MEANINGFUL INTERCULTURAL PRACTICE:
AMERICAN AND INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS
ON A U.S. CAMPUS

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Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) intercultural relational model was used as the analytic framework for a better understanding of intercultural practice among international and American graduate students with their so-called culture other on a U.S. mid-sized college campus. Data were collected and analyzed in the two phases. In Phase I, the subjective views of intercultural practice on campus were collected from 12 research participants through semi-structured interviews. In Phase-II, Q methodology employed enabled 4 out of 12 participants to model their subjective views on the issues of intercultural interactions and relations on campus through operating three Q-sorts respectively. Each Q-sort was comprised of the 42 statements generated from the interview data in Phase I. These 42 statements were statistically grouped by factor analyses. By the end, there were three types of intercultural practice emerging: (a) action-oriented; (b) knowledge-skill oriented; (c) seeking intercultural field for self-fulfillment.

The research participants cut through the conventional conception of group identity bipolarized as “international” and “domestic” through unstable-othering for forging connection and developing relationships in an interchangeable interpersonal-intercultural manner. That promised them to move among different communities of practice and unnecessarily being the full membership of these communities. The current study made the theoretical contributions in the following perspectives: (a)
intercultural adaptation as a one-way relation; (b) “small culture” among students defining their communities of intercultural practice. By the end, the constructive suggestions were put forward for higher education institutions designing intercultural educational program for promoting intercultural interactions among students.

**Key words:** intercultural experience; international and American graduate students; unstable othering; community of intercultural practice; adaptation as a one-way relation
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The United States has for many years been the world’s leading destination for international students enrolled in higher education institutions abroad (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2017). U.S. public research universities are increasingly turning to international student recruitment to offset state funding cuts to higher education (IIE, 2017). Maintaining a steady increase in international applications and ensuring enrollment across both the graduate and undergraduate levels appears to be a common goal of university presidents and boards of trustees in the United States. The U.S. universities go to overseas recruiting fairs or have their own offices in the targeted countries. For example, the university in the current study has its China Center and India Center. However, according to the Open Doors 2017 data, due to the changes of immigration policy, international student enrollment in the United States slowed considerably for the 2016–2017 academic year (IIE, 2017). Nearly 40% of U.S. higher education institutions reported a decline in their total number of international applications (Redden, 2017).

Whether U.S. schools are working to pull them in or considering how best to accommodate the current population, international students have become a population that is impossible to ignore. In 2016–2017, the number of international students who studied in U.S. higher educational institutions reached 1.08 million. International students made up nearly 4% of total student enrollment (at the graduate and undergraduate level combined) in U.S. higher education institutions (IIE, 2017). This large number of international students results in significant revenue to their host institutions and makes a significant economic impact; international students and their
dependents supply over 27 billion dollars to the U.S., with 74% of their funds coming from sources outside the United States according to the Open Doors 2014 Report (IIE, 2015).

Along with their significant economic contribution, international students can also offer international and global perspectives to host campuses, including new sources of knowledge and cross-continental academic partnerships. However, this potential benefit is hindered by fragmenting intercultural interactions within academic and social communities, particularly for international students. Though the high-quality courses and diverse experiences available at U.S. universities are attractive to international students, it is critical that higher education institutions integrate international students into their campuses successfully in order to reap the maximum benefits of the program and to continue attracting students from other countries. The low intercultural interaction rate between international and American students on campus is a consistent issue affecting both educators and institutional administrators (Trice, 2004; Williams & Johnson, 2011; Wang, Ahn, Kim & Lin-Siegler, 2017).

In the context of internationalization of higher education institutions, international students constitute an important source of diversity for the student population. It is commonly accepted that higher education institutions can utilize the presence of international students and scholars to seed intercultural and international learning, and to promote the development of intercultural competence among domestic students (Deardorff, 2009; Harrison & Peacock, 2009, 2010; Pandit, 2013). It is also expected that through their intercultural interactions with domestic students, international students can be better integrated into their host campuses. By the time
their graduation, colleges and universities expect American students to have developed intercultural competence as a student learning outcome (Deardorff, 2006). However, the research findings on intercultural interaction rates between international and American students are not optimistic. Among 497 international students at a U.S. Midwestern university, only 50% socially interacted with American students at least every other week, and 9% never did during a semester (Trice, 2004). Among 80 American students in a southern mid–size university, less than half (43%) reported having one or more international student friends (Williams & Johnson, 2011). From an international student’s perspective, forming friendships with American students is challenging and rare. Glass, Gomez, and Urzua (2014) noted this issue and put forward the question: Is it necessary for universities to promote friendship between American and international students on campus? Their findings discuss the need for future research on potential interventions to enhance international students’ social and academic adaptation to college.

Though it is confirmed that international and domestic students are perceived to live in “a world apart” (Montgomery, 2010), the steps forward are not necessarily clear. It is reasonable to assume that for successful intercultural interactions, the parties need to adapt to each other. Bennett, Volet, and Fozdar (2013) and Evanoff (2006) proposed that beyond adaptation, both parties need to co-construct the shared meanings of their intercultural relations, emphasizing cultural similarities while exploring differences. Both studies viewed student cultural diversity on campus as mutually inclusive; the outcome depends on both American and international students and neither group can achieve it independently.
Many studies on international students have presented intercultural competence
development at host campuses as “a moral imperative, especially in relation to how the
Other (international students) should become or act” (Dervin & Layne, 2013, p. 5). For
example, the U.S. higher education host institutions develop “international student
handbooks” to provide international students with knowledge of how “American
culture and customs” functions academically and socially on campuses. The possibility
of jointly constructed interactions in which international students and American
students have space to negotiate and co-construct intercultural relations has been
largely ignored in the “international student handbooks.”

**Problem Statement**

The failure of the policy and practice at institutional level to promote authentic
reciprocity in academic and social relationships between international and domestic
students is apparent. These polarized “us” and “them” intercultural relations prevent
opportunities for domestic students to benefit from internationalization and becoming
globally oriented. Low intercultural interaction rates between international and
domestic students becomes the primary concern among institutions with a sincere
interest in internationalization aiming at intercultural competence development as one
of learning outcomes among all students on campus.

Theoretically, the current intercultural development models take a one-sided
perspective, such as students studying abroad (Park, 2002; Taylor, 1994a; Yeboah &
Young, 2012). Scholars emphasize the importance of relationships in intercultural
competence development and call for more focus on the relational perspective
(Deardorff, 2009). The issue is in assessing the real-world dynamic of students’
intercultural competence development only via a third party’s observation or
evaluation, such as that of intercultural educators and researchers (Griffith, Wolfeld, Armon, Rios, & Liu, 2016). The current study sheds light on both of international and American graduate students’ personal translations of their intercultural practices and their interpretations of their relationships at a U.S. campus.

In the literature on intercultural relations taking the one-sided perspective, such as international student integration into their host institutions, variations by nationality, English proficiency (Glass, Buss & Braskamp, 2013), gender, and race/ethnicity (Glass & Westmont, 2014) have been attended. There is a tendency to make sense of intercultural relations between international and American students across a single social-academic marker axis, such as nationality combined with English language proficiency, while downplaying the context of these interactions and relations. Lacking the adequate literature about the intercultural relationships from the American graduate students’ perspectives induces the misconception about intercultural interaction and relation putting burden on one party. Recent researchers (Gregoriou, 2013; Imamura & Zhang, 2014; Qin, 2009) encourage thinking about the complexity of students’ intercultural experiences from a relational perspective in addition to their immediate intercultural contexts.

**Purpose of the Study**

In the current study, I explore the nature of intercultural interactions and relations between international and American graduate students on a mid-sized college campus. I focus on identifying the students’ preferred approaches to intercultural relations in their interactions with cultural other, and whether or not these approaches tend toward the individualistic knowledge-oriented approach (Shi, 2007), which echoes Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) proposal that sojourners and domestics need to be
equipped with general and specific cultural knowledge and intercultural communication skills and strategies. Alternatively, I assess if their approach tends toward “self-in-the-other and the other-in-the-self,” which Imahori and Lanigan (1989) originally defined as the way intercultural interactants adapt to each other for successful intercultural relations. I use the terms “self-oriented approach” and “relation-oriented approach” to evaluate which approach the research participants preferred in their intercultural practices. For the motivation for intercultural interactions, I have also adopted Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) terms “self-awarded” and “relation-awarded” to indicate how the participants value intercultural relations.

The majority of the previous empirical research on intercultural interactions is on the experiences of those who study abroad, rather than focusing on students’ intercultural experiences at their domestic campus. Theoretically, the current intercultural development models also mostly take this one-sided perspective (Park, 2002; Taylor, 1994a; Yeboah & Young, 2012). Deardorff (2006, 2009) proposed that engaging in “meaningful intercultural interactions” is the first step for building real and deep intercultural relationships with others. The purpose of this study is to explore how both international and domestic graduate students conceptualize intercultural relations and how they experience intercultural interactions—how they discern each other’s viewpoints within intercultural interactions and their relations with their so-called cultural other. The study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of meaningful intercultural interactions and the approaches that international and American graduate students use and/or construct in intercultural practice on campus.
**Research Questions**

The current study is an interpretive investigation into intercultural relations between international and American students in an American university. Through semi-structured interviews in Phase I and Q sorts in Phase II, this study examines how international and American students perceive their intercultural relations and experience intercultural interactions with cultural other. It also identifies which approach they prefer during intercultural interactions at American campus.

This case study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do international and American graduate students conceptualize intercultural relations on their campus?
2. How do international and American graduate students experience interactions with cultural other on their campus?
3. What are some commonalities and/or discrepancies among participants in their understandings of relations with cultural other on their campus?
4. What kind of approach(es) do participants/graduate students employ in their interactions with cultural other?

**Analytic Framework: A Relational Model of Intercultural Competence**

The current study adopts Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) relational model for intercultural competence development as an analytic interpretive framework for examining international and American graduate students’ interactions with cultural other on campus. Imahori and Lanigan (1989) proposed approaching intercultural competence from relational and interactive perspectives. Their relational model defined competence within relationships; intercultural competence is viewed as deriving from dynamic interactive processes of intercultural relations between
international sojourners and their hosts. Those interactants who satisfy each other’s needs in communication are considered relationally competent (Imahori & Lanigan, 1989; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). Ideal intercultural competence here involves communication effectiveness, relational validation, intimacy, relational satisfaction, relational commitment, relational stability, and uncertainty reduction (Imahori & Lanigan, 1989). To achieve such effective outcomes such as mutual satisfaction in intercultural communication, both dyadic members need to adapt their behavior to their partners. One individual’s behavior, however appropriate, may not ensure effective outcomes because the other dyadic partner(s) may not behave as expected. Imahori and Lanigan (1989) posited that interculturally competent sojourners not only adapt their behaviors to their hosts, but also help the hosts to adjust their behavior.

**Relational Model of Intercultural Competence**

Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) relational model consists of two interactants, a sojourner and a host. “Each dyadic member conceptually possesses three major elements contributing to relational outcome, that is, competence, experience and goal” (p. 277). They further conceptualize competence into three dimensions: intercultural communication skill and strategy, motivation and cultural knowledge (Appendix N). These three dimensions influence relational outcomes, interaction goals, and/or the experience of intercultural interactions (Imahori & Lanigan, 1989).

Imahori and Lanigan (1989) proposed specific variables of knowledge and motivation that will influence the effectiveness of intercultural interactions. For example, “knowledge” includes the knowledge of both specific culture(s) and general cultural knowledge; knowledge of the host language; and knowledge of interaction rules. The variable “motivation” consists of specific attitudes toward the other’s
culture, such as the perceived sociocultural distance between sojourner and host, positive attitudes toward members of the other culture, and general attitudes about foreign cultures such as ethnocentrism or open-mindedness. The relational framework also emphasizes specific attitudes toward the interaction partner as important variables of relational competence, such as social anxiety, unconditional regard, assertiveness, attentiveness, attraction, and attitudinal similarity. The third dimension of effective intercultural interaction competence is skill. Imahori and Lanigan (1989) proposed that interactants can display respect for their partner in several ways: using proper interaction body language; displaying empathy; skillfully managing interactions; and tolerating ambiguity. Hosts can use communication skills such as speech accommodation; similarly, a sojourner should be capable of applying linguistic skills to demonstrate host language proficiency. The interactants behave in ways that enhance interpersonal attraction, such as being friendly, and show their concern or interest.

Besides these three dimensions of relational competence, Imahori and Lanigan (1989) argued that there are two other elements that can influence effective interaction outcomes: goals and past experiences. Goals directly influence the three dimensions of competence (Imahori & Lanigan, 1989). However, individuals’ perceptions of their competence level also influence the nature of their goals. For example, linguistically competent sojourners may set a difficult goal, such as anticipating intimate intercultural relations with cultural other, while sojourners who realize their low level of competence might aim to have acquaintanceships.

Individuals’ previous experiences, both positive and negative, also influence their competence (Imahori & Lanigan, 1989). Individuals with prior successes in
intercultural interactions will be more willing to engage in new interactions. Their previous positive experiences may have equipped them with a high level of knowledge, skills, and motivation for intercultural interaction. Several scholars (R. J. Bennett et al., 2013; Park, 2002; Taylor, 1994a) have found empirical evidence that previous intercultural experiences influence intercultural relations. Significantly, “both dyadic members’ competence, past experience, and goals influence the nature of relational outcome and vice versa” (Imahori & Lanigan, 1989, p. 281). In interactions, both the sojourner’s and the host’s individual agency co-shapes their intercultural relations and co-produces effective outcomes in interactions.

**Limitations**

The current study may face the following potential limitations. The first potential limitation is that the research findings might be impacted by participants who are unwilling to present their authentic thoughts on intercultural relations. Afraid of being labeled as “stereotyping” and “discriminating against” the cultural other, the research participants might avoid talking about their negative intercultural relations (Halualani, 2008). The meaningful intercultural interactions might be narrowed down to only “positive” experiences even though both positive and negative experiences are sources for intercultural learning; both are meaningful intercultural interactions.

The second potential limitation is my identity as an international student. My insider identity bolsters my credentials in building a study on intercultural relations and interactions with American students. However, that does not mean that I have monopolistic access to understandings of intercultural interactions. The challenge for me is how to balance myself as an international student and a researcher in the interview process. That struggle will likely not impact the validity and reliability of
the research findings, but it might impact how I discuss these findings. My international student identity endows me with unique insights into these meaningful intercultural interactions and relations. It is what Merton’s (1972) notion of “insider as insighter” (p. 15). However, this insider position might induce ethnocentrism.

Significance of Study

The contributions of the current study would be of interest to intercultural education scholars and faculty members, as well as institutional administrators interested in internationalization at their campuses. The research findings will provide them with theoretical and empirical information regarding one way of looking at intercultural and international education, and the nature of developing intercultural competences from an intercultural relation perspective. Since only a minority of domestic students have opportunities to study abroad or immerse themselves in different sociocultural settings, the current study adds to the domestic students’ perspective, which has been neglected in the literature.

This study also contributes to the literature on intercultural perspectives of the internationalization of higher education. Within higher education institutions with an interest in internationalization, internationalization at the home campus is considered to be positive and beneficial in terms of intercultural competence development, a student learning outcome (Deardroff, 2009). The plethora of studies on the influences of international students on their host campus academically and socially have created a fruitful context for the study of intercultural interaction through the lens of relations between international and domestic students. However, a substantial proportion of the discourse of these research studies is rooted within the assimilationist assumption that international students can and should be better integrated into their host campuses
in terms of English proficiency development, academic adaptation, and social adaptation. By viewing intercultural relations in the binary way that they inevitably exist, this study includes and gives agency to both parties. My research contributes to intercultural education research by uncovering how institutions tend to signify and define “intercultural” relations between international and American students on campus: in a fixed manner within an ethnocentric discourse.

The current study also adds to the empirical evidence on intersubjectivity as a component of renewing intercultural education. This research views the phenomenon called “unstable othering” as a way of understanding how international and American graduate students attempt to cut through conventional conceptions of group identity in order to forge connections and develop relationships with fellow students with diverse cultural backgrounds. That focus adds to understandings of the ways in which students navigate intercultural interactions, using social and cultural resources as a way to gain entry as well as to foster various exclusionary practices. Institutions have historically designed intercultural education programs by seeking student unity in the face of cultural diversity, instead of student unity in cultural diversity. The latter approach to intercultural dynamics is increasingly important in an era that is still coming to grips with the “on the ground” challenges of educational globalization.

From a methodology perspective, the current study offers a specific example of how Q-methodology provides nuance and details that can help in capturing the attributes of the ideal intercultural field on campus. Instead of one-way intercultural adaptation being the norm, interactions in an ideal field would be meaningful to dyadic members in each intercultural dialogic encounter. The students would view the well-being of others as part of their own growth or self-fulfillment (Tanaka,
This study also proposes that Q-methodology successfully captures these dialogic encounters for intercultural learning on campus (Bai, Eppert, Scott, Tait, & Nguyen, 2014). In such encounters, students are not only sharing their realities, but also creating a new reality in their dynamics of intercultural interaction and relations on campus. Intercultural educators and administrators in higher education institutions can use the information about these new realities to move forward. They can use the discourse in their institution to search for effective actions in promoting intercultural interactions and understandings among students with diverse cultural backgrounds on campus.

Need for the Study

Authentic intercultural relationship building is derived from intercultural interactions with the characteristic of reciprocity. Following current theoretical arguments in the area of intercultural competence development, the current study considers both international and American students’ voices on how they conceptualize and perceive their intercultural relations and how that impacts their approach(es) to intercultural interactions. J. Zhang and Goodson (2011) pointed out that micro- and macro-level factors co-define international students’ sociocultural adjustment in their host universities. They proposed that macro-level factors need more attention, such as institutional context. One potential way to identify macro-level factors might be through examining students’ contextualized intercultural experiences.

Research studies around the world (Breuning, 2007; Jon, 2013; Kohnova, 2012; Parson, 2010; Peterson, Briggs, Dreasher, Horner, & Nelson, 1999; Urban & Palmer, 2014) have documented the actual low intercultural interactions rate between international students. The intercultural research fails to identify a discrepancy
between the actual low intercultural interaction rate between international and domestic students and the higher education institutions’ intention of developing intercultural competence as a student learning outcome through the internationalization of higher education. Another discrepancy relates to the reality of intercultural competency often being learned from cultural shock, which is limited to those who immerse themselves in other cultures (Haigh, 2013), such as international students or American students studying abroad. The intercultural experiences of American students without studying abroad have been less documented in the intercultural literature. This clashes with institutional expectations of intercultural competence development on campus as a student learning outcome among all students too. The current study begins contribution to the theoretical and empirical findings regarding the relational nature of intercultural competence development. The research findings would inspire the higher education institutions to develop intercultural education policy and programs for promoting authentic reciprocity in academic and social relationships between international and domestic students aiming at their intercultural competence development.

