the Participants .....	52
Phenomenological Analysis.....	61
Ground: Changes Over Time .....	63
Changes in Feelings .....	65
Changes in Views .....	66
Theme One: Differences .....	67
Environment .....	68
People .....	69
School Setting .....	72
Social Norms and Behaviors .....	74
Values .....	76
Life Style and Mass Media.....	77
Theme Two: Difficulties .....	79
Language .....	80
Lack of Cultural Background (Unfamiliarity) .....	82
Emotional Distress .....	84
Food Problems.....	86
Financial Problems .....	87
Getting Sick.....	88
Uncertainty About the Future .....	89

We Are Foreigners Here (Limitations) .....	90
Theme Three: Coping .....	91
Socializing.....	92
Positive Self-talk .....	92
Sports.....	93
Shopping and Traveling .....	94
Theme Four: Relationships .....	94
Not Connected.....	95
Connected.....	96
My Family .....	97
Romantic Relationships.....	98
Theme Five: Findings in Me.....	99
Perception of My Sojourning .....	100
Changes in Me.....	101
My Value .....	104
What I Want to Do.....	105
Summary of Chapter III.....	107
<b>IV. DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>111</b>
The Structural Description of the Experience .....	112
Changes Over Time.....	112
Differences .....	114
Difficulties .....	115
Differences among Transcripts .....	116
Differences in Experience: Countries .....	117
Differences in Experience: Marital Status .....	118
Differences in Experience: Gender .....	119
Differences in Experience: Length of Sojourning .....	121
Summary and Implications of Study .....	122
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>138</b>
Appendix A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF PARTICIPANTS .....	139

Appendix B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....	141
Appendix C: RESEARCH TEAM MEMBER’S PLEDGE OF CONFIDENTIALITY.....	144
Appendix D: SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT .....	146
<b>VITA.....</b>	<b>155</b>

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION & REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The number of international students attending colleges and universities in the United States during the 2002-2003 academic year totaled 586,323 individuals. Asian students comprise over half (51%) of all international enrollments, followed by students from Europe (13%), Latin America (12%), Africa (7%), the Middle East (6%), and North America and Oceania (5%). In 2002-2003, one hundred and fifty-three U.S. colleges and universities hosted 1,000 or more international students and 29 of these campuses hosted more than 3,000 international students each. California is the leading host state for international students (80,487), followed by New York (63,773), Texas (45,672), Massachusetts (30,039), Florida (27,270), and Illinois (27,116) (Davis & Chin, 2003).

Overseas educational experiences provide international students an opportunity to increase their professional knowledge, expand their worldviews, and have personal growth within a new culture. These individuals often encounter problems such as language differences and cross-cultural adjustment difficulties in addition to the normal problems faced by domestic college students (Church, 1982; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham,



2001).

Research on international students and their adjustment to host countries has expanded greatly. Most studies on international students have employed surveys, questionnaires, and quantitative research methods. Also, international students who participated in these studies were attending schools mostly in the Midwestern and Northeastern regions in America. There has also been a tendency to consider these international students as one homogenous group. There are salient differences, however, between Asian and Western ethnic groups and among South Asian, Middle East Asian, and East Asian. Sue and Sue (1999) noted that there are at least 40 distinct cultural groups among Asian Americans.

The purpose of this study is to produce a description of the thematic structure of the experience of sojourning in East Tennessee by individuals from the countries of China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Four individuals from each country were interviewed. This task was accomplished through a phenomenological exploration of the subjective experience of sojourning in East Tennessee by individuals from East Asia. It is hoped that an exploration of this experience will provide increased knowledge and understanding of the experience of sojourning in East Tennessee by individuals from

East Asian countries.

In this study a qualitative research method was used to describe East Asian individuals' personal experience of sojourning in East Tennessee. The research participants' length of stay in the U. S. ranged from one year to eight years. Participants were selected and contacted by the primary investigator. Once a participant had given her or his consent to be part of the study, qualitative research interviews were held. The length of the interviews ranged from 30-minutes to 60-minutes. During these interviews, participants described their experiences of sojourning in East Tennessee. The interviews were audiotaped and verbatim transcriptions were made from these audio-tapes. All identifying information was removed during the transcription process to ensure confidentiality. A phenomenological hermeneutic analysis was then carried out on the transcripts by the primary investigator and an interpretive research team. All transcripts were read and analyzed by research group members who sought to identify themes which characterized the experiences of the participants. This kind of analysis involves focusing on whole transcripts and then parts of transcripts. Going from whole to part and vice versa, repeatedly, is known as the hermeneutic circle. The iterative process of hermeneutic analysis results in the emerging of themes and a sense of the meaning of the

experiences of research participants.

In Chapter I, relevant psychological literature on cross-cultural adaptation theories, models of acculturation, and literature on international students' cross-cultural experiences and counseling are reviewed. Chapter II contains an examination of the theoretical and methodological assumptions that underlie the phenomenological method used in this study. Chapter III contains the results of the current study, and finally in Chapter IV, the results of the current study will be discussed in relation to previous research.

## **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

To be a sojourner in an alien culture presupposes many challenges for the sojourner. These challenges are most often in the areas of values, behaviors, perspectives on self and others, and world views. Many studies have been carried out in order to understand and explain the phenomenon of sojourning (Church, 1982; Cross, 1995; Kim, 1988; Lysgaard, 1955; .Pedersen, 1991; Smith, 1976; Sodowsky & Plake, 1992). Numerous theories regarding sojourning have been developed and studied by researchers (Adler, 1975; Anderson, 1994; Berry, 1984; Gordon, 1978; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Jacobson, 1963; Oberg, 1960).

The present review includes two parts. In the first part, models of cross-cultural adaptation are described followed by a definition of acculturation. Unidimensional and bidimensional acculturation models are also described. In the second part, historical perspectives of international students' cross-cultural contact are introduced and empirical studies on factors and issues related to international students' cross-cultural process are reviewed. Studies on difficulties faced by international students and issues related to international students and counseling are also reviewed.

## **Part One: International Students' Cross-Cultural Adaptation**

### **Historical Perspectives on International Students**

Intercultural education can be traced to 272 BC based on early biblical records (Brickman, 1965). Although intercultural education has a long history, most research into cross-cultural education began to appear after World War II. After the war, intercultural education programs were expanded to provide technical assistance for those countries affected by the war and also to increase international trade. There was an increased need to understand sojourners and their cross-cultural experiences due to the influence of the Peace Corps Movement, increased student exchange programs, and greater needs for international trade (Furnham & Bochner, 1982).

Early studies on cross-cultural experiences were focused on the psychological welfare of the sojourners. Entering new and unfamiliar cultures were found to be confusing and disorienting experiences. Oberg (1960) defined culture shock as “precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (p. 177). Oberg listed six main aspects of culture shock: (a) strain caused by the effort to adapt; (b) sense of loss and feelings of deprivation in relation to friends, status, profession and possessions; (c) feeling rejected by or rejecting members of the new culture; (d) confusion in role, values, and self-identity; (e) anxiety and even disgust/anger about foreign practices; (f) feelings of helplessness and not being able to cope with the new environment.

The concept of the U-curve hypothesis was employed to explain the cross-cultural adjustment process. Numerous cross-cultural training programs were produced to give professional and psychological help to sojourners in foreign countries.

Theoretical propositions were developed and tested to explain the nature, determinants, and outcomes of cultural contact. Most of these theoretical formulations have been developed, however, using international students as sojourners due to their greater accessibility as potential research participants (Furnham & Bochner, 1982, 2001). The

key concept of the cross-cultural adaptation process, acculturation, will be introduced in the next section. Models and theories of acculturation will first be reviewed.

### **Models and Theories of Cross-Cultural Adaptation**

#### **A Key Concept of Cross-Cultural Adaptation: Acculturation**

The term acculturation was introduced by anthropologists to explain cultural changes that occur from intercultural contact (Castro, 2003). Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) proposed the definition of acculturation as “phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (p. 149). Anthropologists and sociologists have defined acculturation as a process that occurs at the group level (Trimble, 2003). The Social Science Research Council (1954) proposed a definition of acculturation as cultural change that has occurred by the merging of two or more independent cultural systems. These changes can be caused by “direct cultural transmission” or by “noncultural causes, such as ecological or demographic modifications” influenced by an “impinging culture” (p. 974).

The acculturation process can bring about positive changes, but it also can cause disruptive and stressful changes which are often referred to as acculturative

disorganization (Chance, 1965). Based on this notion, Berry (1980) revised the definition of acculturation as a process that involves intergroup contact, conflict, and adaptation.

Berry and Kim (1988) stated that acculturation is a process that includes a series of phases: precontact, contact, conflict, crisis, and adaptation. The adaptation phase may take place when there is a conflict between the majority culture and the minority culture over values, customs, behaviors, and psychological characteristics.

Sodowsky and her colleagues (Osvold & Sodowsky, 1995; Sodowsky, Kwan, & Pannu, 1995; Sodowsky & Lai, 1997; Sodowsky, Lai, & Plake, 1991; Sodowsky & Plake, 1992) view acculturation as the process of behavioral adaptation when a minority group attempts to reduce majority-minority group conflicts. These conflicts are over different cultural values and power.

### **Models and Theories of Acculturation**

Dimensionality has played an essential role in explaining and conceptualizing the cultural and psychological acculturation process. Models that are unidimensional and bidimensional have been proposed and debated for 30 years (Berry, 2003). In the next two sections, unidimensional and bidimensional models of acculturation will be reviewed.

### **Unidimensional Models of Acculturation**

The adaptation of ethnic minority members to the host society has been described as a linear and unidirectional process. In this process, acculturation occurs on a single dimension with groups and individuals moving along that dimension over time. This process involves changes in values, attitudes, and behaviors and a reduction in identification with the former ethnic identity (Castro, 2003).

Several researchers (Adler, 1975; Jacobson, 1963; Oberg, 1960) have suggested stage models to explain the process of cross-cultural adaptation. Oberg (1960) explained cross-cultural adaptation using the culture shock hypotheses and noted that the experience of a new culture may be an unpleasant surprise or shock because it is unexpected and it may lead to a negative evaluation of one's own culture. He defined culture shock as anxiety experienced by the sojourners as a result of losing all familiar signs and symbols of social interaction. Oberg (1960) described four stages of culture shock: (a) the honeymoon stage, characterized by fascination, enthusiasm, admiration, and friendly, superficial relationships with the host society; (b) the crisis stage, described as feelings of inadequacy, frustration, anxiety, and hostility toward the host society and increasing association with fellow sojourners; (c) the recovery stage, described as



increased learning of language and culture of the host society; (d) the adjustment stage, characterized by the sojourner who works well in and enjoys the new culture with significantly decreased anxiety. Oberg suggested that sojourners go through distinct adjustment phases on the way to a final adaptation. Early models of cross-cultural adaptation were greatly influenced by the culture shock concept and were based on the medical model which referred to adjustment problems as psychological pathology (Furnham & Bochner, 1982).

The U-curve hypothesis is one of the early theories of cross-cultural adaptation. This model is based on a study by Lysgaard (1955), suggesting that cross-cultural sojourners go through three phases: (a) the initial phase with elation and optimism; (b) the crisis phase with feelings of frustration and depression, confrontation with new host culture, and missing the familiarities of the home culture; (c) the regained adjustment phase with feelings of confidence and satisfaction, and increased understanding of the host culture and adjustment into the majority culture (Furnham & Bochner, 1982).

Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) proposed the W-curve hypothesis, including a reacculturation process to the U-curve model. They contended that sojourners often experience a reentry shock and emotional and physiological difficulties when they return

to their country of origin (Furham & Bochner, 1986). Individuals are likely to experience more severe reentry difficulties a short time after their return than immediately on their return to the home society.

Church (1982) pointed out that stage models of sojourners' adjustment have some "conceptual and methodological difficulties in classifying individuals" (p. 541). These models of sojourners' adjustment lack essential indicators of each stage in order to classify individuals. These indicators may differ relative to a sojourner's culture of origin or be indicative of experiencing more than one stage at a time. Church also noted based on empirical studies that individuals may not go through all phases of the U-curve hypothesis (Golden, 1973; Klineberg & Hull, 1979).

Gordon (1978) used the term assimilation to describe changes that take place in sojourners. He proposed several different kinds of assimilation: (a) cultural assimilation or acculturation which is described as the gradual acquisition of cultural patterns of the host society; (b) structural assimilation which occurs when an individual enters into the network of host groups and institutions of the dominant society; (c) marital assimilation or amalgamation such as an intermarriage; (d) identificational assimilation described as the development of a sense of identification based exclusively on the host society; (e)

attitude assimilation, which is referred to as an absence of prejudice; (f) behavioral assimilation which is described as an absence of discrimination; (g) civic assimilation which is an absence of values and power conflict. Gordon noted that the assimilation process is gradual and absorption into the host society takes place at both group and individual levels. A large amount of research based on the assimilation model has been carried out to test this hypothesis. The longer people have been interacting with the host society, the greater their absorption into the dominant culture.

### **Bidimensional Model of Acculturation**

Berry and colleagues (e.g., 1980, 1984, 1987, 1989, 1993) proposed a bidimensional model of acculturation which suggests a two-way interaction between a dominant group and a minority group. In this model, ethnic minorities must face issues such as how to retain one's cultural identity. Ethnic identity can be retained by making inter-ethnic contacts.

Berry (1984) noted four possible acculturation patterns that emerge by applying decision-making processes to the issues ethnic minorities encounter when they enter a new society. Berry described acculturation strategies which come in four different forms: (a) integration, (b) assimilation, (c) separation, and (d) marginalization. The integration

strategy occurs when individuals hold positive relations with the host society and maintain their own ethnic identity. The assimilation strategy is evident when individuals seek interactions with the mainstream culture and do not wish to maintain their own cultural identity. The separation strategy occurs when individuals keep a strong ethnic identity and avoid contact with the majority groups. The marginalization strategy emerges when individuals lose cultural and psychological contact with both the dominant and their own ethnic groups.

Along with Berry's bidimensional model of acculturation, other researchers have developed multidimensional models to describe the acculturation phenomena (Garcia & Lega, 1979; Padilla, 1980; Szapocznik, Kurtines, & Fernandez, 1980; Zak, 1973). These multidimensional models describe how acculturation occurs at an individual level as well as at the group level. Psychological acculturation has been defined as an individual's development and maintenance of his or her own ethnic identity. Sociocultural acculturation deals with individuals who seek interethnic contacts with a dominant society (Berry, 2003).

### **Other theories for cross-cultural adaptation**

Lewthwaite (1996) describes a cross-cultural adaptation as a process in which an individual acquires the sociocultural skills which are essential to participate in the new culture. This is a cultural learning theory and this view emphasizes the need to learn a new society's characteristics instead of the need to adjust to a new culture (Bochner, 1981). International students' adjustment problems are regarded as depending on their lack of cultural skills and knowledge for the new host society rather than as symptoms of an underlying pathology. In this model, learning and acquiring intercultural communication skills and adapting to appropriate patterns of behavior are emphasized.

Another interesting theory is equilibrium theory which views cross-cultural adaptation as a dynamic and cyclical process of tension reduction that continues until equilibrium or homeostasis is reached (Anderson, 1994). Anderson notes that the process of adaptation to a new culture is similar to that of adaptation to such life changes as bereavement, starting school, or retirement.

### **Summary of Part One**

In the Part One, historical perspectives on international students' sojourning were introduced. The concept of acculturation and major models and theories of

acculturation were reviewed.

In the early studies of cross-cultural adaptation models, the problems of the sojourner tend to be conceptualized within unidimensional models such as the cultural shock model, the U-curve model, and the W-curve model. In these models, groups and individuals move over time toward the culture of the host society and lose their own ethnic identity. These models refer to an individual level change.

The bidimensional models describe how acculturation occurs at an individual level as well as at the group level. Recent cross-cultural studies emphasize both individual and group level changes in the cross-cultural process. Numerous studies and theories have been developed in the last three decades using bidimensional models of acculturation.

In cultural learning theory, acculturation is viewed as a process of learning new skills and knowledge necessary in the host society. In the equilibrium theory, acculturation is viewed as a process of tension reduction in order to achieve homeostasis.

## **Part Two: Empirical Research on International Students**

### **Factors Influencing Cross-cultural Adaptation**

Numerous studies have been carried out to identify variables that influence the process of cross-cultural adjustment and adaptation. In this section, studies on factors that influence the process of cross-cultural adaptation are reviewed. The variables listed in this section are cultural similarity, language and communication skills, personality, and contacts.

#### **Cultural Similarity**

Pedersen (1991) has reported that international students from non-Western and less industrialized countries tend to isolate themselves more from American peers than those from Western industrialized countries. Pedersen reported that foreign students from Western, industrialized countries tend to socialize more with Americans because of cultural similarities and noted that the greater the cultural difference, the more complicated the international student's adjustment is likely to be. Sodowsky and Plake (1992) also found that Europeans were better acculturated to life in the United States than were their Asian, African, or South American counterparts. They concluded that because Europeans shared more of the same traits, beliefs, and values with America

society, they acculturated better than individuals from non-European countries. The similarities facilitated their adjustment to life in the United States.

Berry (1980) found that among nine groups of Amerindians in northern Canada, those communities with the highest stress levels were those with the least cultural similarity to the dominant group, who had limited contact with the dominant group, and who preferred the rejection mode of adaptation. The communities with the least amount of stress had more initial cultural similarity to the dominant group, experienced more contact with the dominant group, and preferred the integration mode of adaptation.

Cultural adjustment is facilitated by dissociation from one's own ethnic community (Masuda, Matsumoto, & Meredith, 1970) and from association with members of the host culture (Smith, 1976). Bae (1971) reported on the function of value orientation in social adjustment among Korean students in America. He found that Korean students who had low traditional Korean values indicated high endorsement for involvement with Americans, whereas those with high traditional Korean values considered social contact with Americans to be of low priority. The greater the gap between the home and host country's signs, cues, beliefs, and values, the greater the adjustment needed on the part of international students and more time needed to make



that adjustment.

Cross (1995) reported that East Asian students whose self-views and coping strategies were consistent with the new culture's norms and ideals (i.e., independence and direct coping) experienced lower levels of perceived stress than did other East Asian students. Students whose self-views were discrepant with cultural values (i.e., interdependent) expressed high levels of perceived stress.

### **Language and Communication Skills**

Church (1982) reported that foreign students with better language competence experience less discomfort than students with poor language competence. He reported that students with prior travel experiences adjust more easily than those who are away from home for the first time. Kim (1988) also reported that facility with the host language is the most important factor in successful international adaptations. Nishida (1985) found a high correlation between interactional effectiveness and host language competence among Japanese students in the United States.

Zimmermann (1995) reported when foreign students focus on communicating with university faculty, staff, and peers, they are helped in adjusting to a new culture.

Cross (1995) reported that for successful adjustment, relationships with host nationals

were important to foreign students. It is important for foreign students to learn how to increase communication skills by developing relationships with host nationals.

### **Personality**

Kim (1988) indicated that personality factors such as openness and resilience are related to adaptation. Individuals who express openness, easily accept new information and new ways of doing things. The openness factor includes such traits as open-mindedness, extrovertedness, tolerance for ambiguity, positive orientation, and empathy. Resilience refers to the ability to achieve success in the face of new and challenging situations. The resilience factor includes such traits as internal locus of control, persistence, and resourcefulness.

### **Contacts**

Ward and Kennedy (1992) and Ward and Searle (1991) found positive correlations between the amount of contact with the host society and adaptation of international students. They noted that the more contact foreign students had with host nationals, the better they adapted to the host culture. In both studies adaptation was measured by the level of social difficulty encountered by foreign students.

### **Difficulties Faced by International Students**

Researchers have identified several major issues faced by international students.

Church (1982) reviewed 30 years of research focused on international students studying in America. He found a consistent group of problems encountered by international students, including language difficulties, financial problems, adjustment to the educational system, homesickness, and adjustment to social customs and norms. In this section, three difficulties, which international students face in their cross-cultural contact with a new host society, are reviewed. These three difficulties are emotional distress, academic problems, and loss of social status.

#### **Emotional Distress**

When students leave their home country to study abroad they may lose contact with accustomed social support. Developing friendships and building new social supports in an unfamiliar culture may be difficult. Exposure to an unfamiliar environment can create anxiety, confusion and depression. Wehrly (1988) reported that international students experience homesickness, loneliness, and depression.

Lewthwaite (1996) described a crisis of personal identity because immersion in a foreign culture can remove individuals from a familiar environment. Many international

students face culture shock once they enter the new environment and engage with the host culture. Culture shock can be a stressful condition for those who encounter great differences in a host society. The international student may face great differences in climate, food, social values, and communications (Dillard & Chisolm, 1983).

When individuals' adaptive resources are not sufficient to support adjustment to a new cultural environment, acculturative stress occurs (Dressler & Bernal, 1982). This stress is elicited by encountering new life events and seems to cue the acculturating individual to possible dangers and/or opportunities. Although a certain amount of stress may be necessary to alert the individual to respond to new situations, too much stress can threaten healthy adaptation. Berry et al. (1987) suggested that acculturative stress could lead to a "reduction in health status (including psychological, somatic, and social aspects) of individuals who are undergoing acculturation, and for which there is evidence that these health phenomena are related systematically to acculturation phenomena" (p. 491).

Alexander, Klein, Workneh, and Miller (1981) reported that many international students experience stress physically rather than psychologically. They also reported that international students are more likely to seek medical help as opposed to psychological

help.

In most cases, international students will face changes in their roles when they leave their country of origin and become sojourners. The learning of new roles complicates the already stressful conflicts of being a university student who needs living expenses, recreation, social support, and who is already experiencing the normal problems of developmental maturation (Pedersen, 1991).

### **Academic Problems**

Academic performance may suffer as stress and anxiety interfere with learning processes and diminish capacities to organize thoughts and actions (Hull, 1978). In an academic setting, international students may have difficulties in understanding lectures, taking notes, participating in class discussions, and understanding different teaching styles. Also they require more time than their American classmates to read and understand class materials such as textbooks and articles. For many foreign students weak English communication skills are a major stressor and can create significant problems and barriers (Lin & Yi, 1997). Linguistic, cultural, and social differences also may limit international students' involvement in campus activities, restrict interactions with other American students, and limit their participation in class discussions (Hull,

1978).

### **Loss of Social Status**

International students also may experience changes and/or loss in their social status (Alexander et al., 1981). Many international graduate and professional students established strong records of academic performance and obtained high status and prestige in their home countries. However, as international students, they may receive substantially less social recognition and attention from their colleagues, professors, and administrative staff in the United States. Their confidence in their academic abilities and their self-image may decline, and students may feel frustrated, vulnerable, or inferior (Brislin, Cushner, Cherrie, & Young, 1986).

### **International Students and Counseling**

Due to the increased need for providing appropriate counseling services to international students, there have been many efforts to identify the problems that these students face. There also has been increased concern regarding how to provide American counselors adequate training and information regarding how to counsel international students. In this section, studies on international students and counseling are reviewed.

## **Client Variables**

Thomas and Althen (1989) identify international students as individuals who are in transition. International students' values and basic assumptions are typically different from those of American students and their social support situation is distinctive. Their customary communication styles are different and they are unlikely to share the counselor's conception of the counselor's role. They face unique problems and issues of adjustment. Therefore, their attitudes toward counseling are probably different from those of American clients.

Leong and Sedlacek (1986) reported that international students prefer direct as opposed to indirect counseling methods. International students prefer directive counseling that supplies pragmatic information and emphasizes a shared counselor-client responsibility over nondirective counseling that may stress client verbalization and client responsibility. These preferences differ from one culture to another, however (Pedersen, 1991). Yuen and Tinsley (1981) evaluated counseling expectations among international students and found differences among nationality groups. American students had lower expectations of counselor empathy than Chinese or Iranian students. They also had lower expectations of counselor nurturance than other foreign students and lower expectations

of directiveness, expertise, and concreteness than African or Iranian students. May and Jepsen (1988) suggest that the Chinese students in their sample saw the counselor as “expert and friend” whereas American students saw the counselor as “listener and friend.” They also reported that Chinese students were more concerned about the counselor’s age and race than were the American students.

Atkinson and Gim (1989) reported that Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Americans did not show differences in their attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help. They reported that more acculturated Asian Americans held more positive attitudes than did less acculturated Asian Americans. For students whose value orientations to their own culture are low, there is a higher probability these students may actively participate in counseling sessions (Dillard & Chisolm, 1983).

Some research has focused on the gender of the international student as an important factor in counseling. Allen and Cole (1987) found that female international students were more likely to seek counseling than males and that they were more likely to somatize their symptoms. Tracey, Leong, and Glidden (1986) reported that female Chinese Americans and Filipino Americans were willing to identify more counseling related concerns immediately before their intake interview than were their male



counterparts. Gim, Atkinson, and Whiteley (1990) also reported that female Asian American college students expressed greater willingness to see a counselor than did male students. The Asian American students who scored in the low-medium range on the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation scale expressed greater willingness to see a counselor than did students who scored in the high-acculturated range.

Sue and Zane (1987) reported that international students underutilized mental health services due to lack of bilingual therapists and the inability of counselors to provide culturally relevant forms of treatment. Anderson and Myer (1985) reported that international students are more likely to drop out of counseling after their initial contact. Several researchers have tried to predict help-seeking behavior by international students, citing factors such as understanding racism, acceptance of nontraditional educational methods, and having long-term goals (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1989). Students from Western cultures (European and Latin-American) had a more positive attitude toward seeking professional help than students from non-Western cultures (Asian and African), and those students who had prior contact with mental health services held a more positive attitude toward seeking professional psychological help (Dadfar & Friedlander, 1982).

### **Therapist Variables**

The multicultural counseling competency model was developed by Sue et al. (1982). They developed a three dimensional comprehensive model of cross-cultural counseling competencies involving counselor's attitudes/beliefs, knowledge, and skills. Based on this model, Leong and Chou (1996) suggested that in counseling international students, the counselor needs to be aware of potential cultural differences that can be barriers in the process of counseling. They noted that the counselor needs to possess certain culture-specific knowledge about the client's cultural background and the cross-cultural counseling process. Along with knowledge about the client's background, counselors need to develop their own cultural self-knowledge. Counselors need to be aware of their own biases and blind spots. They also suggested that the counselor needs to develop skills in the application of this knowledge with international students.

### **Summary of Part Two**

Part two focuses on empirical studies of international students' cross-cultural experience. This part consists of three sections. In the first section, studies on factors influencing the process of cross-cultural adaptation, were reviewed. The variables, listed in this section, are cultural similarity, language and communication skills, personality,

and contacts. In the second section, studies focusing on major issues faced by international students were reviewed. Three major difficulties listed in the second section were: first, emotional distress such as culture shock and acculturative stress, second, academic problems including difficulties in understanding lectures or class materials, participating in class activities, and interacting with American peers, and finally, experience of losing their social status they formerly had in their country of origin. In the third section, studies on the issues related to psychological services for international students were reviewed relative to client and therapist variables.

### **Summary of Chapter I**

In Part One, the concept of acculturation and major models and theories of acculturation including unidimensional and bidimensional acculturation models were described. In Part Two, empirical studies of international students' cross-cultural experiences and counseling were reviewed. In this part, historical perspectives of international students' cross-cultural contact are introduced. Empirical studies on factors related to international students' cross-cultural process were reviewed. Studies on difficulties faced by international students were also reviewed.

The preceding review of literature indicates that most studies were carried out

using quantitative methodologies such as surveys, questionnaires, and hypothesis testing procedures. Qualitative methods can be applied to the study of individual meanings in social context and to the study of phenomena and the cross-cultural experiences of sojourners that previously have not been investigated.

The current study represents an attempt to understand the experience of sojourning in East Tennessee. East Asian sojourners described their experiences of living in this region. This study is qualitative and employs a phenomenological method for data collection and interpretation. In the next chapter, the theoretical considerations providing the basis for the procedure that is used, as well as the specific procedural aspects of this study, are presented.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **METHOD**

This chapter consists of two parts. In the first part, the philosophical assumptions guiding the use of phenomenological methods are examined. In the second part, the specific procedural aspects are outlined and their application in the present study is described.

#### **Part One: Philosophical Assumptions**

##### **Existential Phenomenology**

Existential phenomenological research procedures have emerged out of the traditions of existential philosophy and phenomenology. Søren Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher, was the first existentialist and Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher, is known as the father of the phenomenological movement. “Existentialism” implies a focus upon fundamental themes of human experience whereas “phenomenology” is concerned with the study of human consciousness as it is given in experience.

“Existential phenomenology can be viewed as that philosophical discipline which seeks to understand events of human existence in a way that is free of the presuppositions of our cultural heritage, especially philosophical dualism and technologism, as much as this

is possible” (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989, p. 6).

The purpose of existential phenomenological research is to investigate the experience of a participant’s being-in-the-world (Giorgi, 1985a). Existential phenomenological researchers are concerned with questions of meaning in human life and experience. The emphasis is on understanding a participant’s experience of living in real life situations. For an existential phenomenological psychologist, people are not viewed as just objects in nature. Rather, they are viewed as having no existence apart from the world (Valle et al., 1989). Giorgi (1985a) noted that the scientific method of investigation, which focuses on observation, labeling, hypothesizing, and testing, is designed to deal with the phenomena of nature, as in biology or chemistry, but not for dealing with experienced phenomena. Existential-phenomenology does not look at external behaviors, but attempts to understand lived experience in real, not experimental, situations.

Existential phenomenological research focuses on the description of participants’ experiences rather than on their behaviors. Research participants are asked to describe their world of experience and the words participants use in describing their experiences become the data of the study. Transcripts of interviews are read, and using hermeneutic

analysis, themes emerge when the transcripts are read and reread. When no new themes emerge, the analysis is completed (Polkinghorne, 1989). Before any interviews are conducted, the primary investigator participates in a bracketing interview. The goal of the bracketing interview is to evaluate the primary investigator's pre-existing ideas and biases regarding the research topic (Valle & Halling, 1989).

Colaizzi (1978) outlines how objectivity is encouraged when using existential-phenomenological research methods. He noted that it is important during the interview for the researcher not to lead the participants in the direction in which he or she expects the interview to go. The bracketing interview is used to help deal with researcher biases. Colaizzi also noted that during the data analysis stage, the researcher tries not to inject his or her own ideas into the analysis. Ideally, concepts and themes should emerge from the participant's own descriptions. A phenomenological research group takes part in the data analysis where discussion among the group members and the researcher encourages sensitivity to the text.

### **Hermeneutics**

The term, hermeneutics, derives from Greek mythology where Hermes was commissioned by the gods to present their messages to humanity. In fulfilling this

mission, Hermes was both a messenger and an interpreter whose aim was to fill the gap between the world of the gods and the world of morals. Hermeneutics can be defined as “the study of understanding, especially the task of understanding texts” (Palmer, 1969, p. 9).

One view of the relationship between language and the world is rooted in early nineteenth century hermeneutics which was largely defined as a philosophy concerned with "the interpretation of meaning" (Bleicher, 1980/1990, p. 1). As Bleicher notes, hermeneutics viewed its task as involving two concerns: (1) deriving the precise meaning of a word, phrase, or text and (2) locating implicit directives expressed on the basis of metaphor or other symbolic forms. Because of its focus on language, and its implications for human understanding, hermeneutics has become a philosophy of interpretation as well as a method for use by social science (Bleicher, 1980/1990; Gadamer, 1975; Gergen, 1992; Kvale, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1989; Pollio et al., 1997; Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989; Van Manen, 1990; Valle et al., 1989).

Hermeneutic philosophy has emphasized the importance of cultural context wherever language and social discourse construct a taken-for-granted reality (Gadamer, 1975; Gergen, 1992). From the perspectives of both hermeneutics and postmodernism,



interest in the discovery of an objective universal truth is displaced by a concern for contextualized truth which emerges from discourse in the form of narratives, conversations, and cultural traditions. Linked to pragmatic human activities within a culture, language constructs, rather than mirrors reality and thus provides a legitimate source for rigorous investigation into the meanings of activities (Kvale, 1992, 1996).

In his discussion of qualitative interviews, Kvale (1996) observed that language constructs knowledge even in these encounters, and he described five postmodern aspects related to the dialogic process. First of all, knowledge is embedded in conversation, and it is through such discourse that the meanings of lived experiences are negotiated and understood. A second feature of language-based knowledge concerns the specific symbolic form known as narrative. With postmodern skepticism toward universalities, attention must be given to working out "truth" locally in small narrative units that, when harmonized with collective stories, articulate and sustain the overall values held within a specific cultural context. Since language serves to construct reality, and each language produces a unique view of the world, it follows as a third point that language does not reflect some objective reality but serves as a shared structure of knowledge learned and articulated by the members of some community. A fourth aspect

of postmodern thought is that knowledge is context specific and cannot, without care, be translated from one context to another. Finally, knowledge produced in interviews is interrelational: it is the result of a dialogic encounter between two persons who are focused on a specific theme. Understanding from this encounter is derived neither from within the person nor from the external world, but emerges from the interdependent engagements connecting them.

Postmodern philosophy emphasizes a moral consideration of truth defined in terms of social context, leading to social discourse as a central arena of investigation. What is articulated as personal experience within a specific context deserves critical notice and cannot be dismissed simply as a deviation from some objective truth. From a hermeneutic (and postmodern) perspective, language is both adequate and essential to understanding the meaning of lived experience as it is manifested and sustained in and through human activity.

## **Part Two: Data Collection and Analysis**

### **Bracketing Interview**

Before phenomenological interviews with research participants are conducted, the researcher participates in a bracketing interview. The goal of the bracketing interview

is for the researcher to become aware of his or her pre-existing ideas and expectations, which is important regarding the objectivity of the study (Dukes, 1984).

In this study, the purpose of the bracketing interview was to identify pre-existing ideas the researcher has regarding the experience of sojourning in East Tennessee of East Asian students. To reduce the possibility of personal presuppositions contaminating dialogical research, the researcher should make such preconceptions explicit (Valle & King, 1978). Colaizzi (1978) emphasizes the need to “interrogate” the researcher’s presuppositions and to ask about the researcher’s choice of phenomena to study, what of his or her personal inclinations and dispositions might influence or even bias the investigation, and what hidden gains the researcher may have in conducting this investigation. He recommends this interrogation take the form of an interview, followed by an analysis of the interview and a summary of the findings into a statement of beliefs, hypotheses, and attitudes about the phenomena under study.

In the bracketing interview, the researcher was asked the same question the participants were asked. The bracketing interview was conducted by a fellow phenomenological investigator. The initial question to which the researcher responded was: “Please tell me about your experience of living in East Tennessee.” The audiotaped

bracketing interview was transcribed and submitted to an interpretative group for analysis.

### **Participants**

Polkinghorne (1989) noted that the criteria necessary for selection of participants are that the participants have had the experience under investigation and that they are able to articulate it. Participants selected for this study have met two basic criteria defined by Collaizzi (1978): (a) personal experience of the topic being studied and (b) a willingness to talk about the topic.

Sixteen participants were interviewed in this study. Participants were from the East Asian countries of China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Thirteen of the participants were graduate school students and one participant was an undergraduate student. Two participants were postdoctoral trainees who were participating in research projects at the University of Tennessee. The participants' length of sojourn in the U. S. ranged from one year to eight years and the length of their sojourn in East Tennessee ranged from two months to six years. The demographic data of the participants is presented in Appendix A. The researcher made personal contacts with her acquaintances and an international student association at the University of Tennessee in order to find potential participants.

Potential participants were contacted by phone or e-mail to discuss the possibility of being a research participant. In this initial contact, the purpose of the study was explained and informed consent was obtained. Sixteen individuals showed an interest in participating and specific arrangements were then made for interviews.

### **Informed Consent and Interview**

Prior to the beginning of the phenomenological interviews, each research participant was asked to read and sign the Informed Consent Form which describes the purpose, method, and issues of confidentiality related to the study (Appendix B). A copy of the Informed Consent Form was given to each participant and any questions regarding the study were answered. All participants were informed of their right to discontinue the interview at any time without penalty. They were also informed that their identities would be concealed throughout all aspects of the study. Questions were asked of each participant regarding their age, vocation, major, degree that they were seeking, marital status, and the length of time lived in the United States and in East Tennessee. Individual interviews were scheduled at the convenience of participants and conducted at locations suggested by the participants. Some of the places interviews took place were in the study areas of the University of Tennessee Library. All the interviews took between 30 and 60

minutes.

Interviews were unstructured and questions were asked in an open-ended fashion so as to encourage elaboration of the experience of living in East Tennessee. All interviews were begun with the following request: “Please tell me about your experience of living in East Tennessee.” Other questions were asked for clarification of thoughts and feelings related to the participants’ experiences. Interviews were audio-taped and were transcribed by the researcher. During the transcription process all identifying information was omitted and replaced with pseudonyms. It should be emphasized that the transcripts were verbatim. In most all of the transcripts there are problems with English grammar expression. Every attempt was made to present the research participants’ speech just as it was spoken.

### **Data Analysis**

Giorgi (1985b) outlines four procedural steps in analyzing transcripts of existential-phenomenological interviews. First, the researcher reads the entire transcript in order to get a general sense of the complete text. Second, the researcher goes back and reads the text more carefully with the goal of picking out “meaning units” or key concepts which focus on the phenomenon under investigation. Third, once the meaning

units are delineated, the researcher goes through the meaning units and expresses the insights contained in them more directly and succinctly. Fourth, the researcher synthesizes all of the transformed meaning units into consistent statements about the participant's experience, which he or she refers to as "the structure of the experience" (p. 10).

Colaizzi (1978) adds a few more steps to Giorgi's (1985b) method of analyzing transcripts of existential phenomenological interviews. Colaizzi notes that after the meaning units are synthesized or formulated into more essential statements, they are grouped together into clusters or themes. These themes must refer back to the original protocols in order to be validated. They cannot contain an idea which was not found in the descriptions of the participants. Next, the researcher takes the themes and combines them into a "fundamental structure" of the experience (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 59).

Kvale (1983) describes the hermeneutical method in terms of understanding the protocol that comes from a qualitative research interview:

The interpretation of meaning is characterized by a hermeneutical circle. The understanding of a text takes place through a process, where the meaning of the separate parts is determined by the global meaning of text, as it is anticipated. The closer determination of the meaning of the separate parts may come to change the originally anticipated meaning of the totality, and this again influences the meaning of the separate parts, etc. In principle, such a

hermeneutical explication of the text is an infinite process, while it ends in practice when one has reached a sensible meaning, a valid unitary meaning, free of contradictions (p. 185).

Once typed, the transcripts were analyzed by an interpretive research group. This group met six times and the meetings ranged from four hours to five hours in length.

Three of the research members had conducted qualitative research using phenomenological methodology more than once and one of the group members had at least one experience of participating in an interpretative research group. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants' interview, a written pledge of confidentiality was obtained from the research team members (Appendix C). The primary researcher provided each group member with a copy of the transcript. The transcript was read aloud by one group member reading the part of the interviewer and another group member reading the part of the participant. Usually, reading was stopped at the end of each page in order to discuss statements of the transcript that were significant within the text. During this discussion, the primary researcher took notes on comments expressed by group members.

A copy of one of the transcripts is provided in Appendix D. All names and identifying information were deleted from the transcripts to protect the identity of the



participants. Significant meaning units were identified, analyzed, and then formulated into meaning statements. After initial analysis of all protocols, meaning statements were organized into subthemes and then integrated into major themes that describe the structure of meaning for participants in the experience of sojourning in East Tennessee. The thematic analysis was presented to members of the research group and the figure of the thematic structure was developed to portray each theme and its relationships with other themes.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiential meaning of sojourning in East Tennessee by individuals from East Asia. Sixteen individuals, who came from China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan for their study or research in the United States, were interviewed and asked to describe their experience of living in East Tennessee. Each interview was audio taped and then transcripts were generated by the primary researcher. Transcripts were analyzed by an interpretive research team using the phenomenological method. The interpreted meaning of the transcripts is presented in this chapter. The first part of the chapter contains the results of the bracketing interview and the second part of the chapter contains descriptions of the participants and the interviews. The third part of the chapter contains a presentation of themes and the overall thematic structure of the experience.

In this chapter, quotations from the transcripts are used to illustrate the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the transcripts. In the presentation of themes, an overview of themes is described followed by more in-depth descriptions of the themes.

All quotes are direct from the verbatim transcripts, single-spaced, and indented within the text. Quotations from different participants being referenced are separated by a space. When only a portion of a sentence was used, this portion is introduced or closed with ellipsis points. All identifying information of participants such as names and places were removed or changed to insure confidentiality. The participants' country of origin and descriptions of Knoxville and Tennessee remained in the quotations. In the next section, the ground and themes that emerged from the bracketing interview are presented.

### **Bracketing Interview**

The bracketing interview consists of a description of the primary investigator's own experience of living in East Tennessee as an East Asian graduate student. The primary investigator came from Korea to study in the United States. She is a doctoral student majoring in Counseling Psychology at the University of Tennessee. At the time of interview, the primary investigator's length of sojourn in East Tennessee was five years. Through the interpretive analysis, using the phenomenological method, a ground and five themes emerged. The theme of Changes Over Time was the ground, and the five themes contextualized within Changes Over Time were as follows: (a) Differences, (b) Difficulties, (c) Coping, (d) Relationships, and (e) Findings in Me. All themes were

interrelated with one another.