**Definition of Terms**

American culture: American culture as a term used in the “International Student Handbook” developed by the U.S. higher education institutions includes the information about the basic American etiquettes such as punctuality, courtesy, sharing and privacy, apparel, dining and tips, and so forth. In the research studies on international and American students’ intercultural communication, American culture is vaguely used for differentiation of international and the U.S. campus cultures.
Cultural other: In the current intercultural study, the term “cultural other” lies on the cultural differences beyond the differences induced by other demographic factors such as gender, social economic status, age, sex, and so forth. “(T)he idea of the Cultural other is intimately associated with globalization, for it is about who we are and who they are and what happens when the two meet” (Sanderson, 2004, p. 7). Sanderson challenged the West people to respond to the Cultural other using Western ideology: the stable binary opposition. Phenomenologically, this binary opposition in education roots in the concept of “otherness,” a quality of not being alike, such as two or more groups with distinguishing features. “‘Otherness’ is a way of defining one’s own ‘self’ or one’s own ‘identity’ in relation to others . . . Education as one of major agents can construct or deconstruct ‘otherness’” (Mengstie, 2011, p. 7). “Central idea of otherness lies on the divide” (Mengstie, 2011, p. 8). Like outsider and insider, when talking about international and domestic students, it is the issue of “Us” and “Them.” According to Mengstie, this division induces stereotyping which maintains the insider and outsider order. Otherness is the result of identity construction through continuous interaction.

Intercultural interaction: Intercultural refers to “a particular kind of interaction or communication among people, one in which difference in cultures plays a role in the creation of meaning” (M. J. Bennett, 2013, p. 11). The term “intercultural” stresses the process of interaction competencies (Holm & Zilliac, 2009). M. J. Bennett (2013) used cross-cultural and intercultural interchangeably to refer to communication among people from two or more different cultures. The current study uses the term intercultural to refer to the interactions and relations among international and American students with cultural other on campus.
Intercultural interaction can be understood as the formation of intercultural relations among international and American students—either positive or negative. Differences in cultures play a critical role in this process of negotiation/construction of meaning within intercultural relation. The nature of this interaction is dynamic and process-oriented. The current study uses the term intercultural interaction, which focuses more on the intercultural response to another’s action, instead of intercultural communication, which focuses on linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse perspectives in sharing information (Shi, 2007).

Intercultural relation: The term intercultural relation in this study refers to the relational perspectives of intercultural competence. Imahori and Lanigan (1989) described this framework by casting international and host students as mirror-imaged interlocutors; both are modeled in terms of their motivations, knowledge, and skills for intercultural interactions. International and host students’ motivations, knowledge, and skills interact with their goals and experiences. The indexes of ideal relational outcomes of intercultural competence include effectiveness, relational satisfaction, intimacy, commitment, uncertainty reduction, and interpersonal solidarity (Imahori & Lanigan, 1989).

International students: International student or foreign student refers to “an individual from another country who is in the United States temporarily on a student visa, and who is registered at an accredited institution of higher education” (Bevis & Lucas, 2007, p. 11). In the current study, the terms international student, foreign student, and sojourner are interchangeable.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on international students primarily focus on their psychosocial adjustment to life and their experiences of acculturation in Western universities. In their systematic review of U.S. studies on international students’ intercultural adjustment to U.S. universities, J. Zhang and Goodson (2011) shed light on the predictors of sociocultural adjustment, including self-assessed English proficiency and satisfaction in amount of contact with Americans. Smith and Khawaja (2011) conducted a review of the studies on international students’ acculturation experiences with specific attention on the possible acculturative stressors encountered by international students at their host universities in Western countries, such as language, academic stress, lack of social network, discrimination, and lifestyle stress. J. Zhang and Goodson (2011) found that the U.S. literature on international students’ sociocultural adjustment is focused on the micro-level. They proposed that macro-level factors need more attention, such as cultural and institutional context. Micro- and macro-level factors co-define international students’ sociocultural adjustment (J. Zhang & Goodson, 2011).

In this chapter, I comb the literature on intercultural interactions between international and domestic students and discuss the possibilities for building intercultural relations. First, I focus my attention on the historical shifts in international student policy in the United States to look for opportunities at the macro policy level. The historical picture provides us with social-cultural clues for understanding American students’ intercultural interactions and relations with international students. Secondly, I discuss the tools, suggestions, and language that
researchers employ around the world to explain the crux of the matter regarding intercultural practices. Researchers have argued for several explanations for the intercultural interaction issues between international and domestic students. Thirdly, I step into the literature on intercultural relations between international and American graduate students at U.S campuses and identify how they conceptualize and perceive their own intercultural relations. Lastly, I focus on the theoretical possibility of promoting intercultural interactions and relations among international and American students.

**Background: Shifts in International Student Policy in the United States**

“Today” in international and intercultural higher education in the U.S. contains strong roots from all “yesterdays.” By following the international education timeline provided by the Institute of International Education (IIE), we can trace the shifts in international student policy in the United States. To say that these shifts go directly from *aid* (obligation) in the earlier years of the 20th century to *trade* (financial benefits) in late years of the 20th century, then finally to the internationalized knowledge and developing international academic partnerships of the 21st century, is an oversimplification. The relationship between international students and their host countries or host institutions is of mutual interest (Chandler, 1989). However, historically, this relationship has at times been one-sided and included only one-way adaptation.

In the earlier years of the 20th century, low international student enrollment in U.S. higher education institutions meant that these institutions paid little attention to that population (Bevis & Lucas, 2007). International students in this scenario were understood as the recipients of development aid from the United States. They acted
as knowledge carriers across national borders (Altbach, 1989). Their experiences in the American political, cultural, social, and economic environment became a potential force for political and technical development in their home countries.

In the 1950s, the number of foreign students increased to 1% of the total student enrollment (Bevis & Lucas, 2007). The 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act created the F-1 visa for nonimmigrant foreign students as full-time students studying in U.S. higher education institutions (Committee on Policy Implications of International Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Scholars in the United States, Board on Higher Education and Workforce & National Research Council, 2005). More colleges and universities began to consider the multiple institutional responsibilities involved (Bevis & Lucas, 2007). In 1954, the Institute of International Education (IIE) published the first “Open Doors Report” of data on international students studying in the U.S., sharing this data among the host institutions and potential host institutions (Koh, 2015).

In the 1960s, the U.S. Federal Government, for geopolitical reasons, passed three key acts—Fulbright-Hays, the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act, and The Peace Corps Act—aimed at increasing mutual understanding between Americans and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchanges. During the 1960s and 1970s, according to the Open Doors Report, international student enrollment increased dramatically, from 50,000 in 1960 to over 200,000 in 1976. IIE developed diverse programs to meet the growing needs of students in other countries, to disseminate information about U.S. higher education, and to aid international students studying the U.S., such as the Host Family Program,
South African Education programs, and so forth. By the end of the 1970s, the United States was the largest host country for international students (IIE, 2014).

In the 1980s, universities shifted into marketization agendas with an emphasis on advertising U.S. higher education for promoting international student recruitment. Student mobility, which was increased via generous scholarship plans for students from developing countries in the 1960s and 1970s, became the crucial strategy of higher education institutions responding to globalization. Chandler (1989) argued, Humanitarianism and internationalism still exist as rationales for foreign student enrollments. But they have been overshadowed in both rhetoric and reality during the 1980s by the increased emphasis on pragmatics: by the money to be derived from foreign student tuitions, by the purchases and expenditures made by foreign students as tourists, and by the less measurable but ultimately even more important contribution to be made by foreign graduates as future financial and diplomatic allies. (p. viii)

In the 1990s, in the era of global competition for international students, student mobility turned into a big business (Knight, 2012). International students were thought of as a source of revenue, in addition to the benefits they provided students native to the host countries. Higher education was transformed from a public good to a trade and commodity (Altbach, 2006). U.S. universities began actively recruiting international students (Pandit, 2013). The U.S. university system was advertised as one of the world’s finest, with outstanding programs and resources available for every student.

Coming into the 21st century, U.S. universities and colleges began to situate their efforts recruiting international students as a part of an internationalization
strategy (American Council on Education [ACE], 2011) with economic, academic, and social imperatives. For U.S. domestic students, international students brought opportunities for contact and communication with broadly diverse cultures. From almost any perspective, the importance of foreign students on American campuses was obvious (Bevis & Lucas, 2007). U.S. universities began to engage international students as cultural resources and as a resource for internationalization of higher education (Brennan & Dellow, 2013; Parson, 2010; Peterson et al., 1999; Urban & Palmer, 2014). In addition, international students were increasingly perceived as a resource for fostering intercultural competence development among American students (Breuning, 2007) through intercultural interaction with each other. Higher education institutions’ new awareness of the non-financial benefits of foreign students has brought with it the recruitment of international students with diverse cultural backgrounds.

Following this historical line, we find that the tendency for international students to be treated as capital and commodities—and as market and economic resources—has expanded (Rhee & Sagaria, 2004). International and American students are clearly bi-polarized as “international” and “domestic,” “us” and “them.” International students are (re)constructed as “the otherness” and situated as a homogenous entity. Bauman (1993) argued that “otherness” is essential to the way in which a society establishes identity categories with the hidden rule of power, such as “stranger” as the other of “native.” With this “otherness” discourse stigmatizing difference, international students encounter difficulties with their membership and identity. They need continuous effort to become a full member of the community (their host institutions; Kim, 2012). After research on this topic became more
common, U.S. higher education institutions began to shift their primary attention to issues related to international students’ adjustments to the host campuses.

The American higher education institutions interested in internationalizing home campuses have noticed the intercultural interaction issues between international and American students. In their efforts to develop effective international and intercultural programs on campuses, they are trying to integrate intercultural section at institutional policy levels and develop intercultural competence as a student learning outcome. To that end, it is worthwhile to explore how American students conceptualize and perceive intercultural relations with their international peers and vice versa. It is important to explore their commonalities and dissimilarities in understanding intercultural interactions and relations with cultural other on campus.

**Conceptualizing “Intercultural”**

Intercultural interaction literature has tended to concentrate on the intercultural experience of international students at their host campuses and assumed homogeneity in attitude and experience within the domestic student population. Colvin, Volet, and Fozdar (2014) recognized that domestic students conceptualize culture and perceive diversity either positively or negatively, which influences their intercultural experiences. They found that students with an ethnorelative conceptualization of culture saw diversity as heterogeneous, and that these students enjoyed intercultural interactions with cultural other. Students with an ethnocentric conceptualization of culture saw diversity as homogeneous and were reluctant to be engaged in intercultural interactions. Even though these students did engage in intercultural interactions, the interactions were fragile and shallow. In their findings, Colvin et al. (2014) put forward that only some domestic students identify groupings of students on campus as ethnically
homogeneous. International students have the same tendency of identifying other international students as similar others, who they believe to share a similar intercultural experience.

The groups identified by international and domestic students are not social entities, but function as a lens shaping their intercultural experiences. International students validate each other’s attitudes, opinions, and behaviors in ways that domestic students are unable to. Cultural boundaries such as differences in nationalities, ethnicities, and languages among international students do not hinder international students from forming an international community of practice because they have the shared interest in studying abroad and shared social and academic experiences in a new culture (Montgomery, 2010). Rooted in Wenger’s (1998) theory of community of practice, Montgomery’s research findings challenge the view that international students need intercultural interaction and relationship with domestic students to get the most from their host universities. The intercultural relationship between international and domestic students is perceived as “a world apart” (Montgomery, 2010). American students limit intercultural experiences to their interactions with international students and separate it from their daily social networks and friendships (Halualani, 2008). However, there exist inclusive global mixers: international students who don’t view their American peers as cultural other (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013).

There is little research on why international and domestic students conceptualize some interactions with cultural other as “intercultural” and some not. M. J. Bennett pointed out, “How we define culture is itself a product of culture” (2013, p. 47). Societal views on intercultural interactions may play a key role in
shaping and framing intercultural interactions between international and domestic students “in terms of individuals’ constructions, frameworks of interpretation, motivations and behaviors” (Halualani, 2008, p. 13). It is necessary for scholars to continue their studies on the relationships among how international and domestic students conceptualize the idea of “intercultural,” how they perceive intercultural relations, and how they experience meaningful intercultural interactions on campus.

**Intercultural Interaction Issues Between International and Domestic Students Around the World**

Intercultural interaction issues between international and domestic students are not unique to the United States. Research studies in Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand have considered the quality and the quantity of intercultural contacts, friendship patterns, and social support networks, and the functional roles of intercultural interactions for intercultural competence development (Ward, 2001). These extensive studies have focused on various issues: the educational, social, and cultural impacts of international students on domestic students and institutions (Ward, 2001, 2006); the social and academic impact on international students of making friends and social-networking with domestic students (L. Brown, 2009; Neri & Ville, 2008; Renties, Beasaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet, & Kommers, 2012; Vaccarino & Dresler-Hwke, 2011; Ward, Masgoret, Newton, & Crabbe, 2005); experiencing stereotyping from staff and domestic students (Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002); the lack of interaction between domestic and international students despite attitudes to the contrary (J. C. Brown & Daly, 2004; Ward et al., 2005); the benefits of international students’ presence and challenges to their performance in classrooms and on campus (Harrison & Peacock, 2009, 2010; Harryba, Guilfoyle, & Knight,
lack of common ground between international and domestic students (Arkoudis et al., 2010); international students forming their own international community of practice on campus (Montgomery, 2010; Rienties & Nolan, 2014; Rienties et al., 2012; Terzian & Osborne, 2011); international students in those universities aiming at internationalization (Jon, 2013; Parson, 2010); the factors predicting intercultural competence (Kohnova, 2012); and motivations for intercultural contact (Dunne, 2013). The factors identified as impacting intercultural interactions between international and domestic students include international students’ language proficiency and communication skills; differing cultural backgrounds; in-group favoritism; a lack of common interests; time limitations; cultural distance; national identity; and unequal power relations. In this section, I expand on some of the major issues thought to impact intercultural relations.

In universities aiming to have a more internationalized campus, international students are treated as an intercultural learning resource for domestic students developing their intercultural competence (Arkoudis et al., 2010; Parson, 2010) and as an approach to internationalization (Parson, 2010). In Australia, research has shown that these goals have not been achieved because of the many obstacles impeding intercultural interactions between international and Australian students: institutional practices such as underdeveloped intercultural educational programs; international students’ inadequate English proficiency; lack of common ground; different learning experiences; domestic students’ work commitments; and the limited time spent on campus (Arkoudis et al., 2010; Nesdale & Todd, 1997) and also international graduate students’ identity development (Fotovatian, 2012). In the United Kingdom, Rienties
and Nolan (2014) found that it is difficult for international students from a Confucian heritage culture (CHC)—such as China, Singapore, Korea, Vietnam, and Japan—to create sustainable friendships and working relationships with UK host students in their new environment due to their home countries sharing fewer similarities with Western cultures. Besides issues in English proficiency, this cultural distance from the host culture might be the most likely explanation for the low intercultural interaction rate between UK students and international students (Rienties & Nolan, 2014). Hu (2014) made the opposite assumption. In his study on international students’ experiences at a Chinese higher education institution, he found that Asian students encounter greater difficulties in communications with Chinese domestic students as compared to Europeans and North Americans, who reported fewer difficulties in communicating with their Chinese peers. Hu (2014) discussed that Asian students’ and Chinese students’ similar cultural heritages does not promote the intercultural interaction rate between them.

One explanation for this obstacle existing even within similar cultures is the impact of national identity, which also affects intercultural interactions (Hail, 2015; Jon, 2013). In a 2012 study, Jon argued that Korean students have no interest in interacting with international students who demonstrate disinterest in or disrespect to Korean language and culture. Jon (2013) further indicated that intercultural interactions should be a mutual process with equal power relations.

In Jon’s study (2013), Korean students felt they had a lower power status compared to their international peers from Western countries. Conversely, those same students tended to look down on certain international students from other Asian countries based on their languages and countries of origin. International students and
their domestic peers must have an equal status during their intercultural interactions in terms of power dynamics for effective intercultural relations to occur. Students in power might not be aware of the ways they are imposing power on their counterparts. International students in Australia have demonstrated a strong desire for reciprocal dialogues with Australians—that is, a dialogue in which domestic students recognize the knowledge and experience international students bring along with them. However, instead of considering how intercultural relations may benefit them, Australian students complain that the international students are threatening their academic success and group identity (Harryba et al., 2013).

In the scenario of intercultural competence development as a student learning outcome, cultural differences alone cannot explain the intercultural interaction issues between international and domestic students at host institutions. In other words, it is not just about a lack of knowledge about other cultures. We need to look at other aspects, such as the intersection of national and personal identities, the conceptualization of “intercultural,” the willingness for intercultural interactions, and the power structures in student approaches to intercultural inquiry. In the following section, I focus on reviewing the research on these issues in U.S. higher education institutions specifically. Based on that literature review, I then discuss the practical possibilities for forming intercultural relations between international and American graduate students at the U.S. host institutions.

**Intercultural Interactions on American Campuses**

Global empirical studies have set the stage for investigating graduate students’ intercultural experiences from different perspectives. There is, however, an existing body of literature focused solely on American higher education institutions. The
majority of studies on the intercultural experiences of international and American graduate students highlights the barriers impeding international students’ effective intercultural communications with American faculty members, staff, and peers (Andrade, 2008; Terzian & Osborne, 2011). In addition to native language and communication skills, there are other traits that negatively affect the quality and quantity of intercultural interactions between international and American students, such as ethnocentrism (Hail, 2015; Lin & Rancer, 2003a; Ruble & Zhang, 2013), religion (Marzouk, 2012), marriage status (Poyrazli, 2006), and gender (Lin & Rancer, 2003b; Marzouk, 2012; Qin, 2009). Some of the other challenges stem from the different academic demands made on international and American students, different pressures from society and family, financial stress, and anxiety about future careers—all of which make intercultural interactions more challenging (Gareis, 2012; Perrucci & Hu, 1995; Terzian & Osborne, 2011; Zhou, Frey & Bang, 2011). These multi-faceted communication and relational issues actually illustrate the willingness for intercultural communication, identity issue, and power issue among international and American graduate students in intercultural practice on campus.

**Willingness in Intercultural Communication**

One of the preconditions for strong intercultural interactions between international and American students is their willingness to communicate with each other. The researchers (Cheng & Erben, 2012; Imamura, Zhang, & Harwood, 2011; Imamura & Zhang, 2014; Zhao et al., 2011) have found that the following factors impact their willingness. First, due to language barriers, international students—especially those from East Asia, compared with those from Europe—experience higher levels of uncertainty and anxiety in intercultural communication. Their high
levels of apprehension about intercultural communication are directly related to their anxiety regarding their English proficiency in communication with their American peers.

Among American students, the apprehension correlated with their willingness to communicate with their international peers is not due to language concerns (Lin & Rancer, 2003a). American students who have had more intercultural experiences, such as friendships with international students, have less anxiety and are more open-minded in intercultural situations (Ruble & Zhang, 2013; Williams & Johnson, 2011); those without intercultural friends may have high intercultural communication apprehension, to the point of avoiding intercultural contact (Lin & Rancer, 2003a).

Among those American students without significant intercultural communication apprehension, the decision to interact with their international peers depends on whether they can perceive the similarities between them. Perceived similarities and a common in-group identity contribute to intercultural friendship formation and sustainability. In their research on international students’ acculturation and adaptation to their host institution, Imamura and Zhang (2014) discussed American students’ willingness to communicate with Chinese international students in four scenarios: assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. The study described the Chinese international students in these four scenarios as follows: assimilated students identified strongly with American culture and encouraged American students to perceive them as a part of their group; integrated students identified with both Chinese and American cultures, and were perceived as part of both by their American counterparts; separated students identified themselves as being part of the Chinese culture; and the marginalized students did not identify
strongly with either Chinese or American cultures. They found that American students were more willing to communicate with assimilated and integrated Chinese international students. American students might be less apprehensive and more willing to communicate with international students who share a group identity—American culture—with them. In this case, intercultural interaction or relation was not a two-way adaptation process.

American student’s willingness toward intercultural communication with international students was decided specifically by the degree of international student’s acculturation to American culture (Imamura & Zhang, 2014); that is, the in-group identity that affected change was based or rooted in American culture. Using American culture as a reference to confront the absence of a common cultural group identity leaves many Chinese students in separation and marginalization conditions and falls into the pit of ethnocentrism (Ruble & Zhang, 2013). This way of defining in-group identity also impacts the common in-group identities forming among international students and American students based on “small culture” in academia or social life. Another point of ethnocentrism is the indication that intercultural encounters exist only from the domestic students’ perspective. At the expense of dealing with intercultural issues, most universities and colleges are only focusing on domestic diversity. As a result, American students tend to depict their intercultural encounters as impersonal, short-term, and exotic (Root, 2014). Ethnocentrism and its effects should be included in the research on intercultural communications between international and Americans students (Lin & Rancer, 2003a).

This favored model of intercultural relations, the one-way adaptation approach, might detract from students’ intercultural competence development through
intercultural communications. One-way adaptation reduces the number of chances to see what kind of changes American students themselves would make to improve their willingness to communicate with their international peers and reduce their apprehension about interaction with cultural other on campus.

**Identity Issues in Intercultural Encounters**

At an institutional level, the dichotomization of students into international and American groups may have induced some of the issues related to how international students’ identities are formed in intercultural relations with their American peers. An individual is a unity of many identities, such as personal, relational, and communal (Hall, 2014; Tracy, 2002; Zhu, 2017). A student may form a relational and communal identity as an “international student” through being defined and categorized this way by outside entities: the U.S government issuing them a specific student visa (F-1) and SEVIS number, their host institutions’ separate office to administrate them, and the institution implementing specific international student tuition, fees, and health insurance. International students’ institutional identity is “international,” existing in comparison to their “domestic” counterparts (Montgomery, 2010). However, outside that dichotomy international students might not always describe themselves as cultural other in relation to their American peers.

In various intercultural contexts, in-group and intergroup relations might not demonstrate all the intercultural interaction and relational patterns between and among international and American students. Their communication may be intercultural in one instance, but shift to interpersonal or intracultural in another (Imahori & Cupach, 2005). According to Imahori and Cupach, intercultural communication occurs when people with different cultures experience their cultural
identities saliently and differently. When they experience cultural identities saliently and similarly, their interaction is intracultural. When they experience relational identities such as becoming colleagues, mentor and mentee, or friends, their interaction is interpersonal. They share the common in-group identity. Within an intercultural relationship, they must be the other of their counter party.

In their research on intercultural interactions, Rose-Redwood’s and Rose-Redwood’s (2013) study uncovers the complexity of international students’ identities in terms of their intercultural relations through intercultural interactions. In their study of 60 international graduate students’ social interaction experiences, they identified four primary patterns of social interaction: self-segregation (only socially interacting with co-nationals), exclusive global mixing (socially interacting with other international students), inclusive global mixing (socially interacting with co-nationals, other international students, and host nationals), and host interaction (socially interacting with host nationals and co-nationals, exclusive of other international students). For this reason it is oversimplified to say that intercultural relations between international and domestic students are bipolar: “we/they” or “integration/isolation.” The social relations can be multilayered.

The intercultural identities formed in these multilayered social interactions are complicated. The ways international and American students conceptualize cultural diversity, cross-cultural friendship (Williams & Johnson, 2011), and intercultural relations are not well understood. For example, in Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood’s (2013) study, the inclusive global mixers didn’t view their American peers as cultural other, even though they recognized the cultural differences
between them. These inclusive global mixers minimized the cultural differences and had little interest in adopting the host culture.

**Unequal Power in Intercultural Relations**

The consensus of the research on international and domestic students’ intercultural relations is that students prefer in-group interactions, or “homophily.” The conditions for inducing positive intercultural interactions have not been thoroughly examined (Kudo, 2015). The primary condition for positive intergroup relations is equal status during their interactions (Allport, 1954). It is essential to look at intercultural relations on the axis of their power relation, for example gender (Lin & Rancer, 2003b; Qin, 2009) or academic norms (Yuan, 2011). Jon (2013) agreed that international students and their domestic peers should have equal status in terms of power dynamics during their intercultural interactions. To form a relationship, both need to be aware of potential power differentials and the discrimination imposed on each other. Domestic students complain of international students threatening their academic success and group identity (Harrison & Peacock, 2010). International students express a desire for their host universities to recognize that different sources of knowledge exist and are valuable (Koehne, 2006). Harrison and Peacock (2010) called this phenomenon passive xenophobia. Relatively recent research (Hail, 2015; Hanassab, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Qin, 2009; Ruble & Zhang, 2013) has identified other phenomena of neo-racism toward international students: negative comments about foreign accents, negative gender stereotypes, inaccurate portrayals of other cultures and national events. Each of these reduces the likelihood of international students forming interpersonal relationships with their American peers. Being aware of these potential power differentials and discriminations, lower-status groups are
more likely to tend toward in-group cohesion (R. Brown, 2000). To an international student, each international student is a “similar other” who confirms that their attitudes, opinions, or behaviors in social and academic settings are right and understandable. They have the shared aim and interest of studying abroad and experience the same social and academic experiences in a new culture. Within this community of practice, international students form strong and supportive intercultural relationships (Montgomery, 2010). International students’ bonding with their similar others hinders their voluntary intercultural interactions with their domestic peers. Their “in-group cohesion” is connoted as “self-isolation” or “self-segregation” in intercultural interactions with domestic students. This in-group cohesion might be “the barrier to establishing rapport with members of the majority status group” (Imamura, Zhang & Harwood, 2011, p.118).

**Hospitality/Hostipitality**

At the institutional level, how host institutions conceptualize relations with international students has been a reflection of how they conceptualize “the other” and intercultural encounters, especially in relation to the internationalization of higher education. “Hospitality” is the near-universal concept for welcoming international students. However, higher education institutions interested in adding intercultural elements to teaching and learning should be cautious of this hospitality; some of them have used the terminology to construct ethnocentric discourses about self and other (Dervin & Layne, 2013). This hospitality discourse labels international students as “the others”—outsiders and strangers.

The notion of international students as foreigners and guests, in this sense, aligns with the concept of “the stranger” by Georg Simmel (1950). International
students come to the U.S. and stay. Their position is fixed within an environment in which social boundaries are similar to spatial boundaries: foreign and domestic. Their position in this social environment is determined, essentially, by the fact that they have not always belonged to it, thus they form their own international community of practice (Montgomery, 2010). They import some qualities into this social environment, which do not and can’t stem from the group itself (Simmel, 1950). Simmel pointed out that strangers would approach the social environment of a university with the specific attitude of “objectivity”; that is, they have no commitment to the peculiar tendencies of this social environment. That creates distances between themselves and the “other” members of the group (the domestics). Expanding on Simmel’s (1950) discussion, the concept of *hostipitality* is a particular form of social exclusion and marginality.

Dervin and Layne (2013) argued that the visible distinction between domestic and international students, based on invisible distinctions established through a logic that defines social reality and context, is an example of hostipitality. *Hostipitality* is a term developed by Derrida (2000) to illustrate the nature of hospitality from a philosophical perspective: hospitality can’t be conceived without hostility. By discussing international students, foreign students, and guests, and their different intercultural discourses at their host campuses, Dervin and Layne (2013) related the study abroad experience to Derrida’s (2000) hostipitality. They make clear that the way higher education institutions use documents (for example, “Survival Guides” for international students) to coach international students to be good “guests,” translates into hostipitality. This research problematizes viewing intercultural education from the perspective of otherness—rarely from within. The dominant underlying discourse
of university and college intercultural interactions falls within *hostipality*: if you do not behave as we do, you will have problems; if you want to stay tomorrow, you have to behave as we do. International students are treated as others or outsiders by their institutions, their peers and teachers (Marginson, 2013). International students as “outsiders” cannot discover what is really going on among domestic students who maintain their status quo within a closed nexus. In addition, the perception of unequal treatment on campus is the main factor influencing international students’ attitude towards the host institutions (Lee, 2010).

**Intercultural Interactions Within an International Community of Practice**

Montgomery (2010) identified that international students form an international community of practice, within which they construct in depth intercultural interactions and relations. She believed that international students share certain common experiences in their academic and social lives, including their international mobility to a new sociocultural context, a strong motivation to succeed academically, and a well-defined view of the future. Montgomery (2010) pointed out that the international students in her study form a community of practice due to their shared aims and interests. The most essential purpose of this community of practice, she argued, is the reconstruction of the social capital that they could not bring along with them to this new sociocultural environment. Within this international community of practice, students support each other socially, academically, and emotionally. Montgomery (2010) also pointed out that language skills are a significant barrier for international students to build up intercultural friendships with the domestic students. Therefore, international and domestic students are perceived as “a world apart.” In that study, domestic students were situated at the periphery of this international
community of practice. They have fewer opportunities to share social capital with their international peers. Similarly, international students do not have the opportunity to share the social capital constructed within their community of practice with their domestic peers.

Further, Montgomery (2010) suggested the phenomenon of existing “a world apart” will continue if boundaries based on nationality continue to serve as a dividing line grouping the student population into “international” and “domestic.” She introduced Holliday’s “small culture” as an alternative way to interpret and study the international communities of practice. According to Holliday (1999), “a small culture paradigm attaches ‘culture’ to small social groupings or activities wherever there is cohesive behaviour, and thus avoids culturist ethnic, national or international stereotyping” (p. 237). Montgomery (2010) argued that, within the scenario of internationalization of higher education institutions, using “small culture” is a more inclusive approach to viewing and describing student groups in higher education institutions. This sharp cut dividing the communities of practice in universities as either international or domestic similarly divides the student population.

Another reason to avoid binary distinctions between students and social groups is the previously mentioned complexity of intercultural relations at American colleges and universities. Several scholars (Bang & Montgomery, 2013; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013; Yuan, 2010, 2011) have uncovered the complexity of international graduate students’ intercultural practices on campus. Yuan (2010) identified three types of adjustment patterns among international undergraduate and graduate students in a U.S. university: “social butterfly, collectivistic-oriented, and self-reliant” (p. 246). Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood
(2013) illustrated the identities of the international graduate students participating in their study through their multilayered intercultural relations. Students with inclusive global mixing patterns—who socially interact with their co-nationals, other international students, and domestic students—had more opportunities to construct communities of practice in which they are committed to mutually engaging with cultural differences in intercultural interactions, instead of primarily focusing on adapting to American campus culture. Yuan (2011) argued that cross-cultural adaptation for most international students is a battle between conforming to American values and preserving their native values. Thus, open-mindedness and intercultural competence alone are inadequate for intercultural adaptation. Bang and Montgomery (2013) found three types of social adaptability styles among international graduate students in a U.S. Midwestern land-grant university: confident optimists, appreciative optimists, and apprehensive optimists. They also confirmed that international students’ social adaptability greatly impacts their socio-academic success and emotional well-being.

**Practical Considerations**

The issues identified here offer higher educational institutions essential insights into developing effective intercultural programs, promoting activities that foster intercultural competence development, and enhancing intercultural interactions between international and American students. Current philosophies on intercultural relations at colleges and universities are not reciprocal. The amount and quality of interactions would be enhanced once (international) students had adjusted to the new culture (Smart, Volet, & Ang, 2000). Promoting intercultural interactions based on this assumption emphasizes a one-way adaptation approach, namely assimilation to
the host culture. Dervin and Layne (2013) pointed out that this one-way intercultural adaptation reduces intercultural education to educating international students about a certain stereotyped host, rather than teaching both international and domestic students to co-shape/construct a new way of interaction with each other. If international and domestic students are both adapting in the process of intercultural interactions, cultural differences should become an opportunity instead of an obstacle for communication productivity (M. J. Bennett, 2013; R. J. Bennett et al., 2013). Williams and Johnson (2011) supported this viewpoint. They found that American students with international student friends tend to attend more multicultural events, during which they are provided with opportunities, venues, motivations, and the need to interact with their international peers. Imamura and Zhang (2014) added that these students find a common in-group identity with their international friends. The scholars (R. J. Bennett et al., 2013; Martinez & Plough, 2018) pointed out that international graduate students’ individual agency plays an essential role in forming authentic intercultural relations and interactions with domestic students. In their study, Martinez and Plough (2018) further confirmed that the intentionality and agency in intercultural learning can only be realized by the contributions of all participants in community aiming at the intercultural knowledge-building.

When international and domestic students develop positive intercultural relations, those connections provide them with intercultural learning (J. M. Bennett & Bennett, 2004; R. J. Bennett et al., 2013; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Leask, 2009; Ward, 2006). International and American students become more willing to listen to one another, develop a self-reflexive awareness of their own cultural group, and sustain a keenness to interact with cultural other. These traits represent authentic intercultural
interactions (Flaherty & Stojakovic, 2008). According to R. J. Bennett et al. (2013), the nature of authentic intercultural interaction ought to be a relational, two-way adaptation process. Martinez and Pough (2018) termed it as “socialization reciprocity” which is defined as mutually beneficial exchanges. The contributions of every member in the community are valued. They challenged the institutional intercultural programs designed with the assumption of international students as deficient.

Intercultural programs that bring international and American students together do not automatically result in diverse social exchanges among the majority of the students on campus. In their search for effective intercultural interactions to promote better understanding of other cultures, “institutions of higher education in the U.S. can become effective public pedagogy spaces that will enhance the production as well as circulation of new meanings to be spread to the larger [American] culture” (Marzouk, 2012, p. 25). Diversity efforts need to be more integrated into the institutional culture for creation of an open and tolerant university experience (Leask, 2009; Rose-Redwood, 2010). For integration and facilitating intercultural interactions among international and American graduate students would probably be best suited to individual academic departments (Perrucci & Hu, 1995).

A Framework for Defining Intercultural interaction

Intercultural interactions and relations between international and domestic students have commonly been discussed from the theoretical framework of “intercultural competence,” with an individualistic knowledge-skill approach. This approach is founded on the idea that individuals can gain intercultural competence if they can master intercultural knowledge, communication skills, and strategies with
specific goals and strong motivations when experiencing intercultural interactions. Shi (2007), from the intercultural communication perspective, problematized this individualistic knowledge-skill approach to intercultural education because it often attributes intercultural problems to the cultural other. It takes for granted that it is the cultural other who are problem-laden and hence need to adapt to their host peers during intercultural interactions. A compelling number of research studies demonstrate concerns about how this one-way adaptation is promoting the intercultural interactions between international and domestic students. There exists a need to create a new framework; however, there are certain issues that must be addressed to do so.

One major issue is that there is no widely accepted model for the training and assessment of intercultural readiness in diverse cultural contexts. The concept of intercultural competence itself is contested, and there is no commonly accepted definition of “competency” within that context. Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) categorized intercultural competence models into five models: compositional models identifying the components of competence; co-orientational models primarily focusing on the comprehension of outcomes of interactional processes; developmental models hypothesizing the stages of competence evolution and progress; adaptation models emphasizing the interdependency of multiple interactants by mutual adjustments; and causal models specifying the interrelations among components, including Imahori’s and Lanigan’s (1989) relational model. Adaptation models extend the compositional approaches from monadic into more dyadic models, and tend to underscore the process of adaptation itself as a criterion of competence; however, they still discuss intercultural competence development from an
individualistic perspective, which emphasizes the functions of individual dispositions in interactions.

Digging further into intercultural communication studies, Imahori and Lanigan (1989) critically discussed the different perspectives in approaching intercultural communication competence (ICC), which is measured via one of three dimensions: behavioral skills, knowledge, and motivation. Ruben (1976) measured intercultural effectiveness based on the sojourners’ performance on seven behavioral skills. He conceptualized intercultural communication competence as a behavioral construct. Hammer, Gudykunst, and Wiseman (1978) also focused on identifying the important behavioral skills perceived by sojourners. In a separate study (Gudykunst, Hammer, & Wiseman, 1977), these authors used what they call a “third-culture” approach, focusing on the affective nature of competence or the psychological link between intercultural interactants. Collier’s (1986) “rule approach,” conversely, centers on the knowledge dimension of competence. Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) believed that all three dimensions—knowledge, skills, and motivation—are interdependent in interpersonal communication competence.

Having summarized the theoretical perspectives based on the original three dimensions, Imahori and Lanigan moved on to discuss their area of interest: relationships. Cupach (1992) was among the first to identify the relational nature of competence. The research on interpersonal and on intercultural communication competence shares the belief that competence can’t be measured without consideration of the other dyadic member in communication. In addition, intercultural relational and interactions are interpersonal-intercultural interchangeable (Dervin, 2016). Imahori and Lanigan (1989) believed that, according to this relational
and interactive view of competence, a highly competent sojourner not only adapts his or her behavior to the host-nationals, but also helps the host-nationals to adjust their behavior. It is essential to consider the dyadic members in intercultural interactions. Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) relational model is built upon these theoretical foundations. They examined intercultural competence development with a dyadic model, which underscores the importance of two-way-adaptation for a successful relational outcome. However, their framework has four major flaws. First, Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) model does not reflect the relational outcome of intercultural competence development as an ongoing process. Instead of being the outcome of a one-time intercultural practice, intercultural competence development is an ongoing and a transformative learning process (Park, 2002; Taylor, 1994a, 1994b). Similar to psycho-social intercultural sensitivity development models by M. J. Bennett (1998), for Taylor and Park intercultural transformation begins with breaking the pattern of alienation via initial contact, a period of testing new habits and assumptions, experiencing intercultural encounters, and finally gaining intercultural competence within the new culture (Park, 2002; Taylor, 1994a). Time is needed to form intimate and satisfactory relations: making a relational commitment to each other, exploring cultural similarities and differences, building stable relations, and reducing uncertainty through developing a mutual friendship and having continuing intercultural experiences. In their study, R. J. Bennett et al. (2013) narratively analyze this on-going process of building intercultural friendships between international and domestic students at the micro-level. They underscored the importance of individual agency in maintaining such relations, particularly through positive reinforcement of intercultural relations, sharing personal stories and perspectives, and emphasizing
cultural similarities while exploring differences. Intercultural interactions become meaningful to dyadic members, but only over time.

Second, intercultural interactants are affected by the balance of power during their interactions. Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) relational model overlooks this power asymmetry. Multiple researchers (Dervin & Layne, 2013; Lobnibe, 2009; Rhee & Sagaria, 2004; Ryan & Viete, 2009) have pointed out that international and domestic students are in a power imbalance in interactions. The relative power of both parties impacts their intercultural relations. Little is known about how the imbalanced power induced by the ethnocentric “us” and “them” discourse impacts international and domestic students’ intercultural experiences.

Third, the relational model fails to take into account the social and co-constructive nature of interaction. Evanoff (2006) emphasized that “meaningful intercultural interactions” guide both parties to co-shape and co-construct intercultural relations and encounters by inventing new ways of being together. In developing these new ideas, sojourners and domestic students have equal status, addressing the power issue mentioned above. Dervin and Layne’s (2013) theory also gives attention to the interactive nature and the relational outcome of intercultural competence development. They believed that during interactions, individual agency affects each other either negatively or positively. This belief is a more modern reflection of intercultural communication.