### **Ground: Changes Over Time**

The ground of Changes Over Time represented the context of time and its continuous flow. The primary investigator perceived changes within herself as a result of contact with new people, a new culture, and a different environment. In this context, she found differences between her home and the host culture. She encountered difficulties and developed strategies to cope with these difficulties over time. She also gained an understanding of the host culture, including people's thoughts, behaviors, and culture, in addition to an increased understanding of her own culture. The primary investigator's experience of living in East Tennessee was mainly characterized by changes occurring over time.

The primary investigator was aware of the changes of her comfort level. She described her feelings of being more comfortable, confident, and powerful as her sojourn extended over time.

I feel more comfortable and more familiar with everything, less gaps between mine and American culture...I had to do almost everything by myself, like starting something from the scratch, because there was nothing. I feel more confident now, and I can survive any place that I will go. I feel like I have more power.

I don't feel that much foreign here in America. I feel more comfortable and more familiar with everything, less gaps between mine and American culture... I feel more comfortable and confident about my English now.

The primary investigator described how her perspective had changed from seeing many differences between her home and the host culture, to finding more things in common between two cultures.

First, there was a big wall between Korean and American culture, when I first came here. They were very different. Now, I don't feel the same way I used to feel about those differences. I know there are many common things like people feel similar about things happening in their life. Basically, there are things that are universal and common between different cultures. Skin color doesn't stand out as much as it used to.

### **Theme One: Differences**

The first theme, Differences, encompassed the primary investigator's perceptions of differences between two cultures. The primary investigator noted several differences she found during her sojourn. She described visible differences and also invisible differences such as how people treat each other among different races.

I was very aware of all those differences between things in Korea and things in America. For example, pumping the gas, using ATM, different looking fruits and vegetables at the grocery stores, different looking people, different languages, and lots of other things...

First of all, there are visible differences. I could see the differences. I see them

on campus or other places. For example, students are jogging or playing sports on campus with half naked, or I see different looking people, a lot of Caucasian Americans with tall figure, green or blue eyes, blonde or brunet ... In Korea, most people show similar feature, black hair and brown eyes. Even buildings look different, different world, and different food ...

There are also invisible differences, such as how people treat each other among different races: White, Black, and foreign people.

### **Theme Two: Difficulties**

The second theme, Difficulties, reflected the primary investigator's awareness of difficulties that she experienced when she entered into a new culture and an unfamiliar environment by leaving her familiar home culture and environment. She described difficulties resulting from her language skills, emotional distress, and an experience of getting sick.

The primary investigator indicated difficulties that she faced due to her English skills. She was aware of her level of English compared with native speakers and she described the communication problems with people due to her English skills.

Second thing was I came here as a Ph. D student. I supposed to compete with American students. I came here as a foreign student and I supposed to speak English very fluently especially in XX program because of all those practicum courses we need to take. I couldn't speak as well as people here... I faced problems such as not catching well about jokes or sometimes communication problems because people talk so fast or their accents are different from Standard English.

Another aspect of the theme of Difficulties described by the primary investigator was emotional distress such as sadness, anxiety, and feeling exhausted from school and work.

I had a lot of mixed feelings about changes and things that I was going through.... I felt sad, when I had to leave my family and home in Korea. My mom was crying at the airport, and that made me so sad. Also I felt so lonely at the beginning. I remember crying almost every night for about a week. I missed home, family members, and my friends.

Being really anxious about not passing the class or not getting good grades, my fear at the beginning was being failed, not passing classes. For example, when professors give students mid or final exams, they will say “Okay, you guys have one hour to finish this.” Then I will have to finish them within certain time limit regardless of my language problems. Nobody cares about whether it’s going to take more time to read and write in English for foreigners. You just have to do it like native people here.

I was exhausted at one point from school and work. At that time, I had to work certain amount of hours for my assistantship, and I was taking comprehensive exam, and was applying for my internship, and having family concerns and issues. Just a lot going on at the same time, and I was so exhausted, and I burn myself out.

The primary investigator described an experience of getting sick.

I was really sick in 2000 summer. I have never been really sick in my life. I was having weird allergy symptoms, and I thought I was going to die. I had hives all over my body. It was awful. My face was swollen up, and I got red and itchy spots all over my body. I had these allergy symptoms almost more than a month. I had several blood tests and they gave me a Cortizol shot when it was really bad.

### **Theme Three: Coping**

The third theme, Coping, conveyed the primary investigator's descriptions of how she coped with the difficulties she faced. The coping skills include accepting and working on her language problems, learning how to be assertive, and focusing on her own needs and wants.

I had to embrace language problems and to work hard to overcome those problems.

Now I see it as more like being assertive instead of insulting or against authority figure. I am still learning about how to be assertive.

I try to find myself more, and listen to what I need and what I want instead of trying to please others.

### **Theme Four: Relationships**

The fourth theme, Relationships, reflected the perceptions of the primary investigator's relationships with other people, including family members.

My parents hope and expect that I will do well and have my Ph. D. and come back to Korea. In our culture, family relationships are close and parents expect their children to do well and children try to meet their parents' expectation, and try not to disappoint them. I didn't want them to disappoint at me and tried not to fail.

I lost five or six years of being with my family back in Korea although I met new friends here. When my mother-in-law had a stroke and my husband was



going through a lot of things at that time, I felt so guilty about not doing my responsibility. I wasn't there for them... I told my parents-in-law later that I was so, so sorry that I couldn't help any.

Some Korean people here helped me to find an apartment and helped me to settle down...met a lot of new people and became friends with them.

### **Theme Five: Findings in Me**

The fifth theme, Findings in Me, conveyed the primary investigator's feelings and changes in her behaviors and perception. These changes also include her adjustment process and value changes.

The primary investigator described her excitement about entering a new environment, meeting new people, and discovering new things.

I had a lot of excitement, too. I was living in an apartment by myself, cooked my own food, met a lot of new people and became friends with them, and I was at a new school. Just a lot of new things. It was quite adventurous and I was excited about that.

It's like when you go to a someplace new or like when you learn new things, such as get a new bicycle and learn how to ride it. It's like being in a new world, and you start to learn new things and new people. There's excitement about ... the process of learning new things one by one.

The primary investigator described her changes in eating pattern and fashion sense.

Now I don't eat Kimchee everyday and I don't miss it so much. I don't cook rice everyday, either. I guess food pattern has been changing...

My fashion sense has been changing. When my friends pointed at what I was wearing, saying my clothes looked ugly and saying they made me look like an old lady, I realized that the fashion in Korea is different from here. I guess I got Americanized because I didn't know it was out of fashion in Korea.

The primary investigator described changes in her perception. She described finding more commonalities between her home and host culture and realizing things that are important for her.

First, there was big wall between Korean and American culture, when I first came here. They were very different. Now, I don't feel the same way I used to feel about those differences. I know there are many common things like people feel similar about things happening in their life....I realized that having my family close is also important part of my life... I became more and more aware of things that make me happy and make life more full.

In summary, a ground and five themes emerged from the bracketing interview.

Themes that emerged from the transcript were: (a) Differences, (b) Difficulties, (c) Coping, (d) Relationships, (e) Findings in Me. These five themes were contextualized within the theme of Changes Over Time. The primary investigator's experience of sojourning in East Tennessee was characterized by changes occurring in a time frame.

Brief descriptions of the sixteen research participants are presented in the next

section. Selected demographic data are also presented.

### **Description of the Participants**

Sixteen individuals from East Asia who had the experience of living in East Tennessee participated in this study. At the time of the interviews, fifteen participants were living in East Tennessee and one participant was living in another state after two years of sojourning in East Tennessee. The sixteen individuals were made up of four students each from China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Participants ranged in age from 24 to 53 years old. The length of their sojourn in the United States ranged from one year to eight years, and the length of living in East Tennessee ranged from two months to six years. At the time of the interview, twelve participants were enrolled as doctoral students and there was one undergraduate student and one master's level graduate student. Two participants were working as postdoctoral researchers. In the following descriptions, each participant has been assigned a pseudonym in order to further protect their confidentiality. Each pseudonym is a common first or last name in the participant's home country.

The first participant, Fu, was a single male graduate student from Taiwan and he was pursuing his master's degree at the time of the interview. Fu had been in East Tennessee for two years, which was the same as the length of his sojourn in the United

States. He described his awareness of differences he found between Taiwan and East Tennessee. He also described difficulties he faced during his sojourn which including emotional disturbances and issues related to financial and social relationships. Fu was very aware of his status of being an international student in the United States.

The second participant, Sumi, was a single female doctoral student from Korea and her length of stay in East Tennessee was four years which was the same as the length of her sojourn in the United States. In the interview, Sumi described some difficulties she faced at the beginning stage of her sojourn in America such as language skills and unfamiliarity with the culture. She also talked about how her perceptions of both Korean and American cultures have developed. Sumi described her sojourn experience as a process of finding herself.

The third participant, Chulsu, was a married male doctoral student from Korea. His length of stay in East Tennessee was six years, and his total length of sojourn in the United States was eight years. Chulsu finished his master's program in Michigan and moved to Tennessee for his doctoral program. In the interview, he described his impressions of Americans and American culture, and what he found about differences between Korea and America including differences in academic settings, life styles,

manners, and customs. He also described some of the difficulties he faced during his sojourning as well as difficulties faced by all international students.

The fourth participant, Liao, was a single female doctoral student from China. Her length of stay in East Tennessee was one year and the total length of her sojourn in the United States was three years. She described her feelings of living in East Tennessee as including loneliness and missing her family members and missing good Chinese food. She talked about cultural differences she found between China and America, such as different preferences for food, fashion, TV programs, and beauty supplies. She expressed a concern about whether she will go back to her home country or stay in America. She pointed out some concerns she may face in the future, depending on her choice of staying in America or returning to China.

The fifth participant, Akira, was a married male postdoctoral trainee from Japan and his length of stay in East Tennessee was two months and his length of sojourn in the United States was one year at the time of the interview. He described some difficulties he faced and talked about differences between Japan and America including different road systems, health insurance, and the environment. He talked about things that he found interesting in America. He also described some changes that have taken place in him

since he came to America.

The sixth participant, Lin, was a married female doctoral student from Taiwan. She had been in East Tennessee for five years and the total length of her sojourn in the United States was also five years. In the interview, she described some awareness of cultural differences and language barriers. She was aware of her physical appearance as an Asian being distinctive from a majority people in East Tennessee. She noticed differences among people in East Tennessee, and found some differences in interpersonal relationships compared with her home country. She also described difficulties she faced, especially at the beginning of her stay. She talked about her awareness of cultural differences between America and Taiwan. She indicated that some international students may face problems due to having a small circle of friends from their country of origin.

The seventh participant, Chiu, was a single male Taiwanese student who was pursuing his Ph.D. The total length of his sojourn in East Tennessee was two years which was the same as the total length of his stay in America. In the interview, he described his relationships with other Taiwanese and American students. He described his perception of the differences between people, their life styles, and environments in Taiwan and East Tennessee. He expressed some difficulties he faced including a language barrier and

relationship issues. He talked about his future plans and goals in order to finish his Ph.D. degree. He described the experience of being sick during his sojourn and how medical systems are different between Taiwan and the United States.

The eighth participant, Hwang, was a single male student from Taiwan. He was pursuing his doctoral degree. The total length of his sojourn in East Tennessee was three years which was the same as the total length of his stay in America. In the interview, he described his feelings when he first came to America and his preparation for studying abroad. He talked about the struggles he faced over the past years of his sojourn in the United States. He described how his relationship with his family has changed over the years of his sojourn and he also described his concerns with other relationships.

The ninth participant, Mei, was a single female Chinese student who was pursuing her doctoral degree. The length of her sojourn in East Tennessee was about one year which was the same length of her stay in the United States. She described her experience of studying abroad as a good learning experience, though she faced some difficulties in the financial and language areas. She talked about some differences between China and America in the school setting and in general life. She talked about her feelings of staying in Knoxville. She also described how people in China think of living

in America. She talked about her coping strategies related to the rest of her sojourn in America.

The tenth participant, Minsu, was a married male student from Korea, pursuing his doctoral degree. His length of sojourn in East Tennessee was one year and the total length of his stay in the United States was three years. After he obtained a master's degree in Kansas, he moved to Tennessee to begin his doctoral study. He described his feelings and difficulties when he first arrived in the United States and how he coped with some of his difficulties. He also talked about some cultural differences and similarities he found.

The eleventh participant, Chao, was a married male student from China and his length of sojourn in East Tennessee was two years and the total length of stay in the United States was four years. After two years of graduate study in a master's program in East Tennessee, he moved to another state to pursue his doctoral degree. He described his excitement of learning new things when he first arrived in the United States and difficulties with English at the beginning of his sojourn. He also described some difficulties in making decisions for his future. He talked about the assumptions he had before he came to America and what he learned about the United States through his



sojourning. He also talked about how he coped with pressure from work and emphasized the importance of having good, healthy relationships with Americans by being confident and assertive.

The twelfth participant, Hiroshi, was a married male postdoctoral trainee from Japan. He has lived in East Tennessee about one year which is the same as his total length of his sojourn in the United States at the time of the interview. He described some difficulties he faced when he first came here, and he also talked about his feelings about living and working in America. He described his perceptions of differences he observed between American culture and Japanese culture. He talked about his relationship with other international students and people's attitude toward him.

The thirteenth participant, Younghee, was a married female doctoral student from Korea. She has lived in East Tennessee for five years and the length of her sojourn in America was eight years at the time of the interview. She described some difficulties she faced due to living in the United States which included concerns for her children's education. She talked about her previous cross-cultural experience before she came to America and also about her experience of living in several different states in America. She described some changes in herself over the past years of her sojourn and she talked

about her perspective of both Korean and American cultures.

The fourteenth participant, Satomi, was a widowed female, and she was pursuing her doctoral degree. She was from Japan, and her length of sojourn in East Tennessee was five years which was the same as her total length of her stay in America. She described her impressions of people and the environment of East Tennessee. She talked about common things and also differences that she found between American and Japanese culture. She described her school life and talked about her future career plans.

The fifteenth participant, Naoko, was a single female student from Japan. She was enrolled as an undergraduate student at the time of interview. Her length of stay in East Tennessee was three and a half years, which is the same length of her sojourn in the United States. She described some difficulties related to her language skills and personality. She also talked about what she has found and learned through her relationships with other people in America. She described some differences she found among people from different countries. She also described changes in her personality and perceptions of herself and some spiritual experiences.

The sixteenth participant, Kuo, was a single male student from China, pursuing his doctoral degree at the time of interview. He had been in East Tennessee for about one

year which was the same length of his sojourn in the United States. In the interview, he described his perceptions of differences between people in China and people in America. He also described his impression of the environment in East Tennessee. He talked about cultural differences between China and America including differences in philosophy, religion, and values. He also described his belief and values, and some conflicts he faced during his sojourn experience.

In summary, selected demographic data and brief descriptions of each interview with the sixteen participants are presented in order to provide some understanding of the participants' experiences of sojourning in East Tennessee. Within the context of describing their experiences of living in East Tennessee, participants described the differences between their home and the host cultures. They talked about difficulties that they faced, how they were coping with their difficulties, relationships with others including their perceptions of people in Tennessee, and what they learned from their experiences. Some participants also talked about changes in themselves as a result of their sojourn experiences. Some participants expressed concerns about their futures after receiving their degrees. In the next section, the ground and themes that emerged from the phenomenological interviews are presented.

## **Phenomenological Analysis**

The experience of living in East Tennessee was described by sixteen participants who came from four East Asian countries: China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Five themes and an experiential ground were revealed as the result of an interpretive analysis using a phenomenological method. The following interrelated themes emerged from the analysis:

(a) Differences, (b) Difficulties, (c) Coping, (d) Relationships, (e) Findings in Me.

Themes that emerged in this study were contextualized by the theme of Changes Over Time.

The ground of Changes Over Time represented the context of time and its continuous flow where the participants experienced changes in their perceptions, understanding different aspects of host culture, and becoming more aware of their own culture. These changes occurred throughout their contacts with people, new environments, and new cultures. In the context of Changes Over Time, they found differences between the home and the host culture and experienced difficulties with living in East Tennessee. They described their coping strategies to handle the challenges they had to face. Participants in this study also described their relationships with others, and findings in themselves including their personal feelings, changes in themselves, and

their future plans.

The first theme, Differences, encompassed the participants' perceptions of differences including differences between the host and the home culture. They also experienced differences between different states and regions. The second theme, Difficulties, reflected the participants' awareness of difficulties when they entered an unfamiliar host culture and new environment. The difficulties they described included weak language skills, lack of cultural background, emotional distress, food and financial problems, getting sick, uncertainty of the future, and limitations of being foreigners. The third theme, Coping, conveyed the participants' descriptions of how they coped with the difficulties they faced. The fourth theme, Relationships, reflected participants' relationships with family members, friends, classmates, and other people. It also conveyed the awareness of the dynamics of interpersonal patterns between themselves and others in the host country. The fifth theme, Findings in Me, conveyed the participants' perceptions related to their perception of sojourning, changes in themselves including feelings and behaviors, values, and future plan.

The thematic structure is presented in Figure 1. The figure consists of the five major themes of East Asian sojourners' experience of living in East Tennessee. These five themes were contextualized within the frame of the ground, Changes Over Time. These five themes are interrelated with one another, and no one theme stands out as more central than any other. Since the ground set the stage for understanding the other five themes, it is presented first. Following the presentation of the ground, the five main themes are presented.

### **Ground: Changes Over Time**

The ground of Changes Over Time provides the context against which the themes of the experience of sojourning in East Tennessee become figural. The participants' experience of sojourning was characterized by changes occurring in a time frame, which existed in each figural theme of the experience. Changes Over Time represented the context of time and its continuous flow where the participants' perceptions of themselves and of the host culture changed throughout their sojourn by encountering new people, new cultures, and new environments.

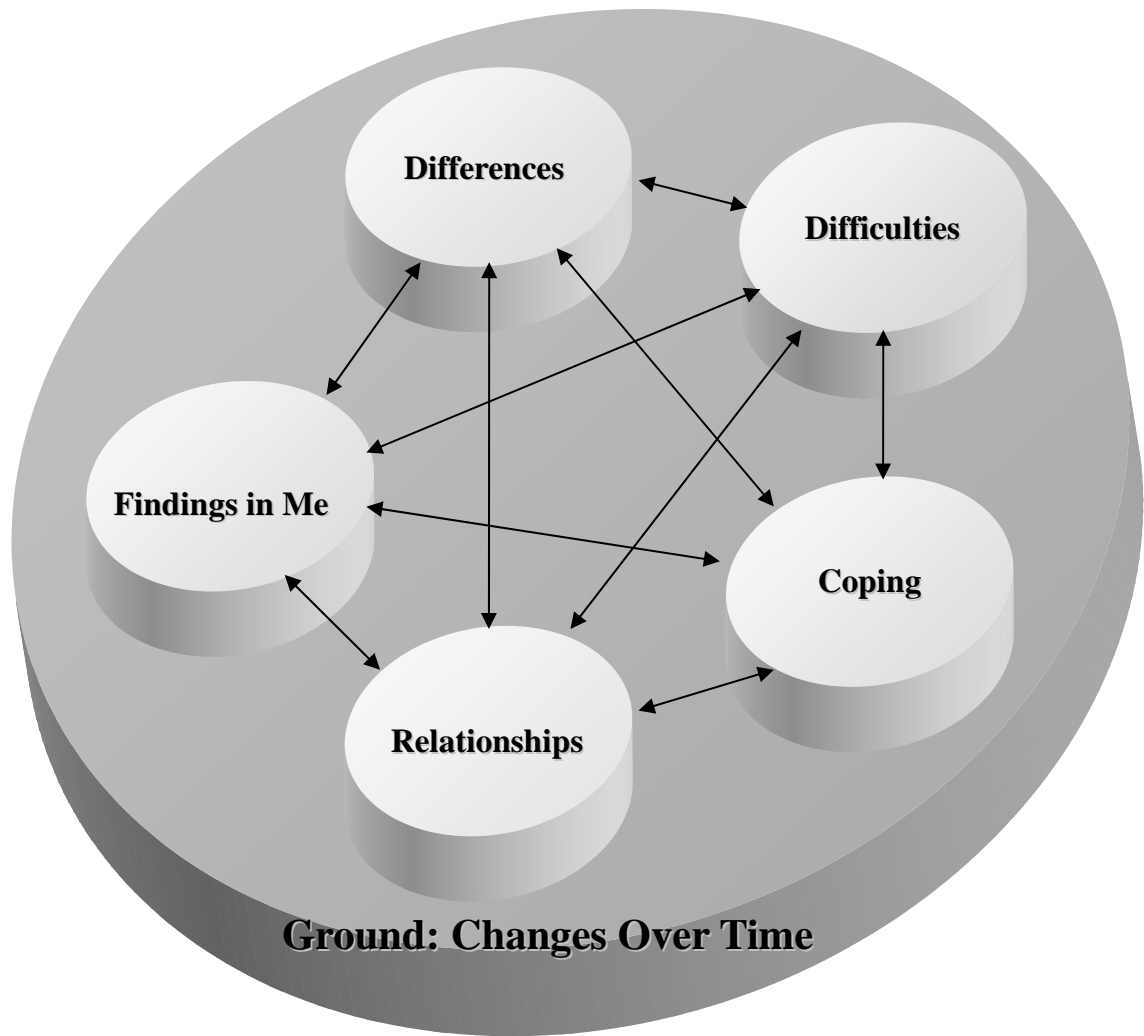


Figure 1. Thematic Structure of the Experience of Sojourning

In the context of Changes Over Time, participants described differences they found between the home and the host culture and relationships with others. They also described facing the difficulties of their sojourns in a foreign country and developing their own strategies to cope with these difficulties. Participants also sought their identity, values, and personal growth through their challenging experiences. The changes described by the participants were related to their personal feelings and their understandings of the home and the host cultures. The changes over time described by the participants were characterized by two subthemes: (a) Changes in Feelings, and (b) Changes in Views.