Fourth, the sojourners in the traditional relational model are considered educational resources for the domestic students’ intercultural competency development. This is a problematic assumption as it strips the sojourners of their
individual agency. The empirical research studies on measurement of ICC within both sides of a specific and actual relationship are few.

The current study builds on Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) relational model to address these issues and examine international and American graduate students’ perception of the nature of intercultural relations within their own intercultural practices. I also explore how they construct or co-shape their intercultural relations in terms of their meaningful intercultural interactions with each other.

**Summary**

R. J. Bennett et al. (2013) proposed that intercultural experiences between international and American students can give both groups opportunities for developing intercultural competence through formal and informal intercultural learning. Of course, international and American students might have different expectations for “meaningful” intercultural interactions, such as forming intercultural friendships or socializing in both social and academic environments. The current study uses the term *meaningful intercultural practice* to mean actual intercultural responses to another’s actions in intercultural practices. In most of the studies I reviewed, the changes resulting from intercultural experiences take place only among international students as the result of their adaptation to the host’s sociocultural and academic environment. American students seem to have no such motivations or results. In other words, for them, intercultural interactions with international students are far less important and urgent.

A particularly useful study would be one that examines positive intercultural relations from both the international and domestic students’ perspectives (R. J. Bennett et al., 2013). The research studies on intercultural interactions implicitly
assume homogeneity of international and domestic students’ perception of intercultural relations. Domestic students and international students define intercultural simply as “international and domestic,” which influences their experiences of intercultural interactions and relations on campus (Colvin et al., 2014). In addition, the research participants in most studies are undergraduate and graduate students mixed together. These research studies primarily employ survey and/or questionnaire to explore students’ intercultural experience. The current study examines how international and American graduate students conceptualize and perceive intercultural relations with cultural other on campuses, which adds a new understanding and contributes a more dual perspective from a more specific population to the literature.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes an overview of the rationale for the use of a case study combined with Q-method, the procedures to gather international and American students’ viewpoints of intercultural relations and interactions with cultural other, and data analysis. Then, the chapter explains the rationale of employing Q-method as the second stage of data collection and analysis for identifying the commonalities and/or discrepancies in international and American students’ understanding and practicing intercultural relations with cultural other at the host campus for identifying the opportunity to develop intercultural competence. As suggested by the previous research, it is essential to look at the issue from international and American students’ perspectives at their host campus at the same time.

The current study employs Q-method to identify the similar patterns or trends of students’ perceptions of intercultural relations, their viewpoints of other’s perception of intercultural relation and their viewpoint of other’s viewpoint of their perception of intercultural relation with cultural other. The last section of this chapter sheds light on rethinking the researcher’s role in intercultural research from the insider and outsider perspectives.

Case Study Rationale

A case study works as “a way of conceptualizing” (Schram, 2006, p. 107) students’ intercultural relations and interactions on campus, and also as “a way of encapsulating” (Schram, 2006, p.107) their intercultural experiences through thick descriptions and interpretations of their conceptualizations of cultural diversity and perception of intercultural relation with cultural other. I identify my research as a case
study because it examines a “contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2003, p. 13). In the current study, low intercultural interaction rate is a phenomenon and also a real-life context for an institution interested in internationalizing the home campus by adding intercultural elements into teaching and learning, student administration, and institutional policy levels. I need to explore and understand international and American students’ individual intercultural experiences, their conceptualizations and perception of intercultural relations with cultural other.

Using case study as the methodology is useful for looking at this process and answering “how” questions (Yin, 2003) in a specific context with thick descriptions and explanations (Merriam, 2002), such as “how international and American students experience intercultural interactions with cultural other” and “how they perceive intercultural relations with cultural other.” This case study is contextually embedded. Both American and international students’ intercultural relations with cultural other can be interpreted and discussed within a specific U.S. higher education institution in internationalization. The value of a contextual embedded study lies in “its ability to draw attention to what can be learned from the single case” (Schram, 2006, p. 107). The readers determine what kinds of information can be applied to exploring and understanding intercultural interactions from relational perspective between international and domestic students in other U.S. universities interested in internationalization at home campuses in the discourse of globalized education. A case study allows for complex behaviors to be examined at a micro-level for purposes of exploring the way that macro problems can be solved at the micro-level (Flyvbjerg, 2006).
The current study approaches intercultural relations and meaningful intercultural interactions between international and American students at a U.S. university from an interpretive constructivist perspective (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I, as a researcher, recognize the researcher’s role in constructing interpretations (Stake, 1995, 2000). I bring my insight in intercultural perspectives to the research in the process in that I interview my research participants as cultural other. My research participants and I both are involved in actively interpreting our intercultural experiences with a constructivist approach. This aligns with the research question exploring the possibility of international and American students co-construct or co-shape new ways of being together through meaningful intercultural interactions. The current research also aims to elicit and understand how the participants construct the shared constructivist perspective of intercultural relations with cultural other. The constructivist perspective also emerges in the process of obtaining these subjective viewpoints through my face-to-face interviews with international and American students, respectively. The relation that the researcher creates with participants in this study is an essential part of a research method (Maxwell, 2013). In the qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument of the research and the research relations are the means by which the research gets done. In the process of conducting interviews, the researcher and the participants form intercultural relations, which can both facilitate and constrain the research design. Maxwell (2013) suggested that “what you (researchers) need are relations that allow you (researchers) ethically gain the information that can answer your research questions” (p. 90). I, as an international student, need to maintain a working research partnership with other international students as research partners.
Data analysis of a case study can follow any number of analysis methods (Merriam, 2009). Q methodology can be used in the study of single case, which is often referred to as intensive analysis (Baas & Brown, 1973). Single case studies can probe into any individual’s experience and internal subjectivity with their self-reference models of some issues through Q-sorting (Baas & Brown, 1973; Stephenson, 1983). Q methodology as a constructivist method uses Q-sorting to actualize a given Q sort (Stenner, 2009). That means any resulting factors are formed as a result of Q-sorting process. In the current case study, Q methodology can provide a systematic means to examine and understand intercultural interaction experiences. Q method allows subjective viewpoints on intercultural relations and meaningful intercultural interactions to be statistically grouped and compared for discovering the approaches to authentic intercultural relations, and identifying the characteristics of meaningful intercultural interactions, and acknowledging the possibilities and conditions for international and American students co-constructing new ways of being together.

**Q Methodology Rationale**

Q methodology, introduced by William Stephenson (1953), was designed to provide a foundation for the systematic examination of subjective perceptions of any issues with thick descriptions and interpretations backed up by statistical mechanics. The focus of Q methodology is on quality rather than quantity (S. R. Brown, 1993). Q methodology integrates the strengths from both qualitative and quantitative designs to enable participants to represent their vantage points of the issues in life (S. R. Brown, 1996). Q methodology strategically links qualitative and quantitative analyses (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). The researchers who employ Q methodology
enable their participants to model their subjective views on an issue through operating a Q-sort comprised of statements (Q-sample) according to a specific condition of instruction. Data analysis occurs with inter-correlating subjective views to each other through factor analysis. Q-sorting provides multiple viewpoints and allows those viewpoints to be statistically grouped and compared by factor analyzing them into certain patterns (McKeown & Thomas, 1988; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Through this statistical grouping and comparing, consensual and divergent subjectivity on certain issues with attention specifically given to the relevance of such patterns to existing theories can be captured. For example, through Q methodology, Yuan (2010) identified three types of adjustment patterns among international students in a U.S. university based on their demographic variables; Bang and Montgomery (2013) found three types of social adaptability styles among international graduate students in a U.S. Midwestern land-grant university.

“Q methodology is a combination of conceptual framework, technique of data collection, and method of analysis that collectively provides the basis for the scientific study of subjectivity” (S. R. Brown & Good, 2010, p. 1149). The current study examined a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. The boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not evident. Intercultural interaction on a multicultural campus is a phenomenon, and it is a real-life context for an institution interested in internationalizing the home campus. In the current study, “my” intercultural experience is a matter of fact and a matter of subjectivity. Q methodology rooted in concourse theory of subjective communicability makes this subjective perception or consciousness observable (Watts & Stenner, 2012). In a finished Q-sort, the application of “my” personal agreement and disagreement ensures
that the items are all related to “my” current viewpoint. Q methodology emphasizes this self-reference which is absent in R methodology (Baas & Brown, 1973; S. R. Brown, 1993; Watts & Stenner, 2005, 2012). The current study focuses on the graduate students’ intercultural experiences in a specific institution. The researcher conceptualizes and encapsulates their individual experiences within this campus case by case (Q-sorts) from their current viewpoint of intercultural practices on campus. Q methodology is equipped to analyze those single cases intensively and to assay the subjectivity of these single cases (Baas & Brown, 1973; Watts, 2011; Watts & Stenner, 2005, 2012). The detection of connections (similarity and dissimilarity of subjective perceptions) is accomplished by way of correlation calculations. Through calculating correlation, the level of agreement and disagreement of Q-sorts among the participants is identified. This correlation matrix provides the basis for revealing the factor structure around the issue of student’s perception of intercultural practices with cultural other on campus.

In addition, through Q methodology with its emphasis on elucidating subjective views from individual participants and then relating their views to each other, subjectivity can be measured and correlated in order to seek a model relevant to existing theories. In this sense, Q methodology is a better fit for a study aimed at discovering the relation between discursive practices and subjective views (Capdevila & Lazard, 2008; Kitzinger, 1987; Stenner, 2009). Q methodology as a constructivist method presents the social construction of a participant’s viewpoint of intercultural interactions and relations. Q-sorting of the participants’ viewpoint statements is an activity of positioning these statements in relation to each intercultural event. Any resulting factors are not a fixture of any event (Stenner, 2009). In this case,
international and American students’ viewpoints of intercultural interactions and relations might be patterned in many ways. The actualized Q-sort structures of their feelings could provide an innovative and new picture.

Q methodology also seeks discursive constructivist endeavors (Capdevila & Lazard, 2008). After factor analysis, the elements of factors reveal the characteristics of the community of intercultural practice and of the groups that contribute to it. In the discourse of internationalizing home campus with the interest of developing intercultural competence as a student learning outcome, factor analysis would help us to identify the community in which the dominant and the marginal discourses generate (Capdevila & Lazard, 2008) in regard to intercultural interactions and relations between international and American students.

Q methodology has been used in the study of divergent experiences of the groups that are relatively powerless and marginalized (S. R. Brown, 2005, 2006; Capdevila & Lazard, 2008), which characterizes international students (Goode, 2007; H. Zhang, Satlykgylyjova, Almuhajiri, & Brown, 2013). The current study employs Q methodology to illuminate international and American students’ subjective perceptions of intercultural relations in terms of “meaningful intercultural interactions” in a Midwestern public research university. The dominant and marginalized factors identified represent their different conceptualizations and perceptions concerning the nature of intercultural relations. I also utilize factor analysis to probe into the way of international and American students being together.

Q research findings can be generalized in the form of conceptual generalization (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The research findings on the concepts of intercultural relations and the nature of these might provide a redefinition of this
concept and implications for how it may be operationalized in the internationalization of U.S. campuses.

**Data Collection**

In data collection, I explain the rationale of the research sample and site selection. Then, I address key issues in research procedures with two stages: interview and Q methodology. I audio-taped the interviews and transcribed each of interviews as soon as possible. I wrote interview memos after each interview, including the intercultural interaction between the interviewee and me in thick descriptions, and the potential categories I might use for analyzing the interview data. I also wrote the self-reflection note on being a researcher from insider and outsider perspectives while conducting each interview.

**Site Context**

The study was conducted at Kent State University (KSU). In 2016, more than 3,000 international students from approximately 109 countries accounted for 11.2% of the total student population at Kent State University. Among these international students, 1,541 are graduate students. The Office of Global Education is responsible for the primary services for international students and scholars including immigration service, international admissions, and cross-cultural education events. The Office of International Student Affairs under the Division of Student Affairs is committed to helping international students academically and socially succeed at KSU. This office provides resources and campus services to meet the needs of a diverse international student population, including campus life (dining, housing, and recreation), campus services (health center, bookstore, etc.), and the center for student involvement (student organizations). International Student Affairs attempts to assist international
students become better involved and engaged in campus life and provides opportunities for domestic and international students to develop in depth friendships. The intercultural events and programs include Conversational Partnership, International Friendship Program, International Student Advisory Board and International Village, and the “International Student Affairs” Newsletter.

Reviewing the mission statements of these intercultural educational programs, councils, and centers, the targeted audience is identified as “International.” The issues related to the international student population are directed to the specific offices or programs named “International.” For example, the International Student Council “encourages communications, collaborations, and support among all international students.” The Conversation Partnership and International Friendship Program attempt to pair international students with American students, faculty, and staff members with the expected outcomes including helping international students develop their English. These programs help build cultural awareness as well as rewarding friendships between students.

The international student population is invisible in other student organizations or centers on campus. The Student Multicultural Center states its mission has a particular focus on the students of color. International students may be excluded from this center due to their nationalities. The underrepresented, first-generation college students, their families and international students of lower socioeconomic status are missing in the institutional discourse and diversity policy.

The university has specific policies regarding international students. For example, to ensure that international students have reliable access to the United States health care services, the university guides international students to a mandated health
insurance plan. Regarding immigration status, the Office of Global Education regularly sends the ISSS newsletter (International Student and Scholar Services) to all international students and scholars. The primary information is related to immigration information including valid visa and valid student status. The office also offers workshops including topics on plagiarism, taxes and other immigration policy.

**Participants**

In the current study, the research participants were purposefully selected from both social science and natural science disciplines. A purposeful sample is “not designed to achieve population validity” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 178), but it “would make a highly credible sample” (Gall et al., 2007, p. 185). The research participants’ intercultural experiences might not represent the intercultural experiences of all international and American graduate students at Kent State University. However, purposeful sampling can help me recruit potential participants who are likely to be information-rich for an in-depth understanding of international and American graduate students’ perception of cultural diversity and intercultural relations with cultural other at the host campus.

In Q methodology, it is not a problem to have few participants because Q methodology aims to establish the existence of particular viewpoints, thereafter to explicate and compare these viewpoints (S. R. Brown, 1980; McKeown & Thomas, 1988). The participant sampling in this study is a purposive one “to yield the most information about the phenomenon of interest” (Merriam, 2002, p. 20) and “to achieve in-depth understanding of selected individuals” (Gall et al., 2007, p. 178).

Q-methodology prefers using a strategic approach to participant sampling (Watts & Stenner, 2012). From these legitimately selected participants, the
researchers are able to capture their varieties of informative and relevant viewpoints related to the research questions. The participant selection can be governed by the study’s theoretical consideration in the sampling design (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). International and American graduate students are specifically relevant to the current research for exploring the possibilities for them co-constructing intercultural interactions on behalf of developing their intercultural competence. The criteria for selecting research participants for the current study are: Education level (graduate); actively engaged in intercultural interactions with cultural other (similar others and dissimilar others); international students living in the U.S. a minimum of two years; American students having at least one-year close intercultural interactions with international students; American students having no studying abroad experiences. The copies of the recruitment email and the consent form for this research approved by the Intuiutional Review Board (IRB) were sent to the potential research participants.

To represent the variability of perspectives surrounding intercultural practices on campus, the research participants were purposefully selected from both social science and natural science disciplines, possibly to confirm the findings of Jammaz (1972) and Musaiteer (2015) that international students majoring in STEM programs had a better experience of intercultural communications with their American peers than those majoring in humanities did.

I employed three purposeful sampling strategies to “make a highly credible sample” (Gall et al., 2007, p. 185): typical case sampling, opportunistic, and snowball strategy (Gall et al., 2007). Through sending the emails to the leaders of several graduate student organizations on campus, the research participant recruiting letter was spread out. I also attended two intercultural events on campus and passed out the
recruiting information. I recruited 15 potential research participants. Twelve of them meet the participant criteria. In the final group, there are 12 research participants \( N = 12 \), with 6 international graduate students (3 from natural science disciplines and 3 from social science disciplines) and 6 American graduate students (3 from natural science disciplines and 3 from social science disciplines). These 12 participants have been studying in their graduate programs for more than two years and have had at least one-year intercultural experience on campus. These six American graduate students neither have had study abroad experience, nor working or traveling abroad. The previous studies (Imahori & Lanigan, 1989; Park, 2002; Taylor, 1994a) indicate the domestic students’ previous study abroad experiences may have great impact on their further intercultural experiences.

In Q methodology, researchers like to have 4 to 6 participants with relatively high loading that are purely loaded on each factor; however, it is hard to anticipate the number of factors retained in the final solution, nor do researchers know which participants will be on which factors (S. R. Brown, 1980, 1993; Watts & Stenner, 2012). That means a desirable number of participants cannot be determined in advance in Q methodology. It is essential to ensure that Q sorts are gathered from as many of the obviously pertinent demographics (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The current study ensures a sufficiently varied participants group in terms of their academic discipline (social and nature sciences) and their institutional identity (international and American domestic). In the final group for Q-sorting, there are four research participants (two international participants and two American participants). These four participants established the existence of the particular viewpoints of international and American graduate students’ intercultural practices on a specific campus from
three different perspectives: “my own point of view,” “the other’s point of view,” and “the other’s perception of my view.” Four out of the 12 participants agreed to do Q-sorting. Each of these four participants did three Q-sorts respectively with the total number of 12 Q-sorts. (See Table 1.)

Table 1

Participants’ Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International Participants</th>
<th>Program discipline</th>
<th>Years at KSU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMSS_1</td>
<td>Education (PhD)</td>
<td>More than two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFNS_2</td>
<td>Liquid Crystal Institute (PhD)</td>
<td>More than two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFNS_1</td>
<td>Liquid Crystal Institute (Master-Physics)</td>
<td>More than two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFSS_1</td>
<td>Arts (Master)</td>
<td>More than two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMNS_1</td>
<td>Mathematics (PhD)</td>
<td>More than two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFSS_2</td>
<td>Modern Languages (PhD)</td>
<td>More than two years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American Participants</th>
<th>Study abroad</th>
<th>Program discipline</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMSS_1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Communications (Ph.D.)</td>
<td>More than two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMSS_2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Hospitality (Master)</td>
<td>More than two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFSS_1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>History (Ph.D.)</td>
<td>More than two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFNS_2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Geography (Ph.D.)</td>
<td>More than two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFNS_3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Liquid Crystal Institute (Ph.D.)</td>
<td>More than two years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFNS_1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Mathematics (Ph.D.)</td>
<td>More than two years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Procedure**

In the current research, data collection proceeded in two stages, as presented in the next section.

**Stage I**

The researcher is the data collection instrument. A substantial amount of data would be collected over three-month through semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions and informal conversations.

Working with gatekeepers to obtain necessary permissions is the critical step of a case study. After receiving the approval from the University Institutional Review Board-Human Subjects Research, I employed three purposeful sampling strategies for recruiting the research participants: typical case sampling, opportunistic, and snowball strategy. Typical case sampling mainly selects the typical case to study for proving it effective to the majority (Gall et al., 2007). I targeted the schools at the University with intensive international students and contacted the gatekeepers such as the international student office staff, the program director, the presidents of the student associations and society, and the professors concerned. Through them, my research recruitment letter was passed out to the potential participants. I also adopted snowball sampling, asking the research participants to recommend other potential participants, and the intercultural activities and events to attend. Even though I secured the interviews of the participants who signed the consent forms, after several interviews, I discovered that I would learn more by studying students’ intercultural experience from the programs with the fewest international students. I went to the intercultural activities recommended for opportunistic sampling which gave me ideas about what to look for in selecting one participant (Gall et al., 2007).
I closely communicated with the research participants and promised anonymity. Their real names did not show up in any report or forms in my study except their signatures on the consent forms. The pseudonyms assigned in my research report are based on a numbered list of names, which are kept separately and were not consulted in the analysis and interpretive phases. All the data are kept in my computer with access password. My major advisor and I as principal investigators have access to these data. The interviews lasted around one hour each. Ten interviews were conducted in the private-room in the library at the University. Two interviews were conducted in the interviewees’ offices.

During the data collection, I used techniques for gathering data: partial participant observation of their interactions with me in the process of interviews, interview recorded, and informal conversations. The multiple data sources permit triangulation during data analysis. With reference to Gold (1958), in the process of face-to-face interviews with my research participants with diverse cultural backgrounds, my identity as an international graduate student defines my observations as the participant with observer stance. In the process of interviews, my identity as a participant is a given because I am the member of the group experiencing intercultural interactions, especially when the research participants define “cultural other” as bipolarized “international students and American student.” My interactions with them have become intercultural in the process of interviews: American-international. For me, the insider’s and outsider’s identity exist at the same time. My identity as a participant with observer stance provides me advantage improving the quality of data collection and interpretation and facilitating the development of new research questions (DeMunck & Sobo, 1998) with rich detailed descriptions of my research
participants’ intercultural interactions with me during the interviews. The participation with observation stance may help me have a better understanding of the intercultural phenomenon in these specific intercultural contexts, which would increase the validity of the study in those observations (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002).

**Interview protocol.** A substantial amount of data comes from 12 semi-structured interviews with 12 interview questions and informal conversations. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was audio-recorded. The interviews were mostly conducted in the study room in the university main library. The 12 interview recordings were transcribed. The field notes and self-reflections were immediately written down after each interview.

**Pilot interview notations.** Prior to the formal interviews, pilot interviews had been done with four international graduate students (two from computer science, one from business and one from library science from University of Akron) and one American graduate student from education at KSU. The pilot tested the interview questions as to whether they would draw the appropriate range of responses.

The first two pilot interviews were done in the gym of a church in Akron, and the other two were done in the student center at The University of Akron. The one with an American graduate student was done in a cafe in Fairlawn. The pilot interviews indicated that three out of four graduate students in the pilot interviews were confused by the term “cultural diversity” in the first interview question. They suggested clarifying it. The students from the business major and the American education major had no problem with the term. The first interview question was designed to explore the conceptualization of “cultural diversity” among the current research participants. I decided not to revise the term “cultural diversity” in the first
interview question. The four international students asked me the same question, “What do you mean by ‘cultural other,’ and what you want me to say?” while the American student had no problem with this term. The original interview questions #5, #10, and #12 were confusing to all of the pilot participants due to their wordiness. I simplified these three questions in response to the feedback.

In addition, all these five pilot interviewees thought “intercultural conflict” was a harshly negative description of the situation between “international and American students.” They said they did not have intercultural conflicts with each other. As a result of the pilot study, the 14 interview questions were finalized as the interview protocol.

**Formal interview notations.** During the formal interviews (the protocol is attached in Appendix A) some research participants were confused by the term “intercultural conflict” in interview questions #4 and #5. The first two American participants told me that they had no “conflict” with cultural other. They thought “conflict” was too harsh. When I used the words “intercultural encounter” and “unpleasant intercultural experience,” they had no problem with that. In the following interviews, I asked them these two questions with “cultural conflict” first. If the participants had problems responding, I used the words “intercultural encounter or challenge” and “unpleasant intercultural experience” to replace “conflict.” In addition, interview questions #8 and #9 were simplified to “With reference to your intercultural experience, what kind of interactions support intercultural relations formed in depth? Could you give me some examples?” and “With reference to your intercultural experience, what kind of interactions challenge intercultural relations formed in depth? Could you give me some examples?”
Stage II

International and American graduate students’ conceptualizations and perceptions of intercultural relation with cultural other and their experiences of intercultural encounters identified in Stage I were used as the raw data source for developing a concourse from which the Q-sample was developed for further in-depth analysis with Q methodology. The foci in Stage II consist of identifying international and American students’ commonalities and discrepancies in their understanding and practice of intercultural relations with cultural other; probing their approaches involved in their intercultural relations and interactions; and last, identifying the possibilities for meaningful intercultural interactions.

Generally, a Q study includes: statement collection, establishing the Q sample, providing selected participants with a condition of instruction for completing the Q-sort, operating statistical analysis involving correlation, factor analysis and computing factor scores, and interpretation of factors. The following sections address how each of these steps was conducted.

Concourse creation and Q-sample statement generation. Q methodology is rooted in “concourse” in the form of numerous subjective statements on a certain topic, a term elaborated by Stephenson (1978). In the present particular study, surrounding the topic of intercultural relations and interactions, the concourse is all ideas collected from international and American students during interviews. “It is Q methodology’s task to reveal the inherent structure of a concourse” (S. R. Brown, 1993, p. 95). It is also from concourse that new meanings on a certain topic arise (S. R. Brown, 1993). In the current study, for concourse, as many as possible statements of both international and American students’ perceptions and conceptualizations of
intercultural relations and interactions were drawn from the raw data source collected in Phase I. The criteria for generating the concourse included the five elements of Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) intercultural relational model; the issues highlighted in the literature review; and the new ideas arising in the interviews. The statements surrounding these criteria and representing the research participants’ viewpoints on intercultural practices on campus were selected among the concourse. These statements are sampled as the Q set for the present study. The scholars (McKeown & Thomas, 1988; Watts & Stenner, 2012) emphasized that, in order to capture the full range of subjective responses to the research question without bias towards the particular concept or opinion, the researchers should allow participants to completely express their personal viewpoints. In this instance, the current study captured international and Americans students’ perceptions of intercultural relations and experiences of interactions with those who they define as a cultural other, including their positive, negative and neutral experiences.

Accordingly, the number of items in a Q-set varies as widely as 40–80 items (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The statement categories consist of intercultural knowledge, intercultural interaction strategies/skills, motivation, goal, the way of change after intercultural encounters, previous intercultural experiences, and the barriers to intercultural interactions. With these seven categories, the statements collected for the concourse were categorized, compared, combined, and condensed into 42 statement items for the Q-set. The number of the statement items is equal among the seven categories, each category consisting of 6 statements. These 42 statement items are randomly assigned a number from 1 to 42 in order to prevent the research participants from identifying the patterns of the statements. See Appendix K.
**Q sorting.** Q-sorting is a process in which the subject models his or her viewpoints by rank-ordering Q-sample stimuli along a continuum defined by a condition of instruction (S. R. Brown, 1993; McKeown & Thomas, 1988), such as, from *most agree* to *most disagree*. The statements are administered in the form of a pack of randomly numbered cards with one statement on each card. The participants are instructed to spread these statements out, then sort them into a fixed normal and symmetrical distribution with statements that are most representative of their viewpoints at the positive pole, through zero, to the statements most unrepresentative of their viewpoints at the negative pole (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The resulting Q-sort is dependent solely upon the participant’s individual self-references without external meaning imposed by the research investigators (S. R. Brown, 1993; Stephenson, 1974).

S. R. Brown (1993) also suggested that the researchers engage in a post-Q-sorting interview. In the post-Q-sort interview, the researchers enable the participants to elaborate his or her viewpoints with respect to specific statements (Shemmings & Ellingsen, 2012). Watts and Stenner (2012) also endorsed the opportunity for the researchers to explore the issue further and improve the quality of the research findings.

In this specific study on international and American students’ perceptions of meaningful intercultural interactions and relations with cultural other, each of participants did three Q Sorts respectively. I had the following perspectives for each participant and sought to understand how international and American students relate to one another in terms of intercultural relation: (a) self’s view of self; (b) self’s view of others; (c) self’s view of other’s view of self. Laing (1969) said,
The person whom we describe, and over whom we theorize, is not the only agent in his ‘world.’ How he perceives and acts towards the others, how they perceive and act towards him, how he perceives them as perceiving him, how they perceive him as perceiving them, are all aspects of ‘the situation.’ They are all pertinent to understanding one person’s participation in it. (p. 82)

Therefore, we cannot give an undistorted account of international students and American students without giving an account of their relations with each other. “Each person is always acting upon others and acted upon by others” (Laing, 1969, p. 81).

First, four participants (AMSS_1, AFNS_3, IFNS_2, IFSS_2), both international and American students, are required to rank order the same set of Q-sample stimuli which represents particular domains of their subjectivity in intercultural relations and interactions with cultural other. The factors subsequently emerge in factor-analysis should indicate their different segments in conceptualization about intercultural relations and reveal the extent to which their subjective viewpoints on the topic are similar or dissimilar. Second, in order to explore how clearly that international and American students are able to discern each other’s viewpoints of intercultural interactions and relations with cultural other, I invited international participants to Q-sort the same set of Q-sample stimuli for what they think is their American peers’ viewpoints, and, vise versa. Then their Q-sorts were compared to determine how clearly they are able to discern each other’s views. The third Q-sort of the same set of Q-sample stimuli focused on how international students view American students’ view international students and vice versa.

The score sheets for Q-sorting are prepared for the participants to record their completed Q sorts. On the score sheet, the participant is given the specific code,
which is consistent with their codes for data collection and analysis in Phase I. The research participants ranked these 42 statements from those which they Most Agree (+4) to those Most Disagree (-4) with the instruction. The condition of instruction for Q-sorting consists of: My Own Point of View, the Other’s Point of View, and the Other’s Perception of My View. Score sheets with different conditions of instruction are included in Appendices F through J.

Q sorts were administered to two international and two American graduate students. These four participants are the participants in Phase I. Each Q-sorting lasted around 45 minutes including the post-interview. Each of these four participants did three different Q sorts at three different times. The four participants agreed that Q-sorting the statements for “my own point of view” is the easiest. The one for “the other’s perception of my view” is the hardest. They said they had to keep reminding themselves to be at “the other’s” stance to do this Q-sorting. In addition, these four participants said they had more statements to the positive poles of the scores (+4, +3, +2, +1). For these 12 Q-sortings, the participants always finished the positive pole first. They took a longer time to sort the statements to the negative poles of the scores (-4, -3, -2, -1). The four participants also shared that the statements under the value zero (0) should have been put under the positive pole of the scores. Even though they put them under the value zero, they tended to agree with these statements.

**Data Analysis**

In the current research, data analysis consists of two stages. In the first stage I employed a qualitative method to analyze interview data for examining participants’ subjective views of intercultural relations and interactions with cultural other. In the second stage, the analysis included factor analysis, factor rotation, and factor
interpretations. In the data analysis, the pseudonyms assigned to each participant are based on letters and numbers, such as IFSS_1 or AMNS_2. For example, IFSS indicates that the participant is an international female student from social sciences. AMNS means that this participant is an American male student from the natural sciences.

**Stage I: Interpretive Qualitative Analysis**

With reference to my research questions, I adopted interpretational analysis. I audio-taped the interviews and transcribed each of interviews as soon as possible. I wrote interview memos after each interview, including the potential categories proposed in Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) relational model. I also wrote down the potential questions I had in the process of interviews and transcriptions. After all the interview data had been collected and transcribed, I developed the categories for analyzing the research participants’ responses to the interview questions. I coded data with Nvivo 10 software to identify the commonalities and discrepancies of how international and American graduate students conceptualized and perceived intercultural relations with cultural other and how they experienced intercultural relations. The conceptual framework contained themes and sub-themes for data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The categories proposed in Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) relational model consist of general and specific cultural knowledge, intercultural communication skills and strategies, the goals and motivations for intercultural relation, previous intercultural experiences, and the approaches to cultural other (self-awarded and relation-awarded). With the research findings at Stage I, I answered the first and second research questions, and partially addressed the third question.
At the beginning phase, I coded the qualitative data based on the categories proposed in the intercultural relational model. I found some segments of data containing information that was not codable using those categories. I revised the category system and then recoded all the segments (Gall et al., 2007). Analysis of data is an ongoing process. Patterns and themes have been sought by construction of cross-case displays. Around the overarching theme “intercultural interaction and relation” between international and American students, there were several criteria set up for coding the data of the 12 interviews: (a) the themes based on the literature and previous research; (b) the ideas and thoughts repeated by most interviewees and the idea or topic repeated by an interviewee in different interview questions; (c) the interviewees’ explicit statements of what was important; (d) key elements in the intercultural relational model; and (e) unexpected themes.

After interviews and reading interview transcriptions closely, I allocated and labeled data with the list of themes. Then I looked at ideas within those themes and identified the subthemes to see how each of the sub-themes and major themes related to each other. The constant comparison of these themes with a deductive approach within the intercultural relational model explored how these themes connected to and disconnected from the Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) relational model. With an inductive approach, the themes beyond this relational model were identified and elaborated in terms of the conceptual framework for understanding intercultural relations among international and American graduate students in the scenario of the internationalization of higher education at home campus.
Stage II: Q Method Factor Analysis

Q method is equipped to intensively analyze single cases (Baas & Brown, 1973). Q method is able to assay the subjectivity of these single cases with clarity through the detection of connections (similarity and dissimilarity) by way of correlation calculations. Through calculating correlation, the level of agreement and disagreement of Q sorts among the participants is identified. This correlations matrix provides the basis for revealing the factor structure around the issue of student’s perception of intercultural interaction and relation with cultural other on campus.

Fundamentally, factor analysis examines a correlation matrix to determine how many basically different Q sorts are in evidence (S. R. Brown, 1993). S. R. Brown referred to factors as different families. Q sorts that are highly correlated with one another may be considered to have a family resemblance. Those participants whose Q-sortings are highly correlated with each other are considered to be grouped together. Instead of being grouped in terms of some external criterion (e.g., by gender or nation of origin), subjects group themselves through the process of Q-sorting themselves into different groups (McKeown & Thomas, 1988).

The 12 Q sorts were entered into the PQMethod Software program for factor analysis (Schmolck & Atkinson, 2012). The data were analyzed using centroid analysis with varimax rotation which reveals the maximized amount of variance explained by the extracted factors. In the current study, the three factors identified indicated international and American students’ similar and different perceptions of intercultural relations and interactions on campus, and their similar or different approach constructed in practicing meaningful intercultural interactions. These three factors also indicated the possibilities and conditions for forming meaningful
intercultural relations between international and American students on campus. The
data analysis revealed three perceptions of intercultural experience that reflect three
types of intercultural practice on campus: (a) relation-oriented, (b) knowledge-skill-
oriented, and (c) intercultural field for self-fulfillment.

These three significant factors were extracted during factoring process. These
three factors in the final solution all satisfy the Kaiser-Guttman criterion. Eigenvalues
of less than 1.00 are taken as the cut-off point for retentions of factors. In the current
study, these three factors accounted for 65% of the total study variance, which can be
considered as a sound solution (S. R. Brown, 1980). The identified factors only
provide raw materials for probing subjective relations from the participants’ vantage
the theoretical from the statistical significance of factors in Q methodology.
Sometimes, statistically insignificant factors may hold special theoretical meaning.
The current study determined the importance of factors based on holistic
consideration, including their theoretical and statistical significances, the research
questions, the study findings in Phase I, and the purpose and theoretical issues in the
current research.

While determining the best fit between or among participants’ subjective
viewpoints, it is necessary to do factor rotation within multidimensional variable
space. There are three major statistically-based rotation techniques: varimax,
quartimax, and equimax. The varimax method of orthogonal rotation approximates
simple structure (McKeown & Thomas, 1988) and is the most frequently employed,
and it serves to maximize the amount of variance explained by the extracted factors
(Watts & Stenner, 2005). “In other words, it maximizes the variance of each factor by
making high loadings higher and low loadings lower to simplify factor interpretation” (Akhtar-Danesh, 2017, p. 150). Which rotation technique is employed depends on the nature of the data collected and the aims of the study in a particular context (S. R. Brown, 1980). The current study employed the varimax for maximizing the variance explained by the three extracted factors, which are equally important.

**Factor Interpretation**

Following factor analysis and rotation, researchers need to determine which factors are to be selected for interpretation. The interpretation of factors proceeds on the basis of factor scores, which result in a single model Q-sort for each of the factors. As S. R. Brown (1993) stated, “A factor score is the score for a statement as a kind of average of the scores given that statement by all of the Q sorts associated with the factor” (p. 117). These scores can be compared to determine the interrelation of the many items within a particular factor array or model Q-sort. Interpretations are constructed by carefully referencing the positioning and overall configuration of the statements in relevant factor arrays. Initially, the highest and the lowest ranking items in the factor arrays allow researchers to identify those important issues about which factors are polarized. With reference to the research questions, then the other additional highly ranked items or potentially useful items are identified. Watts and Stenner (2012) pointed out that it is important to attend to the items near the middle of the distribution, especially the items under value zero, because “on occasion, an item ranked in this area can act as a fulcrum for the viewpoint being expressed” (p. 167).

In the current study, during the factor interpretation, I attended to the structured factor array and know the factor arrays from pole to pole. I used international and American
students’ own words collected and recorded during interviews and their demographic information to interpret the clues contained in each array.

**Ethical Issues**

The research participants shared their positive and negative experiences of intercultural interactions and relations during the interviews. It could be assumed that some of them might feel stressed to recall negative intercultural experiences. Securing confidentiality, in the consent form, the participants were informed of the possibility of talking about their unpleasant experiences. The research participants were informed that they could withdraw from my interview at any time. In addition, during the post Q-sorting interview, they were asked to explain why they ranked certain statements in a particular way and what that meant to them. If they felt uncomfortable in giving explanations, they were allowed to give no explanation. I also included an audiotape consent form for the confidentiality of the interviewees.

The ethical issue in analysis involves the question of whether the participants should have a say in how their statements are interpreted (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In phase II analysis, the research participants were asked to Q-sort the statements extracted from their interviews ranking from most agreed to most disagreed. They gave indirect interpretations of these statements around the topic of their intercultural relation and interaction with cultural other. For reporting the research findings, I informed the research participants that the commonalities and discrepancies of their perceptions of intercultural relations and interactions with cultural other would be reported. Their individual names and academic programs would remain anonymous during all stages of the research. Only I knew the names matched to these numbers and had access to these numbered score sheets.
Trustworthiness: Rethinking Intercultural Researcher From Insider-Outsider Perspective

The demographics of the student population at Kent State University are not substantially different from other public universities in the U.S. The largest proportion of international students is from mainland China. I found no demographic validity threat to the qualitative study. For this intercultural research design, I used relational approach. With this relational approach in the process of doing the study, I reconceptualized myself as an intercultural researcher rather than an insider or outsider. As an international student researcher, I was vigilant regarding the stabilized relation between researcher and research participants.

For the part of data generation, each interview in this study was a unique event in the particular circumstance, which was co-constructed by the participant and me in the process of interviews. Thus, in relational accounts, I am neither outsider nor insiders, but co-participants in a shared social activity and interaction with each other. In the process of interview, interviewer and interviewee shared the goal of making sense of incidents recalled by interviewees. In this shared enterprise, I and my research participants attended to a power relation, but I attempted to reduce its framing of data generation. I kept reflexivity and took journals right after each interview. Reflexivity allows researchers to account for their impact on the data generation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). So semi-structured interview questions used were trying to avoid the crude imposition of my agenda on the interviewees. Interviewees might give descriptions of intercultural experience or events instead of those prompting reflection on the construction of meaning around those intercultural
incidents. What I did was ask follow-up questions for further clarification and prompt reflection on their intercultural incidents.