### **Changes in Feelings**

Participants described how they experienced changes over time in their feelings. These changes usually had to do with personal feelings and their use of English over time. Sumi described how she felt more and more comfortable about living in East Tennessee and about her English as time went by.

(Sumi) First year was the most difficult for me and I had to figure out things...Now I feel kind of more comfortable living here. Sometimes I feel more comfortable speaking English rather than in Korean. I began to feel very comfortable when I was here almost two years. Between one year and one and half year, I began to feel really comfortable. Two years, it's like, okay this is it. Now I feel like I don't want to go back.



Naoko also described how she used to think people may discriminate against her because of her English, and she talked about a change to feeling more comfortable and confident about her English.

(Naoko) The first year, I was really nervous and also I used to think too much about my language. I thought people discriminate me if I speak differently. I don't have any big experience of being discriminated. I used to think that people is going to discriminate me if I speak weird English. I used to think that. ... I am eager to challenge many things. I feel comfortable to speak to people from me... I have more energy to do something, and confidence. I don't think in negative way...

### **Changes in Views**

Participants described their changes in their views. They described how their views of America changed as the sojourn continued. Mei described some changes in her view of America. She realized America is not a perfect place.

(Mei) Before, I came here... America is so wonderful. After I came here, you still have a lot of problems. Actually America is not a perfect place. It also has some problems. Sometimes you will feel maybe that's not what I want...Before I came here America was like from TV or other movies. We just thought America was with more opportunity. I just thought America was very good place and wonderful place.

Chao also described changes in his view of America after two years of sojourning. He described how he felt calmer than the first two years and that he was able to see things

with neutral feelings.

(Chao) After one year, I got used to the environment and felt comfortable in my study, and I began to do some research. So things became smoother... When I first came to America because of new environment and new language, even common things became very excited things. So after two years when I came to Atlanta, then I came to have more neutral feeling about what actual America is. That's another big change. I think first two years of image was biased. I felt very excited, but after two years I calmed down and I could think more independently.

Satomi described changes in her view of life in America. She said that she found more things in common than differences.

(Satomi) The more we know each other, the more I find we have commonality as human being... Human life, social life, they cry, they laugh, they get angry for same reason, same phenomena. So I found that instead of finding differences, I found similarities. So then I became comfortable being here.

### **Theme One: Differences**

The first main theme, Differences, encompassed the participants' perceptions of differences between their home and the host country. Participants described things that they found different or interesting during their sojourns. These descriptions included visible differences such as different physical appearances, different behaviors, and different accents among Americans. They also were aware of less visible differences such as how Americans treat people of various races. The Differences theme will be

presented relative to the following six subthemes: Environment, People, School Setting, Social Norms and Behaviors, Values, and Life Style and Mass Media.

### **Environment**

Many participants were aware of the environment when they were asked to describe their experience of living in East Tennessee. They often started their descriptions of the environment in East Tennessee as not being crowded as their country of origin.

(Fu) Basically, here is not crowded as Taiwan. There are not many people here, and there are not many cars on the road usually.

(Chiu)...the feeling of this city is that there are not many people compared to my hometown. I think the environment of this city is very pretty. Taipei is a very big city, so when I moved here I feel like, for example, traffic is not bad as Taipei, where there are too many cars. Not many cars on the street...If you go outside, you can see a lot of trees and a lot of flowers... I like natural environment. If you live in a big city, when you go out, there are big buildings and a lot of cars. The air is not very clean, but here you feel more relaxed and feel very good.

(Mei) Here is like countryside, it's very quiet...I think Knoxville is a very small city. You have very open space and there is no high building. In China, I lived in a big city. There are too many buildings and too many people in the street. Here just like countryside, very quiet and very a few people. You know in the street no people just cars...I prefer Knoxville because it makes me feel more comfortable, makes me feel happier.

(Hiroshi) I like Knoxville. Compared to Japan, there are more green here and campus is beautiful than Japanese average college. It is not crowded...Not many

people here. Housing is very good, cheap and not narrow, more spacious. It's not usual in Japan. So housing environment is very good, much better than Japan...I feel comfortable to live here. So part of reason is housing.

## **People**

A second subtheme of the Differences theme is People. Participants often described how they perceived people in East Tennessee. They described people being kind and friendly, being independent, being in equal relationships, being optimistic and confident, respecting privacy, and keeping boundaries. Participants described people in East Tennessee as being nice and friendly.

(Chulsu) I think Tennessee is one of the very good places to stay...I lived in Michigan before I came here. People who live in Michigan are stricter than people who live in Tennessee. Whenever I go to the government office, for example, immigration office or Michigan state buildings, people there are really official. I don't see any emotions from them. But in Knoxville, most departments or government office people are pretty helpful for me. People here are more kind and generous, compare to North and South bound.

(Chiu) First a few months, I met a lot of people. I went to my department, and a lot of American students, staff, and faculty were very friendly. They introduced themselves and said hello to me. I think that's a big difference in Taiwan if you don't know no body will say hi, or hello. Here on the street, people will say "hi, how are you?" I think this is a good city.

(Mei) Since this is small town, people are nice to you. When you catch a bus, driver will say hello to you. In China or in New York nobody will care about you. I think that's very good. The first time I catch a bus here the driver said, "Hi, how are you doing?" I was like, "I don't know how to answer," because no

driver will ask this kind of question. Now if they will ask me “How are you?” I will answer. I think people being polite, but I like it. It makes me feel that that’s a life. People should be respectable, and it makes you feel better.

(Younghee) The people I met here are very, very friendly. They are always willing to help me if I have any problems. I guess there are many international populations here. So they get used to people who do not speak good English or who do not understand ... They were very friendly. Southern hospitality, that’s what I feel.

(Satomi) I met nice people here. First impression was very good because it’s rural part. People in rural part are very friendly. If I visited New York or a big city, I might have been lonely. Because this area, for instance there are many churches here, and religious people which means they are very sincerely... You noticed that even on the street, people greet each other even though they don’t know each other.

Some participants described people in America being more independent than people in their home country. Chulsu described his impression of young people in America.

(Chulsu) One day, I went to the Kroger for grocery shopping. There was a boy, only 10 years old, working there. I asked “Why you are working here?” He said he wants to make money for his living. Most American people can support them until they totally grow up. I mean I want to tell you about his independence. Just a teenager, but he wants to make money for himself. But in Korea, most people support their children until they get married. So I think that’s different culture. They are independent. As they get married, most American guys get independent from their parents and they make their own family. But in Korea, people still have pressure of taking care of their parents even if they have their own family. Especially, first son has more pressure about that... I think most American guys are more kind than Korean, in my personal experience.

Lin was aware of how interpersonal relationships are different in America. She also described how Americans appeared to be more appreciative of humor and more confident and optimistic.

(Lin) Interpersonal relationship is different. Here's not that hierarchical. Here is more equal... I feel that Americans appreciate humors a lot more than Taiwanese people do. That's what I noticed. People like to be funny here. They think it's a good thing, but in Taiwan, people might think that fun person is silly or something. So that's something different... One thing I noticed that Americans are very confident and they are really optimistic. That's something I really, not envy, but I really like me to be like that. It seems to be like that they are happier. They seem to know how to have fun in their life. They are very efficient, too, in their work.

Some participants described how people in America provide more space for others and respect others' privacy.

(Mei) When people are talking, style is different. Here, you people have more space... Physical space and personal space. China is very crowded... here if you want to have something for yourself, nobody will discuss about you. In China, they will talk about you this or that. Here nobody will care about your personal life like divorce. In China, people will say "Oh! You divorced?"... More open minded here, more respect.

(Younghee) On the other hand, here people don't touch about other people's life... People expect me to behave in some way because you're a mom or you are a person who is in a certain age group... Responsibilities and people expect people to behave in a certain way. Here, I feel more freedom. Whatever I do, nobody cares about it.

(Satomi) They will leave me alone which means ...This is American culture. I think they are not intrusive. I can do whatever I like and I can insist my time for my time...I can put my time as priority... Even in Japan, I can do whatever I want to do, but as a member of community sometimes I have to submit my time.

Satomi described how people in the business field keep their boundaries related to their work territory.

(Satomi) In business, they don't interrupt other part, out of their territory. As a team work, sometimes that situation causes some trouble. In my country compared to this country, team work is very important to make something to happen...They protect their part, just their own part. For instance, "that's not my business." That's very dry...A team work is very important here but the kind of team work is different... For example, Toyota, a car maker, to make a superior car, team work is very important. Even they notice other part other than their own part. If there is a problem, they can speak out that problem to support each other. Final product is very important. To make a final product successful, they have to speak out outside of their territory. But here they protect their own territory and they don't concern about out of their territory.

### **School Setting**

A third subtheme of the Differences theme is School Setting. Participants described differences they found in the school settings. They noted that there are differences between the school systems in America and Asia such as changing major, options for taking courses, teaching styles, and different interpersonal relationships between professors and students. Some participants noted that students are more

responsible for their study. Chulsu described how changing a major is easier in America.

He also talked about relationships between professors and students.

(Chulsu) ...actually in America changing a major is pretty easy. In Korea most students continue to work in the same research field, but in America they change their major based on their interest. This is one of the most different facts between Korean and American life. Second thing is a relationship between students and professors. In Korea, educational system is pretty different from America. Students just listen to professor's lecture. But in America, they discuss about topics. So in America, students feel more freedom and they easily develop their ideas because by growing up here they are used to that kind of education system...In Korea, most students respect professor. We never use slang to professors. In America, American students use their body language and sometimes they use slang. When I came to America for the first time, it was pretty shock to me. Because I never think about the expression like "What's up?" We learned formal language and use like "How are you?" But American young guys used "What's up?" to a professor. I think most professors are pretty generous to that behavior.

Lin also described relationships between professors and students.

(Lin) One thing that is different here is that you call by first name of anybody. That's weird for me because you can even call your professors by their first name... Here's not that hierarchical. Here is more equal. Right here I noticed that professors joke a lot with students and students make fun of professors even though professor might be 50 or 60 years old. But in Taiwan, young people are supposed to respect old people. They are not supposed to make a fun of their professors or their parents.

Mei described different teaching styles and differences in taking classes.



(Mei) You can choose your interesting classes, but in China we can't. Especially, for graduate class, professors' class style is totally different. Some professors give no examination. Their style is very good. Some other professors give a lot of assignments or more papers to write. That's different... In China, in undergraduate school we always have class together. For example, 30 people are always together taking same class. But here it's not. Even for undergraduate students, they can register different classes. Classmates are always different. In China, 30 or 40 people are together taking same classes until you graduate except you give up. That's a difference.

Minsu described differences in students' attitude and differences in class assignments.

(Minsu) Students are more independent, and there are a lot of homework. My undergraduate school, in that period, I didn't do a lot of work. When I came here every week, there was homework.

Younghee talked about some students in America being very interested and responsible for their study regardless of their age.

(Younghee) I see some people, they are really interested in study, do some research, really serious and responsible for their study... In Korea, people who is in 50's and 60's, it's difficult for them to go back to school, to graduate school to get another degree. Here not everybody, I see many elderly people come back to school to seek another chance...

### **Social Norms and Behaviors**

A fourth subtheme of the Differences theme is Social Norms and Behaviors.

Participants described the differences they found in the host society compared to their home societies. They noted differences relative to social norms, rules, laws, and

behaviors. Chulsu described differences in body language. He also talked about differences such as giving tips and paying sales taxes.

(Chulsu) Sometimes, I had cultural shock because of different body language. Actually, they used fingers when they called friends or somebody else. In Korea, that kind of gesture is pretty insulting somebody. When you insult somebody, you use a finger. What we usually do when we call someone, we just shout. Usually we just call the name like, "So and so, come here." Here, they use finger to call people, but that kind of gesture in Korea used to call pets and it's not for human... Actually most Korean guys don't use tips at the restaurant. Most restaurants in Korea, they include every fee to the price of the food. In America, we have to pay food, tips, and sales tax also.

Satomi described that certain behavior such as running is not a common behavior in America.

(Satomi) They don't run. The running is very... I didn't notice that first time I came here. Running is very... not jogging for exercise, as a social behavior, running is a very embarrassing thing. I don't know...

Minsu described different table manners and drinking behaviors in America.

(Minsu) Maybe, eating habit was really different. I have to watch my mouth. It was hard... They didn't drink too much. They didn't get drunk. They sip beers for two or three hours.

Some participants described health insurance and law systems as being very different from their country of origin.

(Akira) Japan, we don't get to choose health insurance. Automatically, we can get health insurance. It's very cheap, too. In America, it's too expensive. And the coverage depends on diseases. They have to choose seriously which one is the best for you. It was difficult...

(Chao) I think the law is more comprehensive and it is conducted strictly. So people have more rights protected by law. Besides the law, all the other policy and regulations make the society run smoothly and even competitions will be good competitions.

### **Values**

A fifth subtheme of the Differences theme is Values. Participants described how some things are valued more in the host society. For example, they described how self-confidence is valued in the host society and getting good results from a research project is very important to obtain respect and attention from others.

(Lin) Another thing about culture is American's confidence. They encourage people to be assertive and confident. But in Asia, people will think you are too proud and too arrogant... For example, for some international students, their field being biology or engineering, especially, probably not in engineering because Americans are minority, but biology or medicine, they noticed that if they don't have good results from their experiment, Americans are not going to pay attentions to that. It happens a lot when people just arrived their lab, but after for example one year or two years, they got a lot of good results and people start to think, "Oh, this is someone that is worthy for me to socialize with." Their attitude become different and became more respectful.

(Hiroshi) I watched news in the morning and women were interviewed for "What do you value for your boyfriends, what do you need a person to be your boyfriend?" They answered "self-confidence." I think self-confidence would be a

good thing, but I believe it doesn't come first in Japan. Maybe in Japan, being gentle or honest is more important. It seems self-confidence is very appreciated here... I think to be a man in the United States, you need to pretend I am self-confident. To look self-confident is important in the United States.

(Kuo) I think their cultural difference... In this country, people like to show something. For example, in my lab, they will get some result from experiments and they will like to show others doing some flash presentations. In China, my advisor would like to say, "Calm down. This is still far away from final results. You still should work hard." They will like us to be reserved and to be humble. Show is not so good in Chinese culture.

### **Life Style and Mass Media**

The last subtheme of Differences is Life Style and Mass Media. Participants described people's life style in the host country relative to leisure activities including night life, shopping, and outdoor activities. One of participants described differences in the content of the television program. Chulsu and Liao described having more night life activities when they were in their home country.

(Chulsu) In Korea, most people enjoy the life at night. When I came to America for the first time, I was really curious about how people will handle their night time. Some of them just spend their time with their family members at night. When I asked some Americans, they responded that they usually spend time with their family members. In Korea, we usually go out and spend time outside. There are a lot of meetings when someone works at the company.

(Liao) I remember one thing about feeling bored because you know in China, there are a lot of Malls that will open very late until mid-night, so you can shop after work. You can invite your friends to walk with you. But here malls close

very early like 9:30. After that there is no entertainment except pub. I don't like to drink pub. We have a lot of karaoke and tea shops. You can just go into and ask any kind of tea. You can sit there for two hours and drink tea and talk with your friends. There are a lot of places like that and they are not expensive.

Lin described Americans enjoy physical activities and appreciate humor more than Taiwanese do.

(Lin) On the other hand, appreciate humor, appreciate physical activity, appreciate outdoor nature, or they can do something very silly for fun. People think having hobby is good, but in Taiwan people think you should be a good student. You can just study. You should not do anything. No sports, and no hobbies, or you are not a good student. When you are working, you have to be loyal to your company. You have to give whole of yourself to a company...

Chiu described differences in working and living styles.

(Chiu) I think the working style is totally different. You know during the weekend, department building is empty. Most students maybe go to a bar or party, during weekend there are something else to do. Most of them do not stay in the lab. In Taiwan, my former university most students they will still go to their lab or department doing some research. You have more time to do something else, not only focus on research... American students, most of them have some financial problem. Because I think, living style is totally different. They go to the bar to drink beers and have a lot of party ... I think it's different living style.

Hiroshi described differences he found relative to mass media. He talked about being surprised by some TV shows he watched.

(Hiroshi) Some TV shows are also surprising to me. People are arguing in the morning. I don't like people arguing in the morning and the content of the argument is awful... The show was awful and sometimes friends are against each other, or parents and children, or formal wife and husband. So I thought it was awful and I changed channel to other program, but it was more awful. They were arguing about who is the father of the children. It was very awful. People were very angry and they are arguing with each other pretty hard, "He is the father." People in the audience enjoy much to see their arguing. DNA testing was used for the proof. The company that offered the genetic test was doing commercial. If you want to test DNA test, contact X company. I was very surprised. If the show was in the midnight, I might feel okay. The show was at 9 o'clock in the morning. I don't want to see "Who is the parent?" in the morning.

### **Theme Two: Difficulties**

The second theme, Difficulties, reflected the participants' awareness of difficulties that they experienced when they entered into a new culture and an unfamiliar environment. These difficulties include language and communication problems, food and financial problems, and emotional distress. Participants described their experiences of physical illness, uncertainty about their futures, and limitations of being foreigners in the United States. The subthemes of Difficulties are Language, Lack of Cultural Background, Emotional Distress, Food Problems, Financial Problems, Getting Sick, Uncertainty About the Future, and We are Foreigners Here.

## **Language**

Participants described Difficulties that they faced due to their weak English language communication skills. They talked about their English skills and other related issues such as difficulties in communication and academic skill areas. Fu stated that it was hard for him to make friends due to his English and his culture. He also talked about difficulties in a social setting.

(Fu) Sometimes it's not that easy to make a new friend. Some might because of your language and some might because of your culture...For example, there is a gathering at church for young adults. I attended several times...Although we play each other, when they are talking to each other or when they are making some jokes I don't really understand what they are talking about. I don't really understand why they are laughing at. I think common communication will be fine. But I still don't feel it's enough. That makes me feel worry about in the future career because mainly we depend on communication, or study even...I think I have to spend more time than my classmates who are American students. If they read three books, I only barely finish one, and when I write a paper...Sometimes if I have to do presentation, that too.

Some participants described the difficulties of understanding English when people were speaking too fast for them or when they were using a southern accent.

(Sumi) Even if I was very familiar with English, reading was okay, but still speaking and listening I had some trouble. When I was in class, what professors were usually saying, I could understand almost 100%, but what other colleagues or friends were saying, I couldn't understand. They spoke too fast.

(Naoko) For example, people say “Pick it up.” But they say “pikidup.” So it was hard to listen because they connect a word by a word like that...When I go to bank or when I go anywhere. People speak differently, depending on people... Somebody speak very clearly. Somebody does not. Like Tennessee accent, or southern accent. And somebody speak fast. So everybody’s English sounds different for me.

Participants described difficulties related to academic assignments, making presentation, writing, and reading.

(Chulsu) Even if I spend much more time in America, I still struggle with language problems...So that means, we have problems when you have presentations. So we need more time to practice, especially to develop my ideas and to organize my ideas. We have to have time for useful expression and useful terms. Presentation and school work also like preparing for reports and papers.

(Mei) Sometimes, I don’t feel like I am a graduate student. I just feel like a baby here. Everything you have to learn. You can speak English, but your English is not even as good as high school or middle school American students. So you have to write papers and read articles that American middle school students won’t read. That was hard for me.

Lin described how she was nervous talking to Americans at an early stage of her sojourn since she was conscious regarding of how people might think of her accent and grammar usage.

(Lin) Language, I think I have improved a lot through past years. But still like, for example, like when I first arrived here, I could understand only 30 percent when I was in class. I couldn’t understand my professor... I noticed that in the past I felt so nervous talking to Americans when I had to, like socializing. I was



always conscious about my poor English and my accent and my grammar errors.

Hiroshi described phone conversations being difficult for him when he had to ask basic services such as requesting cable or electricity services.

(Hiroshi) I came here first, it was kind of hard because I can't speak English well. So it was difficult to make a decision for my house, make a phone call, or many paper works. So all of them were difficult...The biggest problem was the language problem. The telephone conversation was very difficult. So when I asked internet service from Vol connection, someday internet connection was broken. I wanted to ask what happened. I called the service person, and I couldn't communicate with the service person. It was hard, and so I couldn't do anything. So telephone was the only way of communicating with that kind of service. It was very hard...Like asking public service like internet or KUB or Comcast was hard.

### **Lack of Cultural Background (Unfamiliarity)**

Participants described their lack of cultural background because they did not grow up in the United States. Their lack of information on cultural context caused difficulties in understanding some content during their interactions with Americans. Fu described how it was difficult for him to find resources that he needed to solve problems. He felt as if he was surrounded by walls, and did not know how to get out of the room.

(Fu) Culture I think ...Sometimes when someone mentions one person maybe everybody knows who she is what she did...But for me, I am not familiar with this. For me that's part of the culture... I may not familiar about what they do or what they mean...Sometimes you feel like you are living in a very small room

and there are walls every where. It's narrow. You know there is a door, or maybe there are doors, but you don't know how to find them to a bigger room. In my country, if you are not sure about something, compared to here, it will be easier to get a resource. Here, you don't know where the resource.

Sumi also described some difficulties she faced due to her lack of cultural knowledge.

(Sumi) I could not understand, perhaps, because of lack of cultural or background knowledge...It was like I didn't have that context. Whenever, in class discussion time, whenever they were talking about American system, I never experienced American system, like K through 12...I felt that just because I didn't grow up here... This is a good example. We drink tea, but we don't drink a tea with milk. I was invited one time at Sudanese people. This guy asked me if I want milk. I told him I want tea. So I was waiting only tea would be served. He asked me if I want milk. I asked him again and again and again. "What did you say? Say that again. Pardon? I don't understand." You know how couldn't I understand the sound of milk. But the thing is I couldn't match milk with tea, green tea or maybe black tea...we can't ignore the cultural factor because we has not grown up here, so that kind of context is important.

Mei described a problem she experienced related to using references when writing an academic paper. She described that in her country she was not aware of the issues of using references.

(Mei) I came here last semester and I got paper to write. I used some others' sentences and I put them on my paper, but I didn't put those references. Because we don't have so many references in China, so I came here and that was my paper. My advisor saw that and she was so angry with that. She said, "What did you do? This is a plagiarism. You can't do that. It's very bad." I revised this paper for five times. Finally she said, "Okay, you did a very good job and you passed it. You know although that was my mistake, after she said it was very bad,

I still feel very not very comfortable and not very good. But you have to learn how to write and how to study.

Minsu described that it was hard for him because he did not know anyone who could help him adjust to the American educational system.

(Minsu) I didn't know much about American universities... There was no example to follow for me. I have to find out somebody who can help me... I started study in U.S., there were many things I couldn't do some, like homework. I have to use some kinds of computer tools that I really didn't know. Strangely, the department was locked during weekend. But I thought nobody can access during the weekend. Actually there was the key for graduate students, but I didn't know about the key for one month... Then I heard I could get a key and I was really frustrated... I had problems because it was a new place and I was not used to it. We are like a kid here, right? We don't know many about life here... Like kids, children, you need actually parents who can teach about life, tipping or how to get a taxi or etiquettes... Making a lot of mistakes.

### **Emotional Distress**

A third aspect of the theme of Difficulties described by the participants was Emotional Distress. Emotional distress includes loneliness, stress, and depression. Some participants described loneliness as the major emotional distress they experienced during their sojourns.

(Fu) For me, I still find it hard for me to find something to do. I like to exercise very much. To exercise you have to find partner. The students usually have... they have their own school work to do, and you will have your own work to do... you really have to learn to be alone or feel alone. I think feel lonely and it is

one of the strongest feeling in here.

(Liao) Another thing is that because you are in a foreign country, you cannot have so many friends. You cannot have your family with you. Life here is lonely. Sometimes it causes problems.

(Chiu) There are not many Taiwanese students here. Everyone's very busy here focusing on their own study... But here I don't have any other friend the major is same as mine. I miss my family.

Some participants described their stresses or pressure from school or work.

(Sumi) I cried a lot one time. Because, I don't know... my stress accumulated a lot and all of sudden, it just exploded...It was accumulated somehow in my sub-consciousness or whatever.

(Hwang) I feel a lot of stress. For example, I got an assistantship which pushes me to have a good publication. And so let my program feel worthy to pay me so much money... I worry about I didn't get any idea in class. Because I also work in my lab, sometimes I don't have enough time to prepare...It's very hard if I didn't have any background. I think it's very stressful.

(Chao) I have a good relationship with my advisor, but sometimes, at some point I have to finish something. If I can't finish something, I feel pressure from my advisor. Because I knew I had to finish it at some point. That was the main pressure during the first two years.

One participant described his feeling of being discouraged. He stated that international students are more likely to get depressed because of their negative experiences especially at an early stage in their sojourn.

(Chulsu) Sometimes some professors are pretty strict and they never encourage students. When they evaluate papers, they just focus on errors and mistakes. Based on that, they evaluate students. It's not a good idea... Actually that kind of behaviors or actions make foreign, international students depressed. Before they settle down and they become used to American culture, they give up everything... For example, I came to America for the first time. I am a new comer and I met an American guy, and we discussed something, and then he point out my English problems. "Your English is pretty terrible," After getting his response, I feel the situation is pretty scary. If I have the same situation after that conversation, maybe I don't want to share my idea with American guy... We can get depressed easily because of policy and some culture.

### **Food Problems**

Some participants described problems with food. For example, they stated that they couldn't find a good restaurant where they could have home cuisine at affordable price. Liao talked about the difficulty of finding a good Chinese restaurant and missing Chinese food.

(Liao) The difficult thing is I have to cook for myself because there is no Asian food. Restaurants here are a little expensive. When I was back in China, I never cook it for myself. I ate out because it's cheap and I could afford that. And I live here and I have to cook everyday. The most difficult thing in living, and I cannot find very good traditional Chinese restaurant for myself. So in this way, I miss Chinese food very much... Here, I think labor is expensive, so food is expensive. The restaurant is expensive.

Another participant described difficulty getting food during the night time and near his apartment. He also talked about missing Taiwanese food.

(Chiu) For me, there are not many night markets here. In Taiwan, if you want to find some food in midnight or just near apartment or house, you can find a lot of different kinds of food...Here at night if you want buy something to eat, you can only choose XX or fast food restaurants. Most of them close after 10 or 11 o'clock. In my home country, after mid night, you drive only 5 or 10 minutes, there are a lot of different store selling different kinds of food. You can buy any kind of food you want. If you need to cook it at home, you can just go out and choose what kind of food you want. I miss food. Here food is too salty or too sweet. But now I am used to American food, but I still miss Taiwanese food.

### **Financial Problems**

A fifth subtheme of the Difficulties theme is Financial Problems. Many participants described Financial Problems as one of the main difficulties that they encountered as a foreign student. Financial Problems include not being able to find an assistantship, and not being able to earn enough money to afford living expenses.

(Fu)...here probably we don't have that much money. It's hard for us to make some money. Especially I don't have an assistantship. So that makes me feel that I have to save some money. You cannot just go to the movie theater all the time...And about eating. If you eat outside, I feel it's really expensive. I remember when I first come here and every time if I have to spend some money, I always try to think how much it will be if I use Taiwanese current and the number seems to me a lot. So I really feel a lot of pressure, because I know probably my parents spend one out of third amounts to have a meal. But I spend three times of money to have a meal. So I feel pressure to spend money.

(Lin) I think students' finance is a big thing. If you can get a good assistantship, then you are lucky and you feel safe. If you can't get assistantship or your assistantship only pays like 300 dollars a month, then you could have struggles or that will be really scary and stressful thing.

(Mei) Even if you want to work, you won't have a job. That's what I am worrying about. Actually, they guaranteed me just one year assistantship. Until now I am still looking for scholarship or assistantship. Until now, I didn't find anything. So that's the biggest problem for me. I want to finish my degree. I don't know what I can do...That's the biggest problem...Before I came here, they didn't tell me "We will just you one year assistantship." You come here and then after that they tell you. So I have only one year assistantship. It's so bad.

### **Getting Sick**

Some participants described their experience of getting sick during their sojourns. They described getting sick due to changes in their environments and they also described experiences of using medical services. Akira and Minsu described getting sick due to changes in the environments.

(Akira) As you know in Knoxville, there are many people have trouble with allergy. So I worry about that. I got allergy and went to see a doctor. The doctor asked me what's new from here. I said everything is new. Everything means food, environment, air, everything.

(Minsu) I slept in cold dorm room with some winter jacket. Next day, I didn't have any meal plan. The cafeteria was closed. When I looked around the dorm, there was no place to eat. It's so small town, there was no Burger King's, McDonald's around campus. The only place there was I can buy some food or gas. I ate refrigerator sandwiches for two days. Because the room was cold, I had some stomach problem. I smoked too much for a few days, even worse.

Chiu described difficulties he had at the hospital due to different medical services including different insurance or emergency services. He also expressed his difficulty of

describing symptoms in English.

(#7) About two months ago, I got really seriously sick. It was the first time, I needed to go to a hospital and I didn't know how to go to the hospital. In Taiwan, I lived there for 25, or 26 years. I could just go and see a doctor. But here, the insurance system and hospital system is totally different from Taiwan. There are not many hospitals in the city, not many family doctors. Finally, my friend sent me the emergency room at the hospital. Even though, I went to emergency room, I had to wait about two hours. I feel emergency room in America, is not really emergency room. If somebody gets really seriously sick or injured, you see a doctor immediately. But in this system, you have to fill out forms, and you go to the next steps and you will see a doctor after one or two hours. I don't like American hospital system. You need to pass so many steps before you can see a doctor... I hope that I don't get sick anymore... If I could get an American friend's help, that could have been easy because it's difficult to explain how I feel. I can describe it in Chinese, but it's difficult to explain in English about how I feel.

### **Uncertainty About the Future**

A seventh subtheme of Difficulties is Uncertainty About the Future. Participants described their concerns about getting a job and issues related to staying in America.

(Fu) Even though I had a dream to study here, apply for Ph. D., and ...work. But you just don't know where your future is. You don't know that's really going to happen or things are going to turn out to be what you think or what you expect.

(Liao) It's dilemma for every Chinese students. I cannot see myself in my 40s, you're still programming and you still do hard, high pressure... It's very hard. It's hard decision.

(Mei) I feel, after my graduation, I will still have to look for jobs. "Is that going



to be just like this?” You send resume and nobody gives you response at all. I feel so awful... I don’t know what’s the future is. I don’t know when I graduate whether I can get a good job, or whether American economic will be good. Sometimes, we will feel very dark. I feel like I have that feeling. Especially you came here alone...After graduation, what should we do.

### **We Are Foreigners Here (Limitations)**

A final subtheme of the Difficulties theme is We Are Foreigners Here.

Participants were aware of their status of being foreigners in the host country.

Participants described the regulations and restrictions such as limited working opportunities and difficulty traveling to and from the United States. One participant described her experience of discrimination. Fu and Chulsu described some limitations international students faced.

(Fu) Sometimes it’s like hard. Besides, our status here is international students. We are foreigners here. There are limitations here...Now you have to apply for CPT to do your internship every semester. Between the semesters, you are not allowed to do your internship. We cannot just find a work outside of campus like American students do. We have to extend or take a lot of attention for I-20 status. We cannot go everywhere like go and come back. We have to be a full time student. I think sometimes, we are just kind of being watched all the time. But we are not terrorists...Why we will want to do terrorist stuff? There is no reason. Our country is not against America. They set a rule for every foreigner.

(Chulsu) I think most international students have same problems like financial problems, and study problems. Actually, American immigration law is pretty strict to the international students. For example, this government never allows international students working outside. So it’s very difficult to make money

outside, and recently most school have problems with getting funds. They don't have enough funds. That means it's also difficult to get assistantship from the department. And when we go to some places to visit, we are still controlled by immigration, especially if we go abroad, we need a lot of documents to prepare for. Financial problems and regulations are pretty stressful for international students... It's not free to travel and it's not free to work.

Younghee described her experiences of being discriminated.

(Younghee) We feel a little bit of discrimination in anyway. Like school, we do not speak English that fluently. We have less chance to get a teaching position as a GTA. And outside, in some way, sometimes those people behave that way because I'm a foreigner. Like if you go to a store, some people, cashiers sometimes behave very funky. In school, if we do a group project, maybe there are four or five group members, three or four, they are OK. But sometimes, one person really doesn't like to include a foreigner in his or her group...I feel also kind of discrimination at my kids' school too. They were born here and they speak English as almost first language. When my first kid was in a second grade, they put her into the ESL program. I got really surprised. They didn't report me. I visited school one day, and she was in ESL class room. So I went to the teacher's room and said, "She doesn't need ESL." Teacher said "Since her native language is a Korean, she has to be in ESL class for a while." "No. She studied her kindergarten here and her first grade here. There was no problem at all. Why did you put her in ESL class?" She said "Because she is a Korean" So I had to write a letter to the principal and to the ESL coordinator.

### **Theme Three: Coping**

The third theme, Coping, conveyed the participants' descriptions of how they coped with the difficulties they faced. The subthemes of Coping are Socializing, Positive Self-talk, Sports, and Shopping and Traveling.

## **Socializing**

Participants described the importance of Socializing with others in America.

They described their efforts to interact and be friends with Americans.

(Sumi) First year I tried to make American friends and interact with them a lot. I tried to hang out with them on purpose. Even if I was in graduate school, maybe I thought grade is not that important. For me, it's better to quickly catch up their English and improve my English. My first goal was improving my English, so whenever, some single girls in my department at that time, they were in master's program...So we hang out pretty often and I made good friends...They helped me a lot.

(Lin) It is like I have to make conscious, constant, extra efforts to be extremely friendly, to do as much as I can, to be as modest as I can, things like that. To let them feel that like I am a good person. So they will at least willing to just interact with me at some basic level.

(Chiu) For me sometimes, I think, for my social life I also need to go out with them. Sometimes, I will go to bar or I will have to go to party. I think it's very important part. I don't want to have only Chinese or Taiwanese friends. I also can I have American friends but I need to talk to them and I need to join their life...

## **Positive Self-talk**

Some participants described the use of Positive Self-talk as a coping skill. Some participants described self-talk using second person pronouns.

(Mei) "You came here by yourself and you have to face problems by yourself. If you are not strong, what can you do? You don't cry. You just need to think

about what's the next step..." So for other side, that's maybe a good experience because my life has just started. I am still very young. I don't know what's happening in the future. "You may still have other problems. You have to solve them and face them."

(Hwang) Reading is okay, but conversations were not good when I came here. When I could not understand I just smiled. In the class, maybe professor spoke too fast, I couldn't understand. I talked to myself, "OK, just go home and study. Then I can get pretty much from text books." For casual conversations, I just talked to myself, "It's OK, maybe two years later I can understand." I think language is a problem. But I don't want it to be my barrier. I am not the person who remembers language. I can only do language as one part of my life. I know my language process is pretty slow, but it's okay... I think I am a very easy person. I don't want to put too much stress on me. I just worry about study and research. I don't want to spend my time worry about lecture.

## **Sports**

A third subtheme of Coping is Sports. Some participants described Sports playing as an important role for their coping skills. They described how Sports can be helpful for a leisure activity, for their relationships with others, or for releasing stress.

(Minsu) There were so many things to enjoy in Korea, but in the United States, college sports mean a lot of for me as a foreigner. When I have not many people or places to go, the good thing is that I can have interests or passion in college sports. Good thing is that UT football game is free for students. So I can spend a lot of good time with my friends. It gives me a lot of common thing with other colleagues or office mates. So we can talk about that, and we go there, spend weekend together, and drink together after football. That's a nice thing...

(Chao) I play a lot of sports, physical activities, like basketball, soccer, and ping-pong, anything I can play out. I play these activities every week. Maybe Friday

play basketball, Sunday play soccer. So that helps me to conquer the situation when I feel sad or something, or feel high pressure. I go to play until fully exhausted, then the pressure is gone through these.

### **Shopping and Traveling**

Some participants described Shopping and Traveling as their coping behaviors.

They described how these activities helped them cope with their stress.

(Minsu) I spent a lot of money for stupid shopping... to kill time and release my stress, Internet shopping and high-tech electrical appliances, clothing. Sometimes I buy too much grocery and I threw them away... When I'm really stressed out, I go shopping.

(Hwang) I like travel. I don't want to just study. I went to New York, Chicago, Boston, South Carolina, New Orleans, and Florida... Sometimes, I will just to put my research aside. During the travel, I like to see different people and different place.

### **Theme Four: Relationships**

The fourth theme, Relationships, reflected the participants' perceptions of their interpersonal relationships. They described their relationships with others such as family members and friends in their home country and with people they met in the host country.

The subthemes of Relationships are Not Connected, Connected, My Family, and Romantic Relationships.

## **Not Connected**

A first subtheme of the theme of Relationships is Not Connected. Participants described that sometimes they don't feel connected with people in the host country. They did not feel connected because of their language or cultural differences.

(Fu) I don't feel familiar with my American friends. I think maybe it's because I am not interacting with them much... I know some people different countries maybe they are from America or India. I might know someone but we don't really talk a lot or not that close friend level...

(Lin) Segregation is one thing. I noticed that. Probably it's because of my language barrier and cultural differences and probably also because of my Asian look. For example at work, I noticed that it's hard to be friends with Caucasian. I know that most people here are White, there are not many blacks here... I don't feel good when I am being segregated. When I feel segregation, I feel isolated, lonely, and discouraged, really really discouraged.

(Hwang) I just have few America friends. Maybe sometimes I know I can't speak very fast to American friends. Maybe that makes it difficult to have American friends. I still don't have good English, and so I don't go to American parties to make friends. Maybe I don't have time to join the party. My colleges, Americans, we talk a little bit, but most time talk about our project.

(Naoko) Even though they are not going to act differently, but still they do because we are different. The way we speak is different, more like guest than friend. In somewhere in their mind, there is something they can not overcome like a wall. They make a line, but if it is a friend, we pass the line. There is a line. Still I am other for them. In church, I'm happy to take a task which is hard or which is difficult. They do many things within church. But some people say, "Oh, You don't have to do that. I'll do that. You just relax and take an easy job." But they don't say that to other people. If they have a team work, then I want to

join the team work.

### **Connected**

A second subtheme of the Relationships theme is Connected. Participants described their feeling of being connected to people they met in the host country. When they described their relationships with those people they met, most participants also mentioned that they felt good about those relationships.

(Sumi) ...some single girls in my department at that time, they were in master's program. We hang out pretty often and I made good friends. Even they were graduated two or three years ago, but we are still keeping in touch with each other.

(Lin) I know some good people here they are willing to talk to me and that is something that I appreciate the most. They are willing to tolerate my accent and my grammar errors and help me with my English. Like sometimes, I know what I am talking about, but I don't know what is English words for it. They will help me. They will tell me about American cultures and they are also curious about Taiwanese culture. So we can exchange our ideas. In that situation I feel equal. I feel being respected. I feel that I am also valuable human being and that feels good. It's like I am not the secondary.

(Hiroshi) For half year, I went to the English school here... I made some friends, Asian friends. So it is exciting to have foreign friends and they can't speak English well either. So I feel comfortable to communicate with them, similar level of English. And to be friends is much easier because they are also lonely and I am kind of lonely...So it was very fun.

## **My Family**

A third subtheme of the Relationships theme is My Family. Most participants mentioned about their family members during the interviews. Participants who had children talked about their children. Participants talked about how much they miss their families. Some participants talked about their parents' expectations and also conflicts with family members.