Students all over the world may have similar experiences when dealing with learning and teaching. In intercultural research, understanding the contrasting influences arising from different social and cultural traditions may be challenging. I asked myself about what kind of knowledge shaped her strategies and might affect my research findings. My gender, age, ethnicity, language, academic program and personal intercultural experience, even marital status, all shape and influence my own research process, including my methodology, research design, data collection, and analysis.

In the process of contact with the international student research participants, I was an international student sharing the in-group identity of sojourner on campus, but still had different intercultural experiences because of difference in nationality and cultural background. However, I quickly found common ground with my research participants because of shared gender, age, and/or the same marital status. This in-group feeling was strengthened by their assurances, “you know what I mean.”

Naples (2003) defined insider study as the study of the researcher’s own social group. In order to mitigate potential bias, I sought to identify techniques that could be employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis. I used the combined strategies of inductive and deductive approaches with semi-structured interviews in the data collection. As an international student, I possess some a priori knowledge of the international student community. My interactions with other international students happen in my daily life. International student colleagues are “similar others” who share with me the similar intercultural issues socially and
Insider researcher is less likely to stereotype the participants (Greene, 2014). However, insider research is criticized as subjective and as easily biased by the researcher projecting her/his own views onto the participants during data collection and analysis, which would threaten the research objectivity and compromise the study validity.

When interviewing American student research participants, at first, I barely had an in-group feeling. However, what the second interviewee said, “All doctoral students are in the same boat,” immediately pulled me back to a common in-group identity—being doctoral students and future scholars. “It is not just ‘culture’ that guides (intercultural) interactions” (Dervin & Tournebise, 2013, p. 535). My role was to move on a continuum of insider and outsider, rather than as either/or dichotomy. As Chavez (2008) noted, an insider researcher can be a total insider or partial insider. The international student participant from Mainland China endorsed me as the total insider by saying “You know what I mean” while the research participant from Taiwan set me up as a partial insider by saying “our Taiwanese.” The American participants saw me as an outsider by saying “Do you know what I mean?” while they designated me a partial insider by sharing with me their interactions with their Chinese friends: “You know I have a good friend who is Chinese.”

I needed, according to Bhabha (1994), to move through the third space of intercultural dialogue beyond insider and outsider. The interviewees and I could produce new meaning that did not result in merging or mixing, but mutually enriched our understandings of “intercultural.” For example, at first, one of the interviewees persisted that she had no intercultural conflicts with her so-called cultural other. At that moment, I could not push her further on this interview question. I told her she
could share any impression of an intercultural experience. When sharing her opinion on the factors that support or challenge intercultural relations forming in depth, she said, “now, I think I had experience of intercultural conflict with a cultural other. I am sure it is an intercultural conflict.” Her changes made me understand that she perceived “intercultural” in interpersonal and intercultural dynamics. The interview process is in a dialogic mode. This intercultural dialogue was not just between her (American) and me (Chinese), but also between her (at the beginning of the interview) and herself (by the end of the interview).

In the process of data analysis, at times I felt the boundary between insider and outsider was blurred when she read the interview transcripts multiple times. I analyzed the raw data from the perspective of being located in-between insider and outsider. Even though my research aims to study international and American graduate students’ intercultural experiences on campus, in the process of the interviews, I focused on not only the content of what they shared with me, but also focused on the process of the intercultural interactions between the interviewees and the interviewer. After each interview, I made notes and wrote down a narrative reflection on what happened during interviews and our interaction process, including what I asked and what they said before-after the formal interviews, their body languages, my questions, feelings, and thoughts in the moment while interviewing these research participants. I also wrote down additional thoughts about the research topic and reflections on how they interacted with me in the process of interviews. I also paid close attention to the reflection on what I learned, what I experienced and how I made sense of my experience, and how I felt being treated as an insider and outsider at the same time (Appendix N). When describing the themes and how these
themes were connected, I objectively presented the original viewpoints of the interviewees.

Any intercultural interaction occurs in a specific context. The research participants explained their intercultural experiences in their contexts. The research findings on international and American graduate students’ intercultural relations and interactions at this specific university might not be generalized to intercultural interactors in other American universities, but the concepts of intercultural interaction and relation and the co-constructive nature of intercultural research arising from Q-sorting can be generalized in the form of conceptual generalization.

**Rapport With Participants**

The current research purpose is to identify how international and American graduate students conceptualize and perceive intercultural relations, and how they experience intercultural interactions. The potential participants in the current study are actively engaged in intercultural interactions with cultural other. They might be more open sharing their intercultural experiences with me. The conduct of interviews is not without difficulty. “The researcher must draw inference from what occurs in the encounter to broader actions and perspectives of the interviewee” (Ryan & Dundon, 2009, p. 443). In this study, there is one essential element needed to consider for rapport with study participants: relationship development.

In this specific study, I viewed rapport as the degree of the participants sharing their positive and negative intercultural experiences with me with thick descriptions. To achieve rapport with interviewees, first, I searched for the common ground with the participants. As graduate students, the participants and I shared the commonalities such as academic challenges, colleague relationships, and balancing life and
academics. That was helpful for us to establish empathy with each other. Second, before the formal interviews, the participants and I were engaged in an exchange of ideas with each other, including our interest in the intercultural topic and why I am interested in this topic. Both of us were aware of the need for the interviewees to offer explanations of their intercultural experiences. When the participants said that they did not have intercultural conflicts with their so-called cultural other, I just let them keep sharing their experiences with people with different cultural backgrounds on campus. Then, in the flow of their talks, they offered relevant examples and their narratives were fleshed out offering deeper insights into their intercultural relations on campus. I captured how they interpreted their “intercultural relation,” positive and negative, in their thick descriptions of personal stories.

Bias

There is no way to eliminate researcher bias completely (Maxwell, 2013). “Q method embraces the limits of research objectivity” (Robbins & Krueger, 2000, p. 645). Robbins and Krueger (2000) argue that Q method can neither provide absolute and objective access to the participants’ reality nor increase the reflexivity of the researchers (Robbins & Krueger, 2000). However, Q method allows the researchers giving up the monopoly of the research process. Q method allows the participation of the research participants in the construction and manipulation of the categories of a quantitative form of data analysis by doing Q-sorting and explaining their ways of arranging the statements. In addition, the researchers in Q studies need critical self-reflection on their presence in the process of research with bias.

The data selection involves the subjectivity of the researchers. As an international student, how I define cultural diversity and how I perceive intercultural
relations and meaningful intercultural interactions based on my personal intercultural experiences and my major studies in international multicultural education certainly impacts my decisions on what is a positive and meaningful intercultural interaction and relation. To identify and reduce the subjectivity bias, I recorded my research reflections at the beginning of observations, formal interviews, and informal conversations. All the interview questions in Phase I are semi-structured to allow for further discussion of the topics I might not consider important.

Involving interviewer and interviewees in research, “interviewing has often been constructed as a binary process with attendant hidden and not quite-so-hidden hierarchies, facilitated by the social structure of interviews” (Griffin, 2016, p. 15). The differences persist in various ways, even though the researcher intends to equalize the interview process (Griffin, 2016). It was problematic for me to equalize the relation between my interviewees and me. My insider-outsider identities are fluid and play a role simultaneously in the process of recruiting the research participants, conducting interviews, and data analysis. As an international student and a graduate student, I approached my interviewees as an insider-outsider. It was more difficult to gauge the impact of my insider-outsider identity on my research process.

In addition, in the data analysis phase, I developed the categories in Phase I with reference to the literature review, the potentially important and relevant perspectives are still likely to be overlooked due to their marginalization in the community of intercultural discourse. However, with Q methodology in Phase II, the process itself avoids predetermined categories as opposed to functional categories, which engages with both marginal and dominant perspectives (Capdevila & Lazard, 2008). Q factor analysis drew attention to these marginalized perspectives and
provided insight into the manifold perceptions of meaningful intercultural interactions and relations in the context of internationalization at home campus.
CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Stage I—Findings

The current research employs Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) relational model as the analytic framework to examine international an American graduate students’ perceptions of intercultural relations and interactions at home campus. The current study complements Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) relational model addressing the two-way adaptation for successful relational outcome from two perspectives. Firstly, students in intercultural interactions defined “cultural other” contextually and dynamically. They defined some of their interaction with their so-called cultural other as “interpersonal” even though their relations were intercultural. With regard to the relational nature of intercultural interaction, Imahori and Lanigan (1989) stabilized relation among students as bipolarized “sojourner” and “domestic.” Second, in the process of adaptation to each other, students in intercultural interactions socially co-constructed the community of intercultural practice. In the narrations of their intercultural experiences, the research participants positioned themselves as outsiders or insiders dynamically in the international community of intercultural practice. In their intercultural practice, they demonstrated three primary patterns of approaching to cultural other after their intercultural encounters. They also articulated three types of goals for intercultural interaction and relation. In addition, the power issues in intercultural interactions and relations were uncovered.

Cultural Other: Dynamic “Us” and “Them”

The research assumption is how the participants conceptualize “cultural diversity” and who they define as cultural other might impact how they define
intercultural relation and interaction. Even though the research participants employed “nationality” as the mark of cultural other, in the narrations of their intercultural experiences, who were counted as cultural other was dynamic and contextualized. This research finding supports Harvey’s (2016) proposal of self/other demonstrating “relationality rather than dichotomy” (p. 379). The self-other boundary is dynamic and non-totality (Harvey, 2016).

International student participants commonly pointed out the nationality difference as the primary category for defining who were cultural other. They also mentioned the intersectionality of nationality, religion, race, and gender in defining “cultural diversity.” The international student participants pointed out,

Cultural diversity means like people from different nationalities, different cultural background, different languages, different beliefs, and they all interact together. (IFNS_1)

I would say cultural diversity . . . you have diversity at very different levels. If you think of sense of level, cultural level you get diversity, religious level you get diversity . . . mum . . . educational level. I feel there are so many levels of diversity you might encounter on campus . . . I am sure, gender, preferences, these stuff. (IFSS_2)

Another said, “I will understand it, is the different kinds of behaviors, especially, and actions of the people around with my, with because of coming from different cultures” (IMNS_1).

For these international student participants, those who have different nationalities intersecting with race, religion, gender and age were counted as “cultural other.” Nationality inevitably, plays a central role in defining who are “cultural
other.” When describing their intercultural experience with cultural other on campus, international student participants shared their intercultural interactions with other international students, their American student peers, and their faculty members inside and outside the classrooms at host campus. When recalling their previous intercultural experience in their hometowns, they depicted the foreigners in their lives as “cultural other.” These six international student participants employed their own nationality as the reference to decide who were counted as “cultural other” in their previous intercultural experiences in their hometowns. Cultural diversity was defined as “different nationalities.”

American student participants, similar to international student participants, took nationality as the mark for cultural diversity. They defined “international students” as a homogenous group as “cultural other.” One male participant was not sure whether the American religious others could be counted as “cultural other” because they shared the same nationality. He said, “I don’t know whether it is called intercultural, we are all American. So the same nationality, but different religion.”

When describing their previous intercultural experiences, five out of six American participants said that they did not have intercultural experiences because of less cultural diversity in their hometown. Only one female participant mentioned her intercultural experience with her students, based on race, gender, and her age. One male participant from the West Coast mentioned his “cultural shock” at his host campus in Ohio. American student participants confined the intercultural interactions and relations on campus to the ones with their international peers.

In their narrations of their intercultural experiences, international and American student participants contextually defined “cultural other.” For example,
faced with the conflict with her international male colleagues, one American female participant (AFNS_3) minimized the national difference when talking about the ally with her Chinese female colleague. She described their relation as “we” or “us.” She clearly defined her international male colleagues as “cultural other” with regard to cultural difference in gender. Another international female participant (IFSS_1) coincidently defined her American male colleague as “cultural other” based on gender difference. An American male participant (AMSS_1) defined his international female colleague as “we” and “us” based on their similar age while he defined those international and American peers at younger ages as “cultural other.” He said, “We both were older than most of students, like late 30s. I think we had a lot to talk about what we don’t want to talk with people who are 22.” Another American participant (AMSS_2) thought his international peer as “we” and “us” in the video-game world in which they shared the same discourse/language in the same context, and in which they can fully understand each other. An international participant (IMNS_1) shared his Chinese girlfriend’s intercultural encounter with other people in his country. In his narratives, he excluded himself from her experience of intercultural encounter.

The research participants had unstable othering. The finding supports Dervin’s (2016) proposal: Othering is a common phenomenon in intercultural encounters, but it is unstable.

**Unstable Othering: Conceptualization of “Intercultural” Relation**

The research participants preferred the contextualized othering. The research participants defined those “cultural other” as “we” or “us” in some intercultural situations, but as “they” or “them” in others. Among the international and American graduate students, they had heterogeneous perceptions of cultural diversity in
different scenarios: social life or academia. Also, how they perceived “cultural diversity” depended to some extent on the nature of their program disciplines.

The current study found that international and American research participants from natural and applied science disciplines were more likely to minimize cultural diversity to the homogenous group identity based on their membership in the same research team. They had the tendency of identifying each other as similar others or “cultural other.” With reference to the norms commonly agreed on among graduate students in their programs, their relation with a certain cultural group was depicted as “interpersonal” or as “intercultural.” This finding is aligned with Imahori and Cupach’s (2005) finding that when people experience relational identities such as colleagues, mentor and mentee, or friends, their interaction is interpersonal, though their relations remain intercultural. In the current study, when one American female participant talked about her relationship with her international co-worker, she tended to define this relation as “interpersonal” and minimized the element of “intercultural.”

So it doesn’t matter what culture they are from. I don’t know. I don’t really think of it as an intercultural relationship . . . I just think of them as relationships with people. I don’t really think of the cultures so much. (AFNS_2)

About the difference between her upbringing and my upbringing we did have a conflict . . . we were working on the same project, and there was a big difference in understanding of what we were supposed to be doing . . . And that caused a little bit of conflict. But as I have gotten to know her, personally, I kind of understand “Okay so this is just kind of how she is. This isn’t, wasn’t because of me.” (AFNS_2)
However, research participant AFNS_2 talked about her interactions with her friend from an African country as “intercultural”: “So she had actually been here for quite a while. So I think she kind of had a good understanding of what life was like here, so she didn’t ask me as many questions as I had for her.”

When I asked an international female graduate student from a natural science program to describe her intercultural experience, she asked me whether colleague belongs to an intercultural relation. In the interview, she emphasized her tendency to think of her relation with her American colleagues as interpersonal while she defined her relation with her Ukrainian colleague as intercultural.

Is colleague counted as relation . . .? Mostly co-worker . . . we work basically six to seven days a week in the lab . . . I don’t feel, I don’t realize the cultural difference that much. I always think it is individual difference. (IFNS_2)

Here I can say that, the students from Asia care more about group, but my Ukrainian colleague cares more about individuals. This is the most significant difference, intercultural difference between me and my Ukrainian colleague. (IFNS_2)

She minimized the cultural difference with her colleagues and emphasized the similarities including sharing the same lab, taking the same courses, and following the same academic procedures and ethics. However, when taking academic ethics into consideration, she clearly defined her relationship with her Ukrainian colleague as intercultural. However, she expressed her concern about stereotyping a people from a specific cultural group and said, “I hope it is individual difference.”

One international male student from a natural science program emphasized the cultural similarities. He said, “I would like to know about the others’ cultures. Yeah,
in the end, there are a lot of common-points. So we can share those common points.”
He also indicated that the outcome of intercultural relation and interaction is seeking
for interpersonal common interests. He also categorized the intercultural relation with
his American colleague as,

Well, (our relation) like a purely professional. . . . I will say if I want to keep
relation with someone, I will search for common interests, and not because I
am interested in his culture. Not as a vehicle of knowledge. (IMNS_1)
The American students demonstrated the tendency of minimizing the cultural
differences when describing their relations in academia with international students.

I have some students who are like from Middle East, and students who are
African American, students who are Asian, number of different groups of
students. I didn’t really notice cultural differences. I mean they are the same
to me. (AFNS_1)
I would say that they are the same as my other relation, like with my
colleagues . . . like with everybody else . . . So it doesn’t matter what culture
they are from. (AFNS_2)

In some other intercultural situations, they clearly defined their relationship with
international students as “intercultural,” for example,

So I asked “in your original world, what kind of building material is popular?”
Questions like that seem normal and not weird. Something I would ask
someone from other part of this country (the U.S.), you know, can ask about
another part of the world too. (AFNS_1)
We had a couple of students who had just come to the United States to begin
their degree whether it was a Master’s or PhD. Their English skills weren’t
quite, you know, as well developed at that point. And I remember just kind of empathizing, thinking how challenging it would be to go to another country.

(AFNS_2)

However, international research participants from social science disciplines clearly defined relations with cultural other as bipolar “Us” and “Them.” One international participant believed the intercultural relation between international and American students as “educating and being educated.” For example,

When I came to here (the United States), . . . It opened up my mind. It gives me opportunity to asking questions, unless you are interacted with you come from, your specific country. But they would be interested in knowing more about your country if there is interaction . . . I think it would be our duty being here, being international students, even though it is very kind of putting all international students together . . . I think it is our duty to get educated each other and other people. (IFSS_2)

Another international student participant described his intercultural relation as being lingering. He said,

I never think about myself as a typical Chinese or American. I just regard myself as a global citizen. I never belong to, I mean, mentally not physically, typical Chinese perspective, or American perspective. I am just linger, the lingerer between two. (IMSS_1)

The other female participant (IFSS_1) had a similar statement. She thought her intercultural relation with her American peers would be much freer if her American peers do not expect her to be one with any identification such as her nationality, religion, and gender. She did not define her relation with her African
American boyfriend as “intercultural.” She excluded this boyfriend-girlfriend relation from “being intercultural.”

Three American research participants from social science programs described their relations with their international peers as “intercultural.” On one hand, they clearly situated their identity as “We American” and gave international students suggestions benefiting international students in academia and social life. For example,

I mean if he didn’t speak English at all, it is wasting time to get together because I don’t speak Japanese, you know . . . To me, our relation is built on communication. If you can’t communicate, you can’t have relation. (AMSS_1)

I feel like international students, I don’t know, if it is necessarily that they are afraid too scared to talk, just because I think they are afraid that the American students, myself would judge them (their English) . . . I think international students just need to be more comfortable in their own skin . . . so there is nothing really to be afraid of. (AMSS_2)

Well again going back to that example with the undergraduates, it’s made me think about how I teach and the way that I teach . . . so it will make it easier for them to adapt to without kind of causing that conflict. (AFSS_1)

At the same time, they affirmed the benefits gained from intercultural learning through forming intercultural relations with their international peers. One female participant (AFSS_1) shared that having the opportunity to have intercultural relations with international students has made her cut through stereotypes of a certain culture and made self-reflection of stereotypes in her daily life. The other participants said,
Indonesian guy and Indian guys live in the U.S. half of their lives. They seem Americanized culturally, but it still, there are different. I think for some people that might be a turnoff. For me, it starts a mirror attraction . . . I have been interested in more people who can teach me different languages, can show me different cuisine. They don’t represent things that I am sick of. (AMSS_1)

It was really cool the international students always brought some fresh, new different perspective about the situation we were learning about that I just wouldn’t have thought of any other way . . . I just always remember their insights definitely changing the way I viewed a situation. (AMSS_2)

Some research participants dynamically defined their relations with some cultural other as “interpersonal” or “intercultural.” For example, when the research participants described their intimate relationship with cultural other such as boyfriend or girlfriend, or mentor-mentee, close friend, as “interpersonal,” they tended to minimize the cultural differences. In their narrations of their intercultural relations with cultural other, commonly, they did not illustrate the power issue explicitly, except in the cases of two female research participants. However, the power issue appeared in their intercultural stories here and there.