(Chulsu) For my family members, it's good. I have more time for my families. After 5:00 or 6:00 PM, I come back home and will spend time with children. They will have a good memory about me. Actually when people are young, their memories are pretty important. Maybe they will make a good memory about me.

(Liao) ... my parents expect me to be professional. I don't think too much about house work. Before I came here, I never cook for myself. My mom never taught me how to cook. She thinks cooking is time consuming and stupid thing. So she never taught me how to cook or sew. I don't know a lot of those works. They want me to be independent. They don't want me to spend too much time in those house works.

(Chiu) I hoped my family could visit me, but my father is too busy. I hope my father can retire. ... I call them maybe two or three times a week to talk with my parents.

(Hwang) I think my family understands that I love them and also they love me. I think after I came here, my family relationships are getting closer. I will call home on very important days like my parents birthday, mother's day, or father's day. I didn't do this when I was on home... With my older sister, we didn't talk much about ourselves like our boyfriends or girlfriends. This year she told me about many things. I told her about my relationship with my girlfriend. I feel like



we can...just like it didn't happen before. I did see her once a year. It makes me want to care more about her.

(Younghee) My parents-in-law expect me to do something for the family. But I'm busy with my own life and I have something that I want to do, and I want to go for it. So there are some contradictories there. I feel tensions, but I always go for it in my way and they don't like it... But there are some things that we need to negotiate, kind of compromising.

### **Romantic Relationships**

The fourth and final subtheme of Relationships is Romantic Relationships. Some participants described romantic relationships. They talked about some conflicts they have with girlfriends or boyfriends or difficulties in finding their partners. Liao and Lin described difficulties finding a partner or a spouse due to the limited number of students.

(Liao) It's hard for you to find a dream partner. Most of Chinese boys prefer to get married back in China. Parents find girls for them and they go back and get married even if they've never seen each other before, because the ratio between male and female is very weird. It's like 10 male students versus one female student. So that's why it's very hard to find a spouse.

(Lin) Here also it's really hard to find good romantic relationship. It is not easy to find a good partner because the number of students is limited... I think like here it is so competitive to have a girl friend because there are more males than females. If there is a good girl, a lot of guys want to date her because they need to find the partner for themselves. But because of age differences, personality differences, or personal background might be different. And the most important thing is that the number of population is so small here. There are not a lot you can choose from.

Chiu described the difficulty related to having a long distance relationship with his girlfriend who was in Taiwan.

(Chiu) The most difficult part is my personal problem, my relationship with my girlfriend. We only talk through telephone. When we have a problem, I don't know how to solve problem. Sometimes I feel tired because I am here and she is there. When she needs help, I can't help her.

Hwang described his concerns for his girlfriend. He was worried that he may not be able to bring her a happy life if they go back to Taiwan.

(Hwang) I don't know if I can stay here forever... I think she is the person who is very suitable in America. I don't know. Until now, I still need to go back and take care of my parents... I think she can have a good life in America. I am not sure if she can live well in Taiwan. It's very different in Taiwan. People are very traditional Chinese. I am afraid that I cannot bring her a very good life...For me, it's okay to stay either in America or in Taiwan. I think for her, it's better to stay here. It's one of stress about my relationship.

### **Theme Five: Findings in Me**

The fifth theme, Findings in Me, conveyed the participants' perception of their sojourn experience, and changes in themselves. Some of the things they learned about themselves had to do with their values, personal feelings, adjustment processes, and personality changes. Subthemes regarding Findings in Me are Perception of My Sojourning, Changes in Me, My Value, and What I Want to Do.

### **Perception of My Sojourning**

Participants described their feelings about their sojourns including their excitement about learning a new culture, meeting new people, and discovering new things. They also described their sojourn experience as a positive learning experience.

(Minsu) When I first came here everything was new to me. I was very excited, 100% excited. Even talking to a bus driver was very interesting to me. That feeling lasted for 1 year. So the first semester was very fast and I spent all my time on studying and felt excited about new environment.

(Chao) I was very willing to talk to people. As long as I had an opportunity, I liked to talk to them... The room I lived, the campus, computer, everything was new. I was like a kid discovering all the new things.

(Hiroshi) I was excited to come here... I feel honored to work in the United States, because the level of research is much higher in the United States than Japan. It's kind of feeling honored... So I enjoy the life in the United States.

(Satomi) I just enjoy my student life... For me, to be here as a student, I don't feel any difference between my age and other students' age. I almost forget my age. I am learning from them as a classmate... So far I had great experiences with classmates in classes and with professors ... During the class time, we have a discussion. I could speak out for myself and they would listen to me. That was great time.

Some participants described their sojourn experience as a good learning experience.

(Sumi) I think that's great advantage of being here because maybe it depends on person. I can be both critical and at the same time I can embrace both good things of both culture...I read news on internet. I read Korean news and I see

Korea as an outsider perspective.

(Mei) I think this is a very wonderful experience. I enjoy it. I learned more different knowledge and different culture from different countries. Here I can make friends from different countries of all over the world. In China, we don't have this opportunity. I think this is very valuable experience. I also learned different culture between China and America. I think it's also very interesting.

### **Changes in Me**

A second subtheme of Findings in Me is Changes in Me. Some participants described changes in themselves including their personal feelings, behaviors, and adjustments to life in America. Participants described changes in their feelings such as feeling freer or more confident. Some participants described changes in their assumptions about America and some participants described the process of getting adjusted. Akira described changes in their eating patterns and Lin described how she came to enjoy some American food.

(Akira) When I was in Japan, I drunk green tea everyday. But I quit drinking green tea here. As I said, water in America is hard including many metal ions. It doesn't completely extract green tea. Taste is not good... I drink many pops now... As you know Japanese eat fish and also raw fish. In Illinois, it's difficult to get fresh fish. So I eat more meat and eat less fish here...Nobody wears logo T-shirts. My wife bought university T-shirt for me. I also have university logo T-shirt, pen, and mascot...My cars have orange sticker, but in Japan you will never find that.

(Lin) When I was in Taiwan, I ate burgers before. I had a lot of American food

there. But when I came here, I found it's different. Food here were more greasy, and something that I was not used to. Salad, it was very hard for me to chew. I felt like I was a cow. But now I become so used to it. I enjoy it now. Like Greek salad, that's my favorite.

Participants described changes in their feelings. Some participants described how they felt freer and more confident about themselves.

(Lin) Now I just feel freer now. Sometimes I don't care about any grammar errors or anything. I just say whatever I want to say. Kind of like let them come to understand me.

(Hiroshi) No one knows me here. In Japan, when I do something I always care about other person and what I am doing. ...No one knows me here, so I do everything that I want to do... I can wear anything...I can express myself more because I became loose. I just don't care.

(Sumi) Actually I feel more confident about myself now and I feel I am very myself. I feel...So I like what I am now than what I used to be. Yeah all those experiences only Americans who stayed here for their life time, perhaps Koreans who stayed all the time in Korea, they are not going to experience these kinds of things. Now I think I am very wise and mature... It's like I found myself and I didn't have. I was going through that identity stuff a lot. Now I feel kind of I found something good things in me.

Some participants described changes in their perception of America. They thought formerly that America is a perfect place, but after they arrived, they found that it was different from what they had expected.

(Mei) Before, I came here... America is so wonderful. After I came here, you

still have a lot of problems. Actually America is not a perfect place. It also has some problems. Sometimes you will feel maybe that's not what I want...Before I came here America was like from TV or other movies. We just thought America was with more opportunity. I just thought America was very good place and wonderful place. After I came here, Knoxville was not my expectation. I thought Knoxville was kind of like San Francisco, but it's not.

(Chao) ...because of assumptions that America is very good. For me, for the school, university is very good. Knowledge is very advanced and high technology. Other thing is that the whole country is a fully developed country, the best country in the world. I think it is still good, but it's a little bit exaggerated. It's another country

Some participants described their adjustment process. They talked about getting adjusted and comfortable after a certain amount of time of their sojourn.

(Chiu) I had to spend two or three hours to prepare for the class, but now I don't need to prepare for the class...Teaching experience also helped. After teaching one or two sections, I felt more comfortable.

(Minsu) After one semester, I pretty much adjusted myself for department and school system, how do they take a test or I know how to do homework, how to prepare test, to keep researching at the same time, and to keep my grade well. I found out after one semester I'm kind of a good student. Situation was changed.

(Chao) After one year, I got used to the environment and felt comfortable in my study, and I began to do some research. So things became smoother... When I first came to America because of new environment and new language, even common things became very excited things. So after two years when I came to Georgia, then I came to have more neutral feeling about what actual America is. That's another big change. I think first two years of image was biased. I felt very excited, but after two years I came down and I could think more independently.

Naoko described changes during her sojourn. She mentioned that she became more comfortable and proud of her English and that her thoughts had changed as she found her spiritual life during her sojourn.

(Naoko) The first year, I was really nervous and also I used to think too much about my language. I thought people discriminate me if I speak differently. I don't have any big experience of being discriminated. I used to think that people is going to discriminate me if speak weird English. I used to think that. During the first year, I compared myself with others. "Okay, she can do this. I can't do this." It really depressed me. Now I don't do that. After one year, it doesn't matter. Even though we are the same status here, but she speaks better. She speaks better than me, like that. She has more friends than me, like that... Comfortable, I'm proud of my English. I am proud of who I am. I am encouraged by God because I believe He is with me always. I am eager to challenge many things. I feel comfortable to speak to people from me... I have more energy to do something, and confidence. I don't think in negative way.

### **My Value**

A third subtheme of the theme of Findings in Me is My Value. Participants described things that they found important in their life. They described things that they found valuable from their sojourn experience. These include confidence, family value, and keeping good relationships with others.

(Sumi) Confidence is very important and it's important to like yourself. If you hate yourself, then you are in trouble. This is also very American mindset I think that I adopt. American people encourage others to like themselves first. But we in Korea, we don't actually. Nobody says you like yourself first and you are the

most important person. You should give you priority or make yourself happy. We don't say that in Korea. But here I often hear, "make yourself happy" and "your happiness is important." I think that's very good idea. Of course, my happiness is important but it should not be based on others' unhappiness. That's important. I was going through that identity stuff a lot. Now I feel kind of I found something good things in me.

(Hwang) It's like when you loose something, you start to feel that it's very important. I cannot be with my family, and so I feel that they are very important to me... If you live together, you will have fights. When you are separated, you realize they are important.

(Mei) You have to be optimistic. Somebody said, "You are optimistic." Some days, I don't feel that way because if you face some problems, you can't solve those problems... So I have to try my best to make me happy.

(Chao) I think that's important to get good relationships with people... One thing is that I am always quite confident with myself. So I can have an equal attitude with people. I think it's important to have a good and healthy relationship with your colleagues or advisor... Besides your confidence and attitude, you have to make some actual things done.

(Kuo) I think human relationship, caring each other. Caring somebody is very important... individual, humanity. I mean care about what a person thinks about himself. I think that's equal with humanity... Personal feeling, personal emotion... Not like those dreams or the glory of family or... just personal things.

### **What I Want to Do**

A final subtheme of the theme of Findings in Me is What I Want to Do.

Participants described things that they want or what they want to be. Some participants

described their wish to stay in the host country and some participants did not care about



staying or going back home. One of the participants mentioned that she wants to go back to her home country.

(Sumi) You know Korean people are very sincere and genuine. So I don't want to lose it... I want to have my own quality and also embrace some good things. You know American people are very open-minded and they are not judgmental. I really like that quality... They are not judgmental and they give space to individuals. They value that individual uniqueness and so I really like in the way. So I want to get some good things from American and America culture, and I want to maintain my Korean good quality... I like to be here and stay here. I don't think I can fit into Korean society and Korean mind-set.

(Chiu) For me, I want to get Ph.D. as soon as possible. I am already 30 years old. I don't want to waste too much time being a student. I want to find a job... I think my first goal is to get Ph.D., and maybe I switch to another university to be a postdoc for one or two years and then get a good job.

(Mei) Most Chinese students prefer to stay here. Here after graduation, we can earn more money. Maybe American economy is not very good or your major is not good and nobody will need that.

(Younghee) I like American culture. I want to live here if I have a chance to get a job here, but I want to keep Korean culture... I think I feel very comfortable here and I feel home.

(Satomi) After I graduate, I will teach Japanese language in somewhere in America. I like to teach in college level in American. So I can teach Japanese language using my theory of language teaching... Teaching Japanese at college somewhere in America. I like southern part. I like Tennessee.

(Liao) I really want to go back because I feel unhappy. Even if I can earn more money right here, but I feel unhappy living in the place and having no friend... The thing is that even if you work...but in an American company, Asian people

are just like engineers. You can't be a manager or senior manger. You cannot do management work because most of management work is occupied by American people. I don't like that way... So I want to go back. You can get higher respect from people in China.

### **Summary of Chapter III**

In this chapter, the results of the bracketing interview, the descriptions of the participants and the interviews are described. Themes, subthemes, and the overall thematic structure of the experience of sojourning by individuals from East Asia are presented. The bracketing interview consists of a description of the primary investigator's own experience of sojourning in East Tennessee. Themes that emerged from the transcript of the bracketing interview were: (a) Differences, (b) Difficulties, (c) Coping, (d) Relationships, and (e) Findings in Me. These five themes were contextualized within the theme of Changes Over Time.

The interpretive analysis of the sixteen interviews by research participants who came from four East Asian countries revealed the same five themes. The five interrelated themes emerged from the analysis were: (a) Differences, (b) Difficulties, (c) Coping, (d) Relationships, (e) Findings in Me. Themes that emerged in this study were contextualized by the same ground as in the bracketing interviews: Changes Over Time. These five themes are interrelated with all of the others, and no one theme stands out as

more central than any other.

It is obvious that the thematic structure of the bracketing interview is the same as the thematic structure of the research participants. In one sense, it might be considered that the bracketing interview validates the results of the participants' experiences and vice versa. The author is from Korea and she has been a sojourner in the U.S. for six years. On the other hand, a critic might complain that the primary researcher led the research participants to describe her own sojourn experience. Critics are encouraged to consult Appendix D and to read a whole verbatim transcript and verify that the researcher in fact did not lead the participants.

It is also highly likely that all of these seventeen individuals have been perceived similarly by individuals who are indigenous to East Tennessee. The great majority of Americans are not adept at recognizing and differentiating between foreign students who are from China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan.

The Ground of Changes Over Time provides the context of time where the participants experience changes in their perceptions, understanding different aspects of the host culture, and becoming more aware of their own culture. These changes occurred throughout their contacts with new people, new environments, and new cultures. The

subthemse of Changes Over Time are Changes in Feelings and Changes in Views. The first theme, Differences, encompassed the participants' perceptions of differences including differences between the host and the home culture. The subthemes of Differences are Environment, People, School Setting, Social Norms and Behaviors, Values, Life Style, and Mass Media. The second theme, Difficulties, reflected the participants' awareness of difficulties when they entered an unfamiliar host culture and a new environment. The subthemes of Difficulties are Language, Lack of Cultural Background, Emotional Distress, Food Problems, Financial Problems, Getting Sick, Uncertainty of the Future, and We are Foreigners Here. The third theme, Coping, conveyed the participants' descriptions of how they coped with the difficulties they faced. The subthemes of Coping are Socializing, Positive Self-talk, Sports, and Shopping and Traveling. The fourth theme, Relationships, reflected the participants' relationships with family members, friends, classmates, and other people. The subthemes of Relationships are Not Connected, Connected, My Family, and Romantic Relationships. The fifth theme, Findings in Me, conveyed the participants' perceptions related to their perception of sojourning, changes in themselves including feelings and behaviors, values, and future plan. Subthemes regarding Findings in Me are Perception of My Sojourning, Changes in

Me, My Value, and What I Want to Do.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to obtain a description of the experience of living in East Tennessee by sojourners from East Asia. Sixteen participants from China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan described their experiences of living in East Tennessee in terms of the aspects of the experiences that stood out for them. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed by the primary investigator. These verbatim transcriptions were used as the primary source of data in this study. Analysis revealed the following themes: (a) Differences, (b) Difficulties, (c) Coping, (d) Relationships, (e) Findings in Me. These five themes were contextualized within the theme of Changes Over Time.

This chapter contains a discussion of the results of the present study and is organized into three parts. In the first part, connections are made between the structural description of the experience presented in Figure 1 and previous research. In the second part, the differences among transcripts are discussed in terms of their relationships to previous research. In the final part, the summary and implications of the study are presented.

## **The Structural Description of the Experience**

A structural description of the experience is described in Figure 1. This figure describes the relationships between the five themes and the ground. Figure 1 is similar in organization to some of the theoretical models of sojourners' acculturation that have been presented in the literature review. The main similarity is an emphasis on changes over time during their cross-cultural experience. In Figure 1, the ground theme, Changes over Time provides the context for the experience of the other themes.

### **Changes Over Time**

Participants described their changes in perceptions, coping skills, and their awareness of their own culture and host culture during their time of sojourning. These descriptions are similar to the culture shock hypotheses of Oberg (1960). Oberg suggested that the adjustment process occurs in a time flow. He described four stages of culture shock: (a) honeymoon stage, characterized by fascination, enthusiasm, admiration, and friendly and superficial relationships with the host society; (b) crisis stage, described as feelings of inadequacy, frustration, anxiety, and hostility toward the host society and increasing association with fellow sojourners; (c) recovery stage, described as increased learning of language and culture of the host society; (d) adjustment, characterized by the

sojourner who works in and enjoys the new culture and anxiety is significantly decreased.

Oberg suggested that sojourners go through distinct adjustment phases on the way to a final adaptation. Results of this study, however, do not completely support Oberg's stage model. Some participants described their first stage of cross-cultural experience as the period of frustration, depression, and isolation instead of the period of fascination, enthusiasm, and admiration.

(Minsu) When I was out of airport, air was really sticky and hot. After long travel, I was already tired and didn't like air in a new place...Atmosphere, temperature, climate, weather, everything. I left Korea but when I was in airport, I feel like Korea left me something like that. I was not very active, and I didn't ask many things even though I didn't know... Maybe, I was afraid of them, or I was scared of something. I didn't feel like asking somebody or talking. I kept smoking for a few days.

Participants who sojourned longer in the U.S. tend to describe more about their changes over time such as acquiring more language skills and increased interaction with people in the host country. Berry (1984) noted four possible acculturation strategies: (a) integration, (b) assimilation, (c) separation, and (d) marginalization strategies. The integration strategy occurs when individuals hold positive relations with the host society and maintain their own ethnic identity. The assimilation strategy is evident when individuals seek interactions with the mainstream culture and do not wish to maintain



their own cultural identity. The separation strategy occurs when individuals keep a strong ethnic identity and avoid contact with the majority groups. The marginalization strategy emerges when individuals lose cultural and psychological contact with both the dominant and their own ethnic groups. Some participants described their desires to keep their ethnic identity and at the same time wish to keep good relations with the host society. This result supports Berry (1984)'s integration acculturation strategy.

(Younghee) We have traditions and some things that we get used to. But we are human being. But here we have, they used to live in a different way, but after we understand them, we can adjust fairly easy. It's all humankind but with different environment, different ways of living... but after you understand their ways of living, then I think we can accept it. Maybe we can acculturate...people here are all Americans. I have to be the same to work together. I cannot go strong for the Korean mind. I try my best to get together and mingle with them together...I like American culture. I want to live here if I have a chance to get a job here, but I want to keep Korean culture.

### **Differences**

Participants often described the differences between their home country and host country. Most participants described their perception of American people as being independent and individualistic. They described their home culture as more group oriented. Hofstede (1980) has reported that the United States scores as one of the highest countries for individualism. Wheeler, Reis, and Bond (1989) also reported that

interactions of the Chinese were more intimate than those of the Americans.

(Chulsu) I think that's different culture. They are independent. As they get married, most American guys get independent from their parents and they make their own family.

(Younghee) I think it's individualization or individualized society... I see many independent people here.

(Kuo) I think in this country, you can do things independently... In China, you have to rely on someone. This is also because of tradition, history, and tradition of culture. In China... They like to work as a group.

### **Difficulties**

Participants described one of their difficulties as the language problem. They also described problems such as difficulties in class settings and communication with Americans which were closely related to their level of English skills. This result is consistent with the findings of Lin and Yi (1997) and Hull (1978). Many Asian students' weak English skills are a major stressor, and this can cause significant problems when they try to function and succeed in America or to get involved and interact with other Americans.

(Mei) Sometimes, I don't feel like I am a graduate student. I just feel like a baby here. Everything you have to learn. You can speak English, but your English is not even as good as high school or middle school American students. So you have to write papers and read articles that American middle school students

won't read. That was hard for me.

(Hiroshi) I came here first, it was kind of hard because I can't speak English well. So it was difficult to make a decision for my house, make a phone call, or many paper works. So all of them were difficult...The biggest problem was the language problem.

Participants described emotional distress such as loneliness, stress, and depression. Some participants described difficulties in connecting with people in the host country, especially at the early stage of their sojourn. These findings are similar to the suggestions by Dressler and Bernal (1982) who emphasized that acculturative stress occurs when individuals' adaptive resources are not enough to support adjustment to a new cultural environment.

(Fu) Sometimes it's not that easy to make a new friend. Some might because of your language and some might because of your culture...You really have to learn to be alone or feel alone. I think feel lonely and it is one of the strongest feeling in here.

(Sumi) I cried a lot one time. Because, I don't know... my stress accumulated a lot and all of sudden, it just exploded...It was accumulated somehow in my subconsciousness or whatever.

### **Differences among Transcripts**

In the process of the analysis, sixteen transcripts were thematized independently in order to respect each individual's unique experience of his or her sojourning.

Thematized transcripts were compared with each other to find the differences among transcripts. Brief descriptions of each transcript are presented in the previous chapter.

### **Differences in Experience: Countries**

Comparison of transcripts among the different countries revealed that there were few differences found among countries. Ho (1992) noted filial piety as one of the basic cultural values of Asian ethnic groups. High respect for and obedience to parents is a strong value among Asian ethnic groups. Asian children are expected to comply with family wishes and children's obligations and loyalty to parents are important in Asian culture. In this study, at least one participant from China, Korea, and Taiwan described their responsibility of taking care of their parents. One participant from Japan mentioned about how much she loves her mother.

Chulsu was a first son, Liao was an only child, and Hwang was the only son in the family. Each of these three participants described the role of taking care of parents as their responsibility.

(Chulsu) Actually first son has more responsibility for his parents. Parents think supporting their child is kind of an investment. They think they should educate their children well after that they want to lean on their children. And then children should be used to that kind of culture. After we grow up, we think we should take care of parents because they supported us until now.

(Liao) Parents, because after 1975 or 74 we had Single Child Policy. So for me, I have two parents to take care if I get married and my husband will also have two parents to take care. If I live in China, that will be a problem. Who takes care of... We don't have nursing home where people can take care of parents if they have money. We have no such place and that's a problem. My parents cannot speak English and so they do not want to stay here. I should think about where they can stay when they get older and they can't take care of their everyday living. They have only one child. That's a big problem for Chinese young men back in China. For one young couple, they have four parents. Two people afford five people because four parents and one kid.

(Hwang) Until now, I still need to go back and take care of my parents.

Naoko was living with her mom at the time of interview. She described how much she cares about her mother.

(Naoko) I think of my mom here more. I love her for a long time. But now I want to love her more.

### **Differences in Experience: Marital Status**

Mok (1999) noted that the majority of research on Asian ethnic groups' romantic relationships has tended to focus on marriage and relatively less attention was paid to dating issues. In this study, participants who were single talked about their concerns with romantic relationships. They described the difficulties in finding a romantic partner, keeping a long distance relationship, and their concerns with current romantic partners.

(Liao) It's hard for you to find a dream partner. Most of Chinese boys prefer to

get married back in China. Parents find girls for them and they go back and get married even if they've never seen each other before, because the ratio between male and female is very weird. It's like 10 male students versus one female student.

(Chiu) The most difficult part is my personal problem, my relationship with my girlfriend. We only talk through telephone. When we have a problem, I don't know how to solve problem. Sometimes I feel tired because I am here and she is there. When she needs help, I can't help her.

(Hwang) I don't know if I can stay here forever... I think she is the person who is very suitable in America. I don't know. Until now, I still need to go back and take care of my parents... I think she can have a good life in America. I am not sure if she can live well in Taiwan. It's very different in Taiwan. People are very traditional Chinese. I am afraid that I cannot bring her a very good life... For me, it's okay to stay either in America or in Taiwan. I think for her, it's better to stay here. It's one of stress about my relationship.

### **Differences in Experience: Gender**

Matsui (1988) noted that when students from male-dominated cultures are exposed to feminism, they can experience powerful influences on their perceptions and attitudes towards gender roles. Some female participants described their concerns related to power issues such as an unequal relationship with males.

(Sumi) Somehow, they think they are in charge of their family... So they should be a king or a center of family. I thought about it a lot. Why Korean men are still behind the time or whatever (ha, ha). Because, I think they have that kind of men chauvinism.

(Liao) I will expect my boyfriend or husband to cook for me and wash dishes for

me because we are equal. That's why I got a lot of fights with my boyfriend. He expects me to cook and wash dishes and clean the house. They want women to take care of family. They don't want you to spend too much time studying. Study is not a thing for a girl.

Previous studies (Hyde & Plant, 1995; Thomas & Williams, 1991) suggested that coping styles to stressors differ by gender. Some male participants described playing sports or watching sports as coping skills and as leisure activity. No female participants described sport experiences.

(Akira) When I was in Illinois, I had American friends. I had been playing basketball for ten years. I played from junior high school to University. I found basketball team in Illinois State and I joined the team to do practice and to play games. I had many basketball games.

(Minsu) I like football, college football so much. There were so many things to enjoy in Korea, but in the United States, college sports mean a lot of for me as a foreigner. So I can spend a lot of good time with my friends. It gives me a lot of common things with other colleagues or office mates. So we can talk about that, and we go there, spend weekend together, and drink together after football. That's a nice thing.

(Chao) I play a lot of sports, physical activities, like basketball, soccer, and pin pong, anything I can play out. So that helps me to conquer the situation when I feel sad or something, or feel high pressure. I go to play until fully exhausted, then the pressure is gone through these.

### **Differences in Experience: Length of Sojourning**

Acculturation is viewed as a process in which the attitudes and behaviors of individuals from one culture change over time as a result of contacts with a different culture (Moyerman & Forman, 1992). In Oberg's (1960) stage model which is described above, acculturation is a process that always occurs over a period of time. There were differences among participants' descriptions of their experience of sojourning in the U.S. based on the length of their sojourn. Participants who stayed longer in the U.S. described their life as more stable and comfortable compared to those who lived in the U. S. for a short period of time.

(Sumi) Now I feel kind of more comfortable living here. Sometimes I feel more comfortable speaking English rather than in Korean. I began to feel very comfortable when I was here almost two years. Between one year and one and half year, I began to feel really comfortable. Two years, it's like, okay this is it. Now I feel like I don't want to go back.

(Chao) When I first came to America because of new environment and new language, even common things became very excited things. So after two years when I came to Georgia, then I came to have more neutral feeling about what actual America is. That's another big change. I think first two years of image was biased. I felt very excited, but after two years I came down and I could think more independently... After first two years, I could see both good things and bad things like normal people do.



## **Summary and Implications of Study**

The goal of the present research was to describe the experience of sojourning in East Tennessee by sixteen individuals from East Asia. The interpretive analysis of the sixteen interviews by participants from four East Asian countries: China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan revealed a ground and five themes. Themes that emerged in this study were contextualized by the theme of Changes Over Time. The five themes were interrelated and were: (a) Differences, (b) Difficulties, (c) Coping, (d) Relationships, (e) Findings in Me.

The ground of Changes Over Time became the context of time where participants experienced a cross-cultural adjustment process including finding differences between the home and the host cultures, facing difficulties, developing coping skills, interacting with the host society, and obtaining new perceptions of self, others, and their home and host cultures. The cross-cultural adjustment process occurred throughout their contact with people, their new environment, and the new culture. Most participants described their experience of sojourning as a positive learning process. They learned much about the new culture including new customs, new language, and diverse aspect of host society.

A virtue of this study is that the themes emerged from the real life experiences of the sojourners. The themes are always presented and understood in the words of the participants who had the experience. The main goal of the study is to present what sixteen East Asians had to say about their experience of sojourning in East Tennessee.

Another virtue of this study is the increased self awareness of the East Asian research participants. The female participants in this study talked about their awareness of power issues between men and women when they came to America. They described how they were treated unequally in their home cultures because of their gender. They described how they wanted to be treated as equal. Future studies might focus on East Asian female sojourners who live a Western country.

Finally, the author believes that one of the strengths of this study is that it provides readers a second-hand experience of sojourning and possibly the feeling of being connected with the world of the participants. As the author listened to participants' experiences and read their transcripts again and again, she felt connected with each participant's world and she gained an understanding of the sojourn experience through the lens of each individual. The participants' own descriptions represent their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors related to their lives in East Tennessee. A result of this study is a

pure description of individuals which reflect the voice of sixteen East Asian sojourners' life story in East Tennessee. As the author listened to each of the sixteen participants, she felt their excitement, anxiety, sadness, and worries. The readers of this study may also feel a sense of connection with the sixteen East Asian sojourners and begin to understand the experience of living in a foreign country.

Two approaches to help sojourners' adjustment are suggested by the research reported here. One approach, from the therapist perspective, is to provide multicultural training and information regarding foreign cultures to those who will be working with sojourners. A second approach, from the clients' perspective, focuses on providing sojourners with outreach programs, workshops, and coping skills training seminars. Such programs, workshops, and seminars can make sojourn experiences less stressful. It may also be helpful to provide sojourners with on-going support groups to reduce emotional distress.

The findings of this study may have implications for future East Asian sojourners as they adjust to new host cultures. The participants in the study talked about the differences and difficulties they faced. They also described how they coped with those difficulties and what they had learned from their experiences. These findings may

benefit those who are considering sojourning in the future. By reading and understanding others' experience of sojourning, future sojourners may prepare themselves to cope with difficulties and find ways to enhance their sojourn experiences. Trainers of future sojourners can also benefit from this study by obtaining a better understanding of sojourn experiences and providing services to future sojourners that will enable their adjustment in foreign countries. These services may include providing information on the host culture such as identifying different manners, rules, and customs, and providing social skills training or stress/anxiety management groups. Trainers can also connect future sojourners with those who are also preparing for sojourns and also with those who have had successful sojourn experiences.

## REFERENCES

## **References**

- Adler, P. (1975). The transnational experience: An alternative view of culture shock. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 15*, 13-23.
- Alexander, A. A., Klein, M. H., Workneh, F., & Miller, M. H. (1981). Psychotherapy and the foreign student. In P. B. Pedersen, J. G. Draguns, W. J. Lonner, & J. E. Trimble (Eds.). *Counseling across cultures* (pp. 227-243). Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii.
- Allen, F. C. L., & Cole, J. B. (1987). Foreign student syndrome: Fact or fable. *Journal of American College Health, 35*, 182-186.
- Anderson, L. E. (1994). A new look at an old construct: Cross-cultural adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 18*, 293-328.
- Anderson, T. R., & Myer, T. E. (1985). Presenting problem, counselor contacts, and “no shows”; International and American college students. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 26*, 500-503.
- Atkinson, D. R., & Gim, R. H. (1989). Asian-American cultural identity and attitudes toward mental health services. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 36*, 209-212.
- Bae, C. K. (1971). The effects of traditional Korean values on social adjustment and brain drain of the Korean students in the U. S. A. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Wisconsin.
- Berry, J. W. (1980). Acculturation as varieties of adaptation. In A. M. Padilla (Ed.), *Acculturation: Theory, models and some new findings* (pp. 9-25). Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Berry, J. W. (1984). Cultural relations in plural societies: Alternatives to segregation and

- their sociopsychological implications. In B. Miller & M. Brewer (Eds.), *Groups in contact: The psychology of desegregation* (pp. 11-27). London: Academic Press.
- Berry, J. W. (1993). Ethnic identity in pluralistic societies. In M. E. Bernal & G. P. Knight (Eds.), *Ethnic identity: Formation and transmission among Hispanics and other minorities* (pp. 271-296). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Berry, J. W. (2003). Conceptual approaches to acculturation. In K. M. Chun, P. B. Organista, & G. Marin (Eds.), *Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement, and applied research* (pp. 17-37). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Berry, I. W., & Kim, U. (1988). Acculturation and mental health. In P. R. Dasen & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *Health and cross-cultural psychology: Toward applications* (pp. 207-236). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Berry, I. W., Kim, U., Minde, T., & Mok, D. (1987). Comparative studies of acculturative stress. *International Migration Review*, 21, 491-511.
- Berry, I. W., Kim, U., Power, S., Young, M., & Bujaki, M. (1989). Acculturation attitudes in plural societies. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 38, 158-206.
- Bleicher, J. (1980/1990). *Contemporary hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as method, philosophy and critique*. New York: Routledge.
- Bochner, S. (Ed.). (1981). *The mediating person: Bridges between cultures*. Cambridge, MA: Schenkman.

- Boyer, S. P., & Sedlacek, W. F. (1989). Noncognitive predictors of counseling students. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 67*, 404-407.
- Brickman, W. W. (1965). Historical development of governmental interest in international higher education. In S. Fraser (Ed.), *Government policy and international education* (pp. 17-46). New York: Wiley.
- Brislin, R., Cushner, K., Cherrie, C., & Young, M. (1986). *Intercultural interactions: A practical guide*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Castro, V. S. (2003). *Acculturation and psychological adaptation*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Chance, N. A. (1965). Acculturation, self-identification, and personality adjustment. *American Anthropologist, 67*, 372-393.
- Church, A. T. (1982). Sojourner adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin, 91*, 540-572.
- Colaizzi, P. F. (1978). Psychological research as the phenomenologist views it. In R. F. Valle & M. King (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological alternatives for psychology* (pp. 48-71). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cross, S. E. (1995). Self-contruals, coping, and stress in cross-cultural adaptation. *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology, 26*, 673-697.
- Dadfar, S., & Friedlander, M. L. (1982). Differential attitudes of international students toward seeking professional psychological help. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 29*, 335-338.
- Davis, T. M., & Chin, H. K. (2003). *Open doors 2003: Report on international educational exchange*. New York: Institute of International Education.
- Dillard, J. M., & Chisolm, G. B. (1983). Counseling the international student in a



- multicultural context. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 24, 101-105.
- Dressler, W. W., & Bernal, H. (1982). Acculturation and stress in a low-income Puerto Rican community. *Journal of Human Stress*, 8, 32-38.
- Dukes, S. (1984). Phenomenological methodology in the human sciences. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 23, 197-203.
- Furnham, A., & Bochner, S. (1982). Social difficulty in a foreign culture: An empirical analysis of culture shock. In S. Bochner (Ed.), *Cultures in contact* (pp. 161-198). New York: Pergamon.
- Furnham, A., & Bochner, S. (1986). *Culture shock: Psychological reaction to unfamiliar environments*. London: Methuen.
- Furnham, A., & Bochner, S. (2001). Sojourners: International students. In C. Ward, S. Bochner, A. Furnham (Eds.), *The Psychology of culture shock* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.), (pp. 142-167). Philadelphia, PA: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Gadamer, H. G. (1975). *Truth and method*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Garcia, M., & Lega, L. (1979). Development of a Cuban ethnic identity questionnaire. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 1, 247-261.
- Gergen, K. J. (1992). Toward a postmodern psychology. In Kvale, S. (Ed.), *Psychology and postmodernism* (pp. 17-30). London: Sage.
- Gim, R., Atkinson, D., & Whiteley, S. (1990). Asian-American acculturation, severity of concerns, and willingness to see a counselor. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 37, 281-285.
- Giorgi, A. (Ed.). (1985a). *Introduction to phenomenology and psychological research*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University.

- Giorgi, A. (Ed.). (1985b). Sketch of a psychological-phenomenological method. *Phenomenological and psychological research*. Pittsburg, PA: Duquesne University.
- Gordon, M. (1978). *Human nature, class, and ethnicity*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Golden, J. S. (1973). Student adjustment abroad: A psychiatrist's view. *International Educational and Cultural exchange*, 8, 28-36.
- Gullahorn, J. T., & Gullahorn, J. E. (1963). An extension of the U-curve hypothesis. *Journal of Social Issues*, 19, 33-47.
- Ho, M. K. (1992). *Minority children and adolescents in therapy*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Hull, W. (1978). *Foreign students in the United States of America*. New York: Praeger.
- Hyde, J. S., & Plant, E. A. (1995). Magnitude of psychological gender differences: Another side of the story. *American Psychologist*, 50, 159-161.
- Jacobson, E. H. (1963). Sojourn research: A definition of the field. *Journal of Social Issues*, 19, 123-129.
- Kim, Y. Y. (1988). *Communication and cross-cultural adaptation: An integrative theory*. Philadelphia, PA: Multilingual Matters.
- Klineberg, O., & Hull, W. F. (1979). *At a foreign university: An international study of adaptation and coping*. New York: Praeger.
- Kvale, S. (1983). The qualitative research interview. *Journal of Phenomenological*

- Psychology*, 14, 171-196.
- Kvale, S. (1992). Postmodern psychology: A contradiction in terms? In S. Kvale (Ed.), *Psychology and postmodernism* (pp. 31-57). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Leong, F. T. L., & Chou, E. L. (1996). Counseling international students. In P. B. Pedersen, J. G. Draguns, W. J. Lonner, & J. E. Trimble (Eds.), *Counseling across cultures* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.), (pp. 210-242). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Leong, F. T. L., & Sedlacek, W. E. (1986). A comparison of international and U.S. student preferences for help sources. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 27, 426-430.
- Lewthwaite, M. (1996). A study of international students' perspectives on cross-cultural adaptation. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 19, 167-185.
- Lin, J. G., & Yi, J. K. (1997). Asian international students' adjustment: issues and program suggestions. *College Student Journal*, 31, 473-479.
- Lysgaard, S. (1955). Adjustment in a foreign society: Norwegian Fullbright grantees visiting the United States, *International Social Science Bulletin*, 7, 45-51.
- Masuda, M., Matsumoto, G. H., & Meridith, G. M. (1970). Ethnic identity in three generations of Japanese Americans. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 81, 199-207.
- Matsui, M. (1988). Comparative study of female overseas students from Japan and the People's Republic of China at an American university. *Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)*, 1-45.

- May, W. C., & Jepsen, D. A. (1988). Attitudes toward counselors and counseling process: A comparison of Chinese and American graduate students. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 67*, 189-192.
- Mok, T. A. (1999). Asian American dating: Important factors in partner choice. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 5*, 103-117.
- Moyerman, D. R., & Forman, B. D. (1992). Acculturation and adjustment: A meta-analytic study. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 14*, 163-200.
- Nishida, H. (1985). Japanese intercultural communication competence and cross-cultural adjustment. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 9*, 247-269.
- Oberg, K. (1960). Cultural shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments. *Practical Anthropology, 7*, 177-182.
- Osvold, L. L., & Sadowsky, G. R. (1995). Eating attitudes of Native American and African American women: Differences by race and acculturation. *Explorations in Ethnic Studies, 18*, 187-210.
- Padilla, A. (1980). The role of cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty in acculturation. In A. Padilla (Ed.), *Acculturation* (pp. 47-84). Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Palmer, R. E. (1969). *Hermeneutics: Interpretation theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Pedersen, P. B. (1991). Counseling international students. *The Counseling Psychologist, 19*, 10-58.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1989). Phenomenological research methods. In R. S. Valle, & S. Halling (Eds.) *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology* (pp. 41-60). New York: Plenum Press.

- Pollio, H. R., Henley, T. B., & Thompson, C. J. (1997). *The phenomenology of everyday life*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Redfield, R., Linton, R., & Herskovits, M. (1936). Memorandum for the study of acculturation. *American Anthropologist*, 38, 149-152.
- Smith, M. E. (1976). Networks and migration resettlement: Cherchez la femme. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 49, 20-27.
- Social Science Research Council Summer Seminar on Acculturation (1954).  
Acculturation: An exploratory formulation. *American Anthropologist*, 56, 973-1002.
- Sodowsky, G. R., Kwan, K. L. K., & Pannu, R. (1995). Ethnic identity of Asians in the United States: Conceptualization and illustrations. In J. Ponterotto, M. Casas, L., Suzuki, & C. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (pp. 123-154). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Sodowsky, G. R., & Lai, E. W. M. (1997). Asian immigrant variables and structural models of cross-cultural distress. In A. Booth, A. C. Crouter, & N. Landale (Eds.), *Immigration and the family: Research and policy on U.S. immigrants* (pp. 211-234). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Sodowsky, G. R., Lai, E. W. M., & Plake, B. S. (1991). Moderating effects of sociocultural variables on acculturation attitudes of Hispanics and Asian Americans. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 70, 194-204.
- Sodowsky, G. R., & Plake, B. S. (1992). A study of acculturation differences among international people and suggestions for sensitivity to within group differences. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 71, 53-59.