**Power Issues in Intercultural Relation**

The conditions for inducing positive intercultural interactions have not been thoroughly examined (Kudo, 2015). The primary condition for positive intergroup relations during the contact is equal status (Allport, 1954). It is essential to look at intercultural interactions occurring in a power relation.
International students and their American peers were in power dynamics during their intercultural interactions. The factors triggering this power dynamic were complicated, including age, gender, nationality, language, number of population, and the nature of the academic discipline. One of international student participants had a strong desire for reciprocal dialogues with her American colleagues and instructors for recognizing the knowledge and experience coming along with her in Anglo-American education. However, in the dominant Anglo-American discourses, she hardly made her academia voice heard inside and outside the classroom as her cultural representative and herself as an individual. She said,

So to me, using material that I see from my cultural perspective totally misread in American perspective . . . Since it is about art, I was hoping that they would open their mind rather than look at it from (American) cultural perspective. So I was shocked by that. They can only see it with Jesus reference. (IFSS_1)

International students have strong desire for recognizing the knowledge coming along with them in Anglo-American education (Koehne, 2006). She complained about being ignored because of her minority identity in her professional program. She did not realize this “neo-racism” (Lee & Rice, 2007).

In the class, they talked about American and Mexico border. I can not relate to that because I am not American. But, how their research is because they are American and as American to study such issue, so I can’t be the same student as others to think in the same way. (IFSS_1)

When nationality intersects with gender and the nature of a discipline, the power issue becomes noticeable (Qin, 2009). One of the American female graduate
students suffered gender discrimination by two international male colleagues in labs. In the interview, she was upset about these male colleagues belittling female colleagues in academia. She was afraid that her situation would get worse if she reported this gender discrimination. She employed strategies: avoiding showing up at the same time slots in the working place, stopping talking to people for suggestions, and keeping silent.

They have very little respect for us as women and no respect for us as supervisors. We have no authority. As far as they are concerned anything in the lab, even though I have years more experience in advance in any lab than both of them can combine . . . they won’t even listen to me when I tell them to wear safety goggles. . . . And they have been all of fights. I have been yelled at. But the cultural differences are affecting me in my research lab. That is beginning affecting my capacity to achieve my degree. (AFNS_3)

One international female graduate students encountered intercultural conflict in term of gender issue too.

Because I am Asian female, he (American) had some kind of vacancy. I was just trying to be nice as a friend. That made him really different way. It is different sign. Woke me some. I should be more careful about what they expect and what they think. So I started to be more clear, not too engaged with other American students to avoid more problem. (IFSS_1)

Faced with the unequal status in interactions, these two female students employed the strategy of closing-down the interactions with the male colleagues from certain cultural groups.
The power issues appeared in the research participants’ intercultural experiences in different formats. The research participants might not notice their sense of superiority and privilege in intercultural interaction and relation with cultural other. For example, one American male research participant complained about his Chinese peers in their group project.

So when they asked such kind of questions, all American students, native born, were irritated . . . It was boring to listen to and discussion questions like that. That was a serious problem. They don’t know what presentation is.

(AMSS_1)

He described his intercultural experiences with international Chinese students as “painful.” His intercultural encounters with international Chinese students arose from their different ways of reading, asking questions, and making presentations. His intercultural encounter arose from their different understandings of learning in graduate education.

In another case, one international female student noticed that she was explicitly marginalized in her class. Her instructors interpreted and evaluated her works and projects with Western aesthetics. Instead of helping her professors understand the cultural meaning of her projects, she chose to adapt to American way in her future projects.

Anything I talk about or I express in my work doesn’t really come from religious mind. And at this time, at that time, I used some nails in a piece, and the teacher kept looking it as the Christ symbol . . . as Jesus reference . . . so to me, totally misread in American perspective. This is the first time I had, I
noticed that perspective conflict. I studied to be careful with what I should be using. (IFSS_1)

She said that she would be really careful when preparing her project for graduation. She didn’t want her committee members devaluing her design and art crafts due to her works embedded too much into Eastern aesthetics.

Contrast to this one-way adaptation in academia, with the help of his professor, another international research participant shared his experience of taking action to respond to the power issue in the classroom. Coming to the United States, he gave himself an English name that was easy for Americans to remember. Soon, he decided to keep his own Chinese name.

Actually your given name is from your parents and grandparents. It is not peer . . . If you introduce yourself as ‘S’, it is a kind of image in (one’s) mental world that you are a nation, you are Chinese. (IMSS_1)

I was educated with British English in China. When I came to here, all people speak American English. I kept saying sorry to my audience. Then after the class, the professor who took in charge of the class told me . . . you just be yourself. You let them know your language is sort of different from theirs, but it is not right or wrong, your English is good or bad, maybe words are better than others . . . Some people understand what you mean or talk, but pretend not to understand. So then, in this situation, I just do myself, I don’t care about it. (IMSS_1)

These research participants had some changes after their intercultural encounters. From the international and American students’ perspectives, through looking at their experiences of intercultural encounters in positive and/or negative
way, the current study also explored their ways of change and their conceptualizations of intercultural relations with cultural other.

**Patterns of Approaching to Cultural Other**

Accordingly, American students tend to define intercultural encounter with the nature of exotic, short-term, impersonal and linked to travel (Root, 2014). The current study found that the research participants viewed “intercultural encounters” at a culturally diverse campus with the relational nature. These encounters were mostly linked to academia such as different expectations in teaching and learning or working ethics arising from cultural differences. Some were related to the intersectionality of gender, nationality, age, marital status, and languages. After these intercultural encounters, the research participants demonstrated the following ways of change.

After intercultural encounters, international and American research participants both became more reserved and cautious for fear of stereotyping cultural other. The research participants employed different strategies for ensuring their intercultural interactants and themselves staying in the comfort-zone. The commonly used strategies of approaching to cultural other consisted of one or another of the following: self-oriented approach, other-oriented approach, and relation-oriented approach. The research participants employing the self-oriented approach focused more on how they themselves would do after experiencing intercultural encounters while those employing the other-oriented approach focused on what cultural other should do. The research participants with the relational approach emphasized the importance of the adaptation to each other in intercultural interactions.
**Self-oriented approach.** Some of the research participants employed the self-oriented strategy. One American research participant (AFNS_1) tended to talk to her international peers from their perspectives. She avoided making them feel targeted by picking up the topics she could ask Americans from other parts of the United States. She expressed her fear to say anything inappropriate about other cultures like something stereotyping or ignorant to other cultures. She pointed out that American students would not want others to see them being unaccepting of other cultures by bringing up differences or opinions. She believed that,

> It is something like part of your culture you growing up with like that, may tell you it is improper culture . . . It is culture I don’t want to be with. There is no point trying to change somebody.

Being more reserved was considered as the safe approach to cultural other. Another American participant (AFNS_3) expressed her reserved attitude towards a certain culture. She said, “I am still very much aware that individual people are not representative of their entire culture. But, you can tell having such negative experience impact you a little bit.” After intercultural encounters, she took a more hands-off approach to her intercultural interactions with her international male colleagues from that culture. She became more sensitive and cautious about sexism in academia and at the workplace. She paid more attention to what she could do to avoid meeting with these two international colleagues in the lab and other work places.

International research participants indicated that intercultural conflicts result from different understandings of the issues in social and academic life. For example, one international research participant (IFNS_1), after intercultural encounters with her
American roommate, thought these conflicts resulted from different understandings of the issues in daily life such as “being quiet” and “keeping clean.” She employed a self-oriented approach, “I would be more careful (about cleaning the kitchen).” She emphasized that she tried to think about intercultural encounters resulting from individual differences such as different personalities and different working ethics instead of resulting from cultural differences. She explained that the people from the same culture would have different opinion on the same thing. In addition, in the scenario of research in the lab, everything was work related, which mitigated any cultural difference. She focused more on her own academic success and disciplined her own behavior. Another international female student (IFSS_1) majoring in the humanities “offended” an American male student and was worried that “he would do something to” her. She said,

I was just trying to be nice as a friend. That made him really different way . . .

Woke me some . . . So I started to be more clear, not too engaged with other American students to avoid more problem. (IFSS_1)

One American participant (AMSS_2) working with international students defined this self-oriented approach as “being open-minded” as oneself being professionalism. He also believed that intercultural interaction might not be different from other human interaction such as trying to find commonalities between cultures.

**Other-oriented approach.** Self-oriented and other-oriented strategies are one-way adaptations in nature. Different from a self-oriented strategy, which is of one adaptation to others, the other-oriented approach is characterized with one requesting others adapting to them. With other-oriented approach, one American research participant (AMSS_1) complained about Chinese international students’ way
of presentations in group work. He expected his international peers to adapt to the American way of preparing and making presentations. He was concerned about the impact of their way of presentation on the quality of the group project.

Several students’ discussion questions were designed to see if you have read the readings . . . So when they asked such kind of questions, all American students, native born, were irritated . . . that was a serious problem.

(AMSS_1)

One international student participant worked as a teaching assistant and faced intercultural encounters in the classroom. He tried to make his American students get used to his way of talking and teaching. He said,

I used to be sort of humble and timid when I first came to the States. Just like I mentioned I kept saying sorry that I can’t make others understanding. As I realize it is not my fault. It might be your (American) fault, it might be your, the place you need to improve. (IMSS_1)

Another international student participant (IFSS_1) was bothered by the different ways of talking and interactions in the American classroom. Faced with these intercultural conflicts resulting from ethnocentrism inside the classroom, on one hand, she expected her American peers and instructors respecting her cultural identity represented in her projects and works through evaluating her works with the rubric beyond the “Americanized-only” one. On the other hand, she hoped that her American colleagues did not expect her to be one with specific nationality, religion and gender than see her as an individual.
Relation-oriented approach. With relation-oriented approach, some research participants emphasized the adaptation to each other in the process of intercultural interactions with cultural other while some of them underlined the importance of seeking cultural similarities. One Americans student (AFNS_2) said,

But with her, I was in a relation, the nature of our initial interaction was from this project. So I kind of had to learn to work with her in a way that I felt like my views were being heard.

She said that doing the same project together gave her and her international colleague more opportunities to interact with each other, share information and ideas, and also appreciate each other’s culture with relational nature.

Some students sought for the similarities among people with different cultural backgrounds. One international student participant (IFNS_1) said, “I have a friend. She is from India . . . She found a lot of similarities between her life and my life. So we always talked, gave advices.” Another international student (IMNS_1) argued that “I would like to know about the other’s culture. Yeah, but, basically, in the end, there are a lot of common points, as we can share those common points.” One American student (AMSS_2) believed that intercultural interaction would be considered as a basic human interaction such as people trying to converse and find commonalities among diverse cultures. They assumed that the more they understand these cultures, the more similarities they would find among cultures. This intercultural relation would be built upon the belief in cultural similarities.

Goals For Intercultural Relation

International and American participants positioned their experiences of interactions with cultural other dynamically as intercultural or interpersonal along a
continuum with interpersonal at one end and intercultural at the other. Their unstable othering impacted their goals for intercultural relations. They characterized some of their relations with a self-awarded tendency, some with an other-awarded, and some with a relation-awarded tendency.

**Self-awarded.** The research participants with self-awarded tendency in intercultural interactions with their cultural other emphasized what they learned and received benefits from their intercultural experiences. What they learned included foreign languages, cultural knowledge, and the skills and strategies to interact with people with different cultural backgrounds. Within this “intercultural” relation, American research participants all identified themselves becoming more empathic and open-minded towards cultural other. These American students gained cultural knowledge through different skills and strategies. One research participant (AFNS_1) said that in academia, always getting exposed to people (professors) from all over the world, she learned their ways of talking and interaction with others. Another American student (AMSS_1) acquired different cultural knowledge through learning foreign languages with his international friends. He learned how to cook Malaysian and Chinese cuisines and about the women’s status within the Saudi Arabian tradition. He received benefit from these international friendships when he travelled abroad. Another American male student (AMSS_2) came to understand the Saudi Arabian tradition when doing a group project with his Saudi Arabian female classmate. He avoided inviting the girl from Saudi Arabia to go outside individually. He perceived the proper intercultural relation is to allow the cultural other to remain in their comfort-zone without judging any culture. He thought that made him be professional in intercultural interactions with cultural other.
One American female research participant (AFNS_2) chose to live in a community within which she and her children were immersed in diverse cultures. She learned Indian and Nepalese traditions and their cuisines, and she also learned the parents’ attitudes towards education. She thought that “it is really cool for kids to get to interact and learn. And have it be something that’s natural, not something has to be forced.”

Another research participant (AFNS_3) within the international community of learning knew her Chinese peers well through a good Chinese friend. Through this friendship, she learned Chinese culture: “It is really valuable. Because other students, Chinese, make that way. She is sort of going between and explains why they (Chinese) behave in that way.” She (AFNS_3) also mentioned the phenomenon of information getting shared through language groups in her program. For academic resources, the senior Chinese graduate students shared what they had with the Chinese freshmen and junior students in their program. She was proud that her friendship with Chinese students privileged her in getting shared academic resources among Chinese students. Further, she explained that “Chinese all like me . . . but I think they perceive me as a hard worker.”

Still within the international community of learning, two international students enjoyed the supports from her American peers and professors. International students felt being respected and being treated fairly, and being accepted and tolerated.

There is so many acceptance, with our accent, with our missing pronouncing some words, some words we don’t know. . . . Because of international students, they accept you can say wrong things. (IFSS_2)
One of my friends, she used to live in Spain, I guess, she was like she was patient with me until I get the right expression. . . . She doesn’t jump up and pick up the word to finish (my) sentence. (IFNS_1)

**Other-awarded.** People with other-awarded tendency expected what cultural other learned and were benefited from their intercultural experiences. International participants (IFSS_1, IFSS_2, IFNS_1) believed that studying in the United States provided them with good opportunity to teach American students the cultures along with them. In addition, the current study found that the research participants indirectly demonstrated such “other-awarded” tendency.

**Relation-awarded.** With relation-awarded tendency, the research participants commonly believed that intercultural relation benefited each other through educating each other. With this relation-awarded tendency, both parties are supposed to actively interacting with each other, being willing to adjust to each other and befriending with each other. In the narrations of their intercultural experiences, one international student said,

> When I came to here, I was exposed to a more of these . . . It opens up my mind. It gives me opportunity to asking questions, unless you are interacted with you come from, your specific country. But they would be interested in knowing more about your country if there is interaction. . . . So being living in this diversity, friends in this community help me to get to learn more because I get to interact with these people. (IFSS_2)

She believed the best way to develop her intercultural competence was educating others about her culture and getting educated herself on things that she did not know. She said, “I think it is our duty to get educated each other.” From a different angle, an
international student (IFNS_1) argued that it was challenging for cultural other to understand that was the way one did. She believed that it would take time to adjust to each other.

For adjustment, another international student added, “Because the opinions are not just about one sentence. They are also about one point of view of the world, and yeah, that is hard to change.” In addition, he was concerned about American students having no interest in educating others.

But as I said, yeah, basically I was noticing that I was asking them to go here and to go there. But then they weren’t asking me to go here and to go there.

So I said, “Why do I have to pay the effort?” (IMNS_1)

Another international student (IMSS_1) gave the comments, “But I also found that if you spend time, if you put more effort, finally you can make truly friend with them.”

This international student indicated that interest and time were crucial for building authentic intercultural relationship. The mentor-mentee program gave him the real opportunity to spend time with his American colleague and helped them to make friends with each other. Another international student (IFNS_2) shared that students could build good intercultural relationship with each other if they had the same working ethics in academia. Apparently, she believed that intercultural relations would get better if people involved in these interactions could exchange benefit with each other.

Here, my classmates from different countries, we discuss a lot . . . When she said that “let’s discuss,” I felt that we never discussing, it is like I have a summary of the course, she’s kind of taking the short course before the test.

But, when I discussed with my American classmates, you can always learn
something from them . . . I always share everything. So we were discussing everything. They [American students] kind of accepted my sloppy English. Sometimes, can’t understand what they are talking about. Exchanging benefit like start interaction better. Good things for each other, not just language difference. (IFNS_2)

The research participants’ goals of intercultural relation displayed no clear cut among self-awarded, other-awarded or relation-awarded. Most of them had these three tendencies at the same time. They demonstrated one of these three tendencies in a certain intercultural situation based on how they positioned themselves in these intercultural situations.

**Self-Positioning in the Intercultural Practice**

Influenced by their unstable othering, international and American research participants described their dynamic and fluid positions in their diverse intercultural encounter cases: they had the tendency to view themselves as insiders in some, but as outsiders in other ones. For the common discourse on international students “self-isolated,” for example, one American participant expressed her understanding of international students staying in their comfort-zone. She was willing to be empathic toward international students’ intercultural encounters and challenges in a new socio-cultural environment. She viewed international students as a group with a general comment on this phenomenon. When she was asked whether she voluntarily sat with international students, she said “no.” She was talking about this intercultural phenomenon on campus as an outsider and observer.

If students are sitting together, and they have a tendency to be more like talking to each other, that is because they are friends already before in my
class, or they knew each other. They didn’t know other students, just like all students coming not know each other. (AFNS_1)

The other five American research participants mentioned the same phenomenon as observers and outsiders: American students and international students sitting separately in groups based on nationality. When I asked them whether they themselves attempted to sit with international students voluntarily, only one research participant shared his story about sitting together with Chinese international students during lunch time in the university café. However, he said that these Chinese students soon ignored him and talked with each other in Chinese.

However, most of international research participants did not mention themselves as “self-isolated” even though they noticed students sitting separately in groups based on nationalities. Or, they thought sitting separately was natural and normal, and there was no need to worry about. Three international students (IFNS_1, IFNS_2, IFSS_2) attributed this phenomenon to the international students’ confidence in their English proficiency in communication with Americans. At the same time, they pointed out that some Americans tolerated their “sloppy English.” In their narration, these “some Americans” were those with relation-awarded tendency in intercultural interactions such as being mentor-mentee, being friends, being team members, and so forth. These “some Americans” also consisted of those with previous intercultural experiences. The international student (IFNS_1) said,

I guess, she (American) was like she was patient with me until I get the right expression . . . I believe because she exposed to multinational culture, or multicultural environment. Because she used to live in Spain, she teaches English in different countries . . . I guess this is the main reason.
The current study found that American and international research participants talked about their specific interactions as “insiders” within the relations which were relation-awarded and self-awarded. Within these relations, they minimized the cultural difference and/or language difference. The core things that research participants uniquely shared with their so-called others within the relationship of the mentor-mentee, colleague or friend consisted of the same working ethics, the same goal and the same interest. Within these relations, their information was symmetrical. For example, one international student (IFNS_2) and her American peers shared the same working ethics in academics such as doing coding independently and lab work cooperatively. She identified these interactions as the benefit for their academic success. One American student (AFSS_1) and her international peers shared the same goal and working ethics during graduate student orientation. Another American student (AMSS_2) found the common language with his international colleague in online games. The cultural and language differences did not hinder their interactions because they were informational symmetric on math coding and scientific lab work. They said, in coding and scientific lab work, they shared the same language and content in communication. These students viewed themselves as the insiders of these intercultural practices.