- Sue, D. W., Bermier, J. E., Durran, A., Feinberg, L., Pedersen, P., & Smith, E. J. (1982). Position paper: Cross-cultural counseling competencies. *The Counseling Psychologist, 10*, 45-52.
- Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (1999). *Counseling the culturally-different: Theory and practice* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Wiley & Sons.
- Sue, S., & Zane, N. (1987). The role of culture and cultural techniques in psychotherapy: A critique and reformation. *American Psychologist, 42*, 37-45.
- Szapocznik, J., Kurtines, W., & Fernandez, T. (1980). Bicultural involvement and adjustment in Hispanic American Youths. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 4*, 353-365.
- Thomas, K., & Althen, G. (1989). Counseling foreign students. In P. B. Pedersen, J. G. Draguns, W. J. Lonner, & J. E. Trimble (Eds.), *Counseling across cultures* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), (pp. 205-242). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Thomas, S. P., & Williams, R. L. (1991). Perceived stress, trait anger, modes of anger expression, and health status of college men and women. *Nursing Research, 4*, 303-307.
- Thompson, J. T., Locander, W. B., & Pollio, H. R. (1989). Putting consumer experience back into consumer research: The philosophy and method of existential-phenomenology. *Journal of Consumer Research, 16*, 133-146.
- Tracey, T. J., Leong, F. T. L., & Glidden, C. (1986). Help seeking and problem perception among Asian Americans. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 33*, 331-336.
- Trimble, J. E. (2003). Introduction: Social change and acculturation. In K. M. Chun, P. B. Organista, & G. Marin (Eds.), *Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement,*

- and applied research*, (pp. 3-13). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Valle, R. S., & Halling, S. (Eds.). (1989). *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology*. New York: Plenum.
- Valle, R. S., & King, M. (1978). *An introduction to existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology* (pp. 3-16). New York: Plenum.
- Valle, R. S., King, M., & Halling, S. (1989). An introduction to existential-phenomenological thought in psychology. In R. S. Valle & S. Halling (Eds.) *Existential-Phenomenological perspectives in psychology*. New York: Plenum.
- Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Ontario, NY: State University of New York.
- Ward, C., Bochner, S., & Furnham, A. (2001). *The psychology of culture shock* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis.
- Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (1992). Locus of control, mood disturbance and social difficulty during cross-cultural transitions. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 16, 175-194.
- Ward, C., & Searle, W. (1991). The impact of value discrepancies and cultural identity on psychological and socio-cultural adjustment of sojourners. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 15, 209-225.
- Wehrly, B. (1988). Cultural diversity from an international perspective: II. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 16, 3-15.
- Wheeler, L., Reis, H. T., & Bond, M. H. (1989). Collectivism-Individualism in everyday social life: The Middle Kingdom and the melting pot. *Journal of Personality*

*and Social Psychology*, 57, 79-86.

Yuen, R. K. W., & Tinsley, H. E. A. (1981). International and American student expectancies about counseling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 28, 66-69.

Zak, I. (1973). Dimensions of Jewish-American identity. *Psychological Reports*, 33, 891-900.

Zimmermann, S. (1995). Perceptions of intercultural communication competence and international student adaptation to an American campus. *Communication Education*, 44, 321-335.



## **APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**

**DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF PARTICIPANTS**

# APPENDIX A

## DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF PARTICIPANTS

Table A-1. Demographic Data of Participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Length of Sojourning in the U. S.	Length of Sojourning in TN	Nationality
Mei	24	Female	1 year	1 year	Chinese
Kuo	26	Male	1 year	1 year	Chinese
Naoko	27	Female	3 1/2 years	3 1/2 years	Japanese
Liao	28	Female	3 years	1 year	Chinese
Fu	28	Male	2 years	2 years	Taiwanese
Lin	29	Female	5 years	5 years	Taiwanese
Akira	29	Male	1 year	2 months	Japanese
Hiroshi	29	Male	1 year	1 year	Japanese
Hwang	29	Male	3 years	3 years	Taiwanese
Minsu	29	Male	3 years	1 year	Korean
Chao	29	Male	4 years	2 years	Chinese
Chiu	30	Male	2 years	2 years	Taiwanese
Younghee	35	Female	8 years	5 years	Korean
Sumi	36	Female	4 years	4 years	Korean
Chulsu	36	Male	8 years	6 years	Korean
Satomi	53	Female	5 years	5 years	Japanese

**APPENDIX B**  
**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**  
**The Experience of Sojourning in East Tennessee:**  
**A Phenomenological Investigation**

I have been invited to participate in a study of the experience of sojourning in East Tennessee by individuals from East Asia. My part in this research will involve participating in an unstructured question-and-answer interview in which I describe my experience of living in East Tennessee. The interview will last approximately one hour.

Since my participation in this study involves a question-and-answer interview there should be no risk or discomfort on my part. My participation in this study is completely voluntary, and I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

The information I share about my experience will help provide the foundation for further research on the psychological experience of sojourning in East Tennessee by individuals from East Asia. My identity will in no way be revealed to anyone other than the interviewer at any time. The audio tapes will be numerically coded before they are transcribed in order to maintain my confidentiality. I understand that any information identifying me will be deleted from transcripts and written reports. I understand that I will be offered the opportunity to review the transcript that is prepared from the audio taped interview. I understand that portions of what I say in the interview may be reproduced in written reports. All original tapes will be erased after they have been transcribed. Signed consent forms will be kept for three years after completion of the study. The forms will be stored in a locked file box at a University of Tennessee facility. Tapes and any other identifying information will also be stored at the same location until they are erased at the completion of the study.

Upon completion of this study, the researcher will provide me with an explanation of the findings, if I so desire. Any questions I may have about this study may be answered by contacting Yoonmi Kim (318) 641-2335 or e-mail [kyoonmi@hotmail.com](mailto:kyoonmi@hotmail.com) (Address: Psychology Department, Pinecrest Developmental Center, P.O. Box 5191, Pineville, LA 71360) or her Advisor Dr. Mark Hector (865) 974-1984. If as a result of participating in this study, I want to discuss personal issues, I will contact Yoonmi Kim or Dr. Mark Hector.

I have read and understand this explanation of the research project and have had my questions regarding this study and/or my participation in it answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate.

---

Name

---

Date

---

Signature

---

Address

**APPENDIX C**

**RESEARCH TEAM MEMBER'S PLEDGE OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

## **RESEARCH TEAM MEMBER'S PLEDGE OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

### **The Experience of Sojourning in East Tennessee:**

#### **A Phenomenological Investigation**

As a member of this project's research team, I understand that I will be reading transcriptions of confidential interviews. The information in these transcriptions has been revealed by research subjects who participated in this project in good faith that their interviews would remain strictly confidential. I understand that I have a responsibility to honor this confidentiality agreement. I hereby agree not to share any information in these transcriptions with anyone except the primary researcher of this project, Yoonmi Kim (318) 641-2333; or other members of this research team. Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards, and I pledge not to do so.

---

Research Team Member

---

Date



**APPENDIX D**

**SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

## **APPENDIX D**

### **SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

I: Interviewer

P: Participant

I: Please tell me about your experience of living in East Tennessee.

P: Generally people here are very friendly. Sometimes I may sense some, just a little bit of segregation or discrimination but basically people here are pretty friendly.

I: Tell me more about segregation or discrimination.

P: Segregation is one thing. I noticed that probably because of my language barrier and cultural differences and probably also because of my Asian look. For example at work, I noticed that it's hard to be friends with Caucasian. I know that most people here are White. There are not many blacks here.

I: You mentioned that your physical and cultural differences, and language barrier.

P: We also have some workers or students, for example, from South America or Europe. Because of their mother tongues are closer to English. So it is easier for them to overcome language barrier and improve their English. I am sure that will be great plus for them to get into socialize with Americans and blend in. And also their culture is a lot more similar to America compared to between East Asian culture and White. Their look is like, it will be easier to be White and then will be Black, and then Asian. Asian look is more distinct for them. That is what I notice about me being Asian here.

I: So being different from the majority.

P: Right. But there are also very nice person. They are very friendly and they are willing to be friends with international students. There are people very friendly and patient and curious about other people. They don't just assume. They usually are very generous. They are willing to spend time with international students. That's something that I appreciate a lot.

I: Could you tell me more about discrimination?

P: Probably I didn't use that word very well. Probably more segregation.

I: You mean being apart from majority.

P: Right. Apart from main stream. I know that that will happen. If there are Americans come to Taiwan, Taiwanese people don't see them as in group. I can understand that. I

don't feel good when I am being segregated. When I feel segregation, I feel isolated, lonely, and discouraged, really, really discouraged.

P: Tell me more about your feeling isolated, lonely, and discouraged.

I: It is like I have to make conscious, constant, extra efforts to be extremely friendly, to do as much as I can, to be as modest as I can, things like that. To let them feel that like I am a good person. So they will at least willing to just interact with me at some basic level.

P: Okay.

I: I also like to talk about some of good people here. I know some good people here they are willing to talk to me and that is something that I appreciate the most. They are willing to tolerate my accent and my grammar errors and help me with my English. Like sometimes, I know what I am talking about but I don't know what is English words for it. They will help me. They will tell me about American cultures and they are also curious about Taiwanese culture. So we can exchange our ideas. In that situation I feel equal. I feel being respected. I feel that I am also valuable human being and that feels good. It's like I am not the secondary.

P: So with some people, you feel more belonged and respected. They are more willing to listen to you. They are more generous and you feel more valuable. But with some people, you feel being apart from main stream. You feel isolated and lonely. You have to put more effort to in order to gain their attention and respect.

I: Right. Something I noticed, many people said that in America, if you can do your job well then people are going to pay attention and respect you. I heard that. It's like here you have to prove your value.

P: You do really well and then you get respect.

I: Yeah. It's not only my field. When I talk to other students, some will say same thing. For example, for some international students, their field being biology or engineering, especially, probably not in engineering because Americans are minority, but biology or medicine, they noticed that if they don't have good results from their experiment, Americans are not going to pay attentions to that. It happens a lot when people just arrived their lab but after for example one year or two years, they got a lot of good results and people start to think, "Oh, this is someone that is worthy for me to socialize with. Their attitude become different and became more respectful.

P: So you have to show them or prove them you are good at something in order to gain respect.

I: Right.

P: You mentioned about a language barrier and talked about cultural differences. First, could you tell me more about a language barrier?

I: Language, I think I have improved a lot through past years. But still like, for example, like when I first arrived here, I could understand only 30 percent when I was in class. I couldn't understand my professor. But right now most of the time, I can understand 85%, most of the class. I noticed that in the past I felt so nervous talking to Americans when I had to, like socializing. I was always conscious about my poor English and my accent and my grammar errors. Now I just feel freer now. Sometimes I don't care about any grammar errors or anything. I just say whatever I want to say. Kind of like let them come to understand me. If they don't understand, they might look funny or they may ask me a question. When that happens, now I kind of know them more. For example, what will be this face mean. I noticed that they might be confused and I might restate myself. But still for example, there are more than two Americans together, they are going to speak fast.. They are too fast for me. Still it's hard for me to catch up. Five years later now, sometimes I can still get the key word, and I might ask them what did you mean here and ask them to repeat.

P: So your English has been improved a lot, but sometimes you still find it difficult to understand them when they speak too fast.

I: That is kind, for me to be able to more interact with American. It is still going to be a big con, weakness. If there is a one to one conversation, I can handle that. If it's one to two or three, I can only listen. Because I still working hard. I try to grasp as much information as I can. And my brain is so busy processing all the information I got. I cannot have any output. That's become...it's not me. I like to talk. With Americans, they might think I am timid or they might think that I am not expressive or I am too introverted.

P: So your language skills influence your social life.

I: A lot. I think cultural difference is something that is not as influential as language ability.

P: So you think language skills are the more essential thing for relationship (or socializing) or socializing?

I: Yes. Especially, people here are so busy. They don't have a lot of time to just wait for you to finish your sentence.

I: So you mentioned language barrier. You feel a lot freer. You feel that you improved a

lot. But still sometimes when there are more people and if they are talking too fast, then it's hard to understand their English. The language is the most influential thing for socialization.

P: Right.

I: You mentioned cultural differences. Can you tell me more about that?

P: One thing that I noticed is food. American food is very different. I remember when I just arrived here. When I was in Taiwan, I ate burgers before. I had a lot of American food there. But when I came here, I found it's different. Food here were more greasy, and something that I was not used to. Salad, it was very hard for me to chew. I felt like I was a cow. But now I become so used to it. I enjoy it now. Like Greek salad, that's my favorite.

I: So you are getting used to American food.

P: Yes, a whole a lot. And another thing about culture is American's confidence. They encourage people to be assertive and confident. But in Asia, people will think you are too proud and too arrogant. So when I just be myself, being Asian XX, people think I am too timid. That is what supposed to be. That is something people would value and respect if I am in Taiwan. That is something I have been keep working on. During the first two or three years I didn't realized that, but more and more recently I realized that. Because I am not only study but I have to work for my assistantship. I noticed that sometime I really have to be able to feel comfortable talking about some of the good things that I can do. I have to sell myself, and so people can see me. And when I am not being treated right, I have to stand up for myself. I have to say "No, I am not agree with you," because of this and that. That gave me good results.

I: So in your culture, being more humble and modest, being yourself is normal. But here being yourself then people misunderstand you as withdrawn.

P: Yes. They think I am nice person but they think I am timid.

I: Tell me more about other people seeing you as being timid. What do you mean by being timid?

P: I think sometimes, especially with American I am timid because I don't want to upset them by being rude of something. Because there are some rules that I don't know. So I might act differently or speak something different from what they would usually do, and that might be impolite. So when I do something I am always be careful. I don't want myself to do something really wrong. So sometimes I am not as free or as confident to be myself saying whatever I want to say as when I am with Taiwanese

students. And people see me as timid but actually I am trying to be respectful.

I: So sometimes your attitudes get misunderstood by people because of your being cautious and being more respectful.

P: They think I am not confident enough or I am not assertive.

I: So you're saying that being more assertive or standing up for yourself is more important here.

P: Yes. That is so important. Like what I said earlier, you have to be able to prove that your work is good. You have to earn your personal value. Not only you have to work hard but you also have to be able to sell yourself. So people can see it. People here are not like Asia. They will not pay a lot of attention and observe what you are doing. It's not good or bad. It's just different system. People have to do a lot of self-promotion or something. So they have to promote themselves.

I: So you mentioned selling yourself in order to gain respect and attention.

P: Right. Or to get whatever you deserve.

I: Tell me more about America and Taiwan being different system.

P: I don't know how to start. I use the word "system," but now I don't know because it can be anyway at work, in family, or at school. One thing that is different here is that you call by first name of anybody. That's weird for me. Because you can even call your professors by their first name or call boss by his or her first name or call dad or mom by his or her first name. But in Taiwan, it's never going to happen. If that happens, it means that they are in a big fight. They do not respect each other any more. So that is something that I noticed. Interpersonal relationship is different. Here's not that hierarchical. Here is more equal.

I: Tell me more about that. In Taiwan, it's more hierarchical and here, it is more equal.

P: Right here I noticed that professors joke a lot with students and students make fun of professors even though professor might be 50 or 60 years old. But in Taiwan, young people are supposed to respect old people. They are not supposed to make a fun of their professors or their parents. I feel that Americans appreciate humors a lot more than Taiwanese people do. That's what I noticed. People like to be funny here. They think it's good thing, but in Taiwan, people might think that fun person is silly or something. So that's something different.

I: So in between different age, there is more respect in Taiwan. Also humor is more valued here.

P: Right.

I: Anything else related to different culture?

P: One thing I noticed that Americans are very confident and they are really optimistic.

That's something I really, not envy, but I really like me to be like that. It seems to be like that they are happier. They seem to know how to have fun in their life. They are very efficient, too, in their work. On the other hand, appreciate humor, appreciate physical activity, appreciate outdoor nature, or they can do something very silly for fun. People think having hobby is good but in Taiwan, people think you should be a good student. You can just study. You should not do anything. No sports, and no hobbies, or you are not a good student. When you are working, you have to be loyal to your company. You have to give whole of yourself to a company. In Taiwan, it's hard to be assertive. For example, it's 5 o'clock. I finished my work, but if my boss is still here then probably I need to stay here because I don't want my boss to think I am lazy. But people here appreciate individualism more. They respect that "Okay, you have your personal life, too. If you take care of yourself, well, then you are going to be more efficient at work." So the whole philosophy is different here.

I: That's very interesting point. So you talked about differences between your country and America and how people here are more optimistic and also they enjoy their life and leisure life or outdoor activities or hobbies, or they enjoy humor and at the same time they can be efficient at their work, but in Taiwan you should dedicate yourself for your company. And you also said individualism is more appreciated here.

P: Can I talk something about being students here?

I: Sure.

P: I noticed that being international student here is that we have really small social circle because of language or culture, or because we don't have a car, we cannot afford it. We feel really lonely because we are being isolated. I noticed that Taiwanese students like to have a lot of parties. These people won't be very close if they were in Taiwan going to the same graduate school. But here you have no choice. You have to hang out with people or you will be alone. Here also it's really hard to find good romantic relationship. It is not easy to find a good partner because the number of students is limited. There are more males than females.

I: So here you have small social circle. Not many Taiwanese people here, so there is limitation of meeting a lot of different people. So if you are not involved with this small circle, then you will be isolated.

P: Right. If you want to date with someone, it's hard to have your own privacy.

I: Tell me more about that.

P: I think like here it is so competitive to have a girl friend because there are more males than females. If there is a good girl, a lot of guys want to date her because they need to find the partner for themselves. But because of age differences, personality differences, or personal background might be different. And the most important thing is that the number of population is so small here. There are not a lot you can choose from. When you start to date someone, sometimes it's a lot of pressure because you might upset a lot of people by choosing this person, it means you are rejecting others. So it is very hard to balance the friendship and your own personal life.

I: So you said it could be a lot of (P: Pressure) pressure?

P: It could be a lot of interpersonal pressure. That is something that I have noticed. Sometimes when you start to date with someone, you might be isolated from that point because some people might feel upset, perhaps some jealousy in it. I think romantic relationship is very important because it give us a lot of emotional support and having someone is really good. I really enjoy it. But when I was dating my husband, there was a lot of pressure that I got from my group. I almost had to isolated myself from the group for almost about a year.

I: That's really interesting. Tell me more about the pressure. When you were dating someone, there were more pressure from your Taiwanese group because they may feel jealous?

P: Right. Sometimes they may feel jealous. For example, this guy gets a girlfriend, then other guy get jealous. This guy who has a girlfriend now will spend a lot of time by themselves. So we as a group cannot spend as much as we used to be and everyone here is lonely. It means that if one of us leaves the group, then we feel empty like we are not together. We are not as same as anymore. So that jealousy could be a gender thing but also it could be that "I lose the friendship."

I: It's very interesting. Let me summarize what you have talked about so far. You talked about people here, some people being very friendly, very generous, trying to help you, and being patient with you. And you feel valued with them. There are also some people make you feel like you are different and you feel isolated from the main stream and you feel like you have to work harder to get respect and attention from them. You talked about proving yourself, how important it is to be assertive and to stand up for yourself in order to get respect. You talked about language barrier. Your language has improved a lot and language skills are very important to socialize. You



talked about cultural differences like food. You also talked about differences between Taiwanese and Americans, and how system is different here. Also you talked about Americans being very confident and optimistic, and enjoying their leisure life or outdoor activities. But people in Taiwan, they have to dedicate their time for the company. You talked about relationship between Taiwanese. You talked about having small circle since here are not many Taiwanese students. You talked about problems of having small circle of Taiwanese students because sometimes when a person has a relationship with someone, he or she will get pressure from group members because they think they are losing their friends. So what else is standing out for you about living in East Tennessee?

P: I think students' finance is a big thing. If you can get a good assistantship, then you are lucky and you feel safe. If you can't get assistantship or your assistantship only pays like 300 dollars a month, then you could have struggles or that will be really scary and stressful thing.

I: So not having financial security makes you feel scary?

P: Right.

I: What else?

P: Not really. Those are most important things in my experience of living here.

I: Thank you so much.

P: You're welcome.

## **VITA**

Yoonmi Kim was born in Taegu, South Korea on May 13, 1971. She grew up in Taegu, graduating from Kyung-Hwa girls' High school in 1990. She went on to the Kyungbook National University, in Taegu, majored in Biology, and received a Bachelor of Science degree in February, 1994.

After graduation from college, she worked as an English teacher at the private institute for elementary and middle school students for a year. She entered the graduate school majoring in Counseling Psychology at the Kyungbook National University in 1996. She completed master level course work in summer, 1998 and transferred to the doctoral program in Counseling Psychology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in fall, 1998. She completed her predoctoral psychology internship at the Pinecrest Developmental Center/Central Louisiana State Hospital in Pineville, Louisiana, in August, 2004.