The International Community of Intercultural Practice

The institutions stabilize and structure othering: international and domestic students. The institution organizes and signifies the intercultural interaction among students as “intercultural.” However, interactions among students with diverse cultural backgrounds in the community of practice are phenomenologically dynamic (T. H. Zhang, 2018). The research participants’ unstable othering allows them to
move voluntarily among multiple communities along with their social and cultural capital. The current study identified the characteristics of an international community of intercultural practice on campus, which have a fit for Wenger’s (1998) three defining features of a community of practice.

**Mutual engagement.** Regarding membership in a community of practice, Wenger (1998) emphasized that the members should be mutually engaged in the community of practice. These doctoral students would go through the same development path (Gardner, 2009): the initial transition, coursework, initial relationship with peers and academic advisor, qualification examination, transition to candidacy, teaching and research experiences, dissertation/thesis experience, the job search, and transition to professional roles. In this process, American graduate students and their international peers, to some extent, are mutually engaged in supporting each other and form their international community of practice in graduate education.

The graduate students with different cultural backgrounds as the teaching and research assistants work together in the same building, even on the same floor. It is difficult to distinguish their talks about work and the personal exchanges because those are woven into their daily-based conversations. “Even in the party with our international colleagues in our department, our talking is mainly about our teaching, our students, or our research” (AFNS_1). American graduate students do things together with their international peers such as working projects together, preparing for doctoral qualification examination together, doing mathematics homework together, carpooling and going to conferences together and co-authoring research papers. The research participant AFNS_1 said, “we are all on the same boat.”
They built up relationships with their international peers through connecting meaningfully with each other in academic and social life. The participant AMNS_2 said he had a really close relationship with his Chinese colleagues. He didn’t mind asking them for suggestion when he had an affectionate feeling for a girl. They also didn’t mind him pointing out the problem in their coding projects and were willing to listen to his solution. They carpooled to attend two of their colleagues’ wedding in another state and/or shared the same room for sleeping overnight. These mutual engagements made their membership sustainable in this international community of practice with focus on scholarship.

Mutual engagement involves not only “our” competence, but also the competence of others (Wenger, 1998). The research participant (AMNS_1) said, “My Chinese colleagues are really good at mathematics, but they know I am really good at coding. We always work together and develop creative modeling.” His international colleagues (IFNS_2 and IFNS_1) confirmed his words. International colleagues always asked American colleagues for suggestion for better coding. American graduate students majoring in the humanities are pretty strong in scholarly writing. The participants (AMSS_1 and AMSS_2) mentioned that they always helped their international colleagues with their English language and issues in their written papers. For appreciating their helps and befriending them, their international peers invited them to their parties. As graduate students majoring in humanity, they learned a lot about different cultures and cuisine from their international colleagues. Sometimes, they and their international friends discussed about the impacts of their traditional cultures on their academic and social life, such as Chinese students’ way of making presentation and Saudi Arabia women’s status in society and marriage.
Their mutual relations in an international community of practice are mixture of power and dependence. They helped each other and formed sustainable relationships. As graduate students, for the sake of academic success, it is more important to know how to ask for help and who is the best person to grant that help. Then, the mutual engagement occurs (Wenger, 1998). The research participant AFNS_3 shared, “She is from India. She is really super strong in lab work. She knows everything in lab. Without her encouragement, I couldn’t have done this research project.” She mentioned that American graduate students in her program are minority in student population. Without doubt, her primary interactions were with her international colleagues who were admitted to the program in the same year as she was. They took class together, took qualifying exam together, and finished their doctoral program at similar pace. Her international colleagues shared their educational resources with her for academic success. She said, “I work really hard, they know it.” The other participants emphasized “working hard” and “proper work ethics” playing an important role in sustaining membership in community of practice.

The participant (AFNS_1) pointed out that the organized socialization unnecessarily supports intercultural relationship between international and American students. She believed that working together, depending on and relying on each other in academia definitely helps for intercultural relationship development. She thought the interaction between American and international graduate students should go beyond that. American graduate students’ mutual engagement involved the members of the group working together. They participated in the gossip and engaged in shared work practices and social activities, which maintain the community. They didn’t need
to be the same type of people and they didn’t need to always stick together. However, they did connect to each other in meaningful ways.

**Joint enterprise.** In the process of mutual engagement, the graduate students constructed their shared experiences of being a teaching assistant or a research assistant in their specific programs, and transferred to their professional role. This is what Wenger (1998) defined as “joint enterprise.” The research participant (AFNS_1) mentioned,

Having many professors and students from other countries, it becomes more normal and comfortable to interact with people from other places. In academia, there are always people from everywhere all over world. You get exposed a lot . . . You get used to way they talk, the way they interact with their colleagues.

These graduate students found the way to adapt to the academic and social environments in their departments through sharing stories and problems for surviving in graduate education, learning to build relationship with their academic advisor whom graduate students called “my boss,” gossiping and providing suggestions based on their personal experiences. This involved negotiating their joint endeavor.

The graduate students created a symbolic community practice, such as the academic and work ethics within their community of practice as accountability of one’s behaviors. The research participant AFNS_3 and AMNS_2 mentioned the commonly accepted work ethics in lab, such as wearing goggles and lab clothes, and not changing the status of instruments in lab without asking around. They were mutually accountable in being responsible to others by not making their lives more difficult. The six research participants shared that, after intercultural encounters, they
tended to self-reflect their behaviors. They were cautious not to stereotyping others, especially those with different cultural backgrounds.

There is the boundary between any two communities of practice. Wenger (1998) believed that the communities of practice themselves can be the sources of boundary and the contexts for creating connections. But, they need someone to be brokering who can mobilize among two communities. People can use their multi-membership “to transfer some element of one practice into another” (Wenger, 1998, p. 109). Accordingly, students can be the brokers who make new connections across communities of intercultural practice by adapting to these communities. The mobilization of the research participants along with their cultural and social resources between the community of practice with their co-nationals and the international community of practice could be decoded as brokering practice. For example, the research participant AFNS_3 mentioned her close friend, an international colleague, a Chinese girl, introducing her to Chinese student community. This Chinese girl and her husband (American) benefited from their cross-cultural marriage went between American student community and Chinese student community in their school. They played a role of “brokering.” The American research participants AFNS_3 and AMNS_2 won their membership in Chinese student community because of their hardworking ethics and befriending with this young couple. Two international participants (IFNS_1 and IFNS_2) mentioned that their American peers from senior year reached out to international students and shared what they knew about the program, lab instruments and other sources with them. “They are local. It seems that it is their responsibility to help us” (IFNS_2).
Another participant AFNS_2 failed to win her membership in international African student community even though her close friend played the role of “brokering.” That international African student community is at the institutional level. She said she found no way to fit in because that intercultural interaction is not on a daily basis. There is no joint endeavor existing in this one-visit intercultural experience.

American graduate students were engaged in actions and negotiated the meanings of their actions with one another in this international community of practice. It is the student members who produce a practice to deal with what they understand to be their enterprise, such as developing social and academic network among students with diverse cultural backgrounds as a part of their joint enterprise within an international community of practice. Their shared repertoire is developed, including routine, ways of talking and doing things, stories and discourse which have becoming part of their practice in intercultural interactions in this community.

**Shared repertoire.** Even though the research participants engage in the communities of practice, they do not necessarily have full membership in the communities in which they mobilize freely. This international community of practice, to American students, remains ambiguous.

According to Wenger (1998), they seem to have the full membership because they can handle themselves competently in these familiar territories. However, the research participants indicated that they did not commit to “this group of people.” They interpreted their memberships in the communities of practice with the term “interpersonal” and “intercultural” interchangeable. Sometimes, they used “they” or
“their” refer to their international colleagues. Sometimes, they used “we” and “our” to describe their academic and social activities.

In the current study, taking the research participants (AFNS_3 and AMSS_1) as examples, they did not need to be the member of the Chinese student community, and they still could mobilize among the community of their co-nationals and the Chinese student community in their schools. The educational resource flowing through their interpersonal relations with Chinese students couldn’t define their full membership in the Chinese community of practice. The other four research participants (AFNS_1, AMSS_2, AFSS_1 and AFNS_2) had similar experience. They positioned themselves in the peripheral of practice in terms of intercultural relation at superficial level.

In their description, they shared the experiences of mutual engagement in an international community of practice, such as hanging out after work, going to conferences together, going gym together, gossiping, and helping each other for homework or individual’s assignments. They also enjoyed the social and academic resources from two different communities of practice. They followed the commonly agreed on intercultural norms such as self-reflection approach after intercultural encounters against stereotyping cultural other. However, this shared repertoire was dynamic and contextualized.

**Practical Implications**

At the institutional level, the study researchers (Soria & Troisi, 2014; Williams & Johnson, 2011) suggest developing specific intercultural programs or activities for fostering intercultural competence development and enhancing intercultural interactions and relations between international and domestic students.
In the current study, the research participants suggested that structured intercultural educational programs for promoting intercultural interactions on everyday basis would be welcomed instead of cultural edutainment.

I would like to see more opportunity of understanding and more people to get to sit down, talk, interact, reflect and understand the differences . . . I don’t think we should summarize all of our heritage to food and dance. There are much deeper stuff . . . There are student organization, international student mentors. They are initiatives, I feel like if they have something to push for on campus, they need to be more structured. It is a way really getting people out of their comfort-zone, go and meet and talk. I think it needs more structure. (IFSS_2)

There’s no like real initiative, because there’s no incentive to go to these events, it’s purely voluntarily, so you know . . . only about a third of the people that show up are actually American and then the rest are normally international students or- uh- scholars visiting that show more greater interest in it. (AMSS_2)

With practical consideration, the current study found that there is a gap between what international and American graduate students thought about each other for the sake of intercultural interaction. International students thought that American students would not like to talk to them while Americans students said that they do not know how to start the conversation with their international peers. Two research participants (IFSS_2 and AMSS_2) indicated that the intercultural events and activities on campus attempted to promote intercultural interactions based on one-way adaptation.
The research findings in Stage I illustrate the students’ intercultural experiences with cultural other on campus, including how they conceptualize “intercultural,” how they approach to cultural other after intercultural encounters and their goals in intercultural interactions and relations. The research findings in Stage II primarily identify the commonality and the discrepancy among students’ perceptions of intercultural practice on campus.

**Stage II Findings**

The 42 Q-sorting statements were selected from the concourse with reference to seven elements for the successful intercultural relation. Among them, there are five elements mentioned in Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) model, including cultural knowledge, intercultural communication skills and strategies, motivation, goal, and previous intercultural experiences. The other two consist of the barriers to intercultural interaction and the way of approaching cultural other after intercultural encounters.

In the current study, the range of intercultural viewpoints containing these seven elements favored by the research participants emerged (Appendix L) from a factor analysis of the participants’ Q sorts. The interpretation of factors proceeds on the basis of factor scores, which result in a single model Q-sort for each of the factors. These scores were compared to determine the interrelation of the items within a particular factor array. The highest (+4) and the lowest (-4) ranking items in three factor arrays help to identify those important issues about which factors are polarized. With reference to the research questions, then, the other additional highly ranked items were identified. I also gave special attention to the items under value zero (0) in
each factor because “on occasion, an item ranked in this area can act as a fulcrum for the viewpoint being expressed” (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 167).

Factor appearance is dependent on the emergence of discernible patterns of commonality among the viewpoints of the research participants. The number of factors that emerge from a Q study is generally limited (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Three factors were extracted in the current study. As presented in Table 2, three factors (Factor A, B and C) in the final solution all satisfy Kaiser-Guttman criterion: the extracted factors with eigenvalues (Evs) are no less than 1.00. According to S. R. Brown (1980), the factors in the final solution should account for as much variability as possible. The three factors extracted in the rotated factor matrix account for 66% of the total study variance (See Table 2). The factors with X indicate that they are the defining sort. For example, in Factor C, 0.7245X is the defining sort loading for the participant’s (IFNS_2) own point of view of intercultural practice on campus.

Three Types of Intercultural Experience

The participants viewed intercultural experience on campus as three types: (A) Action-oriented; (B) Knowledge-skill-strategy oriented; and (C) Seeking the intercultural field for self-fulfillment. In the following section, the distinguishing and characteristic statements that define each factor are presented and interpreted.

Table 2

*Q-Sort Factor Matrix With X Indicating Defining Sort Loadings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q-SORT</th>
<th>FACTORS*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFNS_2-My own point of view</td>
<td>0.1961</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Factor A: Relation-oriented interaction. Factor A relays the message of intercultural experiences on campus as relation-oriented interaction which distinguishes it from the other two views of intercultural experience (factor scores to the left for factors A, B and C, respectively). The statements with which Factor A is in agreement explain the social interdependence in intercultural interactions. The statements were sorted by the participants under the value from the most agree to the most disagree (+4, +3, +2, +1, 0, -1, -2, -3, -4).

The students with action-oriented view of intercultural experience believe that sharing what they think and feel about other cultures plays an important role in intercultural understanding (statement 10, +4), a view not strongly embraced by factor B (0) and C (+1; see Table 3). These students also expect someone from those
cultures being willing to tell them why people in their cultures behave in certain way (statement 2, +4), a view not strongly supported or opposed by factor B (0) and C (0). With the belief in intercultural interaction as a basic human interaction occurring naturally (statement 6, +3), there is nothing really to be afraid of (statement 1, +3), a view not embraced by factors B and C (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Distinguishing Statements for Factor A-1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>It would really be helpful if there was someone willing to help us from very beginning someone to go between our culture and their culture and to explain why people from their culture behave in that way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sharing what we think and feel about other cultures with people from those cultures helps intercultural understanding between them and us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>There is nothing really to be afraid of when we want to learn from cultural other. Intercultural interaction is just a basic human interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+3</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Interacting and learning with cultural other is something that happens naturally rather than being forced.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The statements with which Factor A disagrees are as important as those of which Factor A approves. The following statements cast a bright light on Factor A’s disagreements in the left column when compared with those in Factors B and C. At first blush, it is difficult to understand how the students would regard collectivism and individualism as descriptive characteristics of a culture as adequate or inadequate for explaining the differences in intercultural interaction on campus. However, when statements 1 and 6, at the positive pole, are taken into consideration, the disagreement with statements 15 and 22 falls into place: not minimizing cultural differences in the
relation-oriented action (see Table 4). Cultural differences can be used to explain the
differences in intercultural interactions and different work and academic ethics
between international and American students. The view of differing cultures with
collectivism and individualism as descriptive characteristics of a culture is embraced
by Factor A. When taking the participants’ nationalities into consideration, this
statement (15) stands out as distinguishing for students experiencing intercultural
interactions as relation-oriented action.

In addition, the view of statement 22 at the negative pole is rejected by these
three factors (Factor A, B and C) (see Table 4). First, in the current study, the
students know the impact of the cultural differences on intercultural interaction and
relation, and they would think of the cultural difference in the process of interaction
with people with diverse cultural backgrounds. Second, the students believe that
intercultural interactions benefit all students involved. In the post-interview, one
research participant (IFSS_2) said that for the students involved in intercultural
interactions, intercultural understanding would happen anyway at some point. What
is central to intercultural understanding is to be engaged in intercultural interactions
with relational nature on campus.
Table 4

**Distinguishing Statements for Factor A-2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-4</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Cultural differences such as collectivism and individualism are not adequate to explain our differences in intercultural interactions on the campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Having different working and academic ethics is more likely the result of personal differences, not cultural differences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Factor B: Knowledge-skill-strategy oriented.** The statements distinguishing Factor B from the others reveal a different kind of intercultural experience, which might be referred to as the process of storing up intercultural knowledge, skills and strategies. As the statements and their scores show, the students view this type of intercultural experiences as being educated about different cultures (statement 15), English language proficiency (statement 35), and intercultural communication knowledge-skill-strategy (statements 14, 32; see Table 5). Several of these statements are of little importance or even negative importance from the standpoints of Factors A and C.
Table 5

*Distinguishing Statements for Factor B-1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-4</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Cultural differences such as collectivism and individualism are not adequate to explain our differences in intercultural interactions on the campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35.</td>
<td>International students’ decisions about whether to interact with their American peers depend on whether they are confident in their English-language proficiency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>14.</td>
<td>There is a potential power differential and discrimination that we impose on each other in the course of intercultural relations between international and American students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>32.</td>
<td>My intercultural relationships would be much freer if others didn’t expect me to be solely identified in terms of my nationality, religion, gender, or any other trait.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the students embracing this type of intercultural experience, they believe in getting educated about other cultures through intercultural interactions such as intercultural dialogue. The knowledge about differences between collectivist culture and individualist culture (statement 15) is inadequate to explain the intercultural interactions among students with diverse cultural backgrounds on campus. In this respect, Factor B is the inverse of Factor A. In the process of intercultural interactions, there are other factors impacting intercultural interaction in quality and quantity such as international students’ English language proficiency (statement 35), different academic goals (statement 7), power difference in intercultural communication (statement 14) and other social traits (statement 32; see Table 5). For these students, it is crucial to have cultural knowledge, skills and strategies for successful intercultural interactions.
At the negative pole of the distribution of scores, the students’ intercultural experience focusing on knowledge-skill-strategy is, in one respect, the reverse of the relation-oriented action intercultural experience. For example, with reference to Factor B, intercultural interactions and learning happen in a forced manner (statement 6). This is not the trait of Factor A which embraces the view that interacting and learning with cultural other occurs naturally without being forced.

Factor B in another respect is the reverse of Factor C. Intercultural relationships are different from other relationships, such as mentor and mentee, colleague or co-worker (statement 34, -4). Taking statements 3 and 20 into consideration, Statement 34 gets its place in the knowledge-skill-strategy intercultural experience. The students believe that living in a multicultural environment, they do not need to avoid cultural topics because that is part of their life and they get used to cultural differences. However, living in a multicultural environment cannot make their intercultural interactions happen naturally. In the interaction, they still need to think considerably about cultural differences. In other words, with reference to Factor B, intercultural interaction is built on general cultural knowledge with consideration of cultural differences (See Table 6).
Table 6

*Distinguishing Statements for Factor B-2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+3</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Interacting and learning with cultural other is something that happens naturally rather than being forced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Intercultural relationships are no different from other relationships, such as mentor and mentee, colleague, or co-worker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>3.</td>
<td>In order not to offend cultural other in intercultural communication, it is wise to avoid culture-specific topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Living in a multicultural environment makes intercultural interaction a natural occurrence. We get used to diverse ways of talking, thinking, and doing things.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Factor C: Intercultural field for self-fulfillment.** The concept “field” borrowed from Pierre Bourdieu (1990) shows the setting in which international and American students have their intercultural practices. The intercultural field operates with its own set of rules. Factor C reveals the students’ logical conclusion of their intercultural practices as defined and reproduced by and in the intercultural field on campus.

The statements characterizing Factor C from the others reveal a different kind of intercultural experience which might be referred to as the intercultural field for self-fulfillment (see Table 7): having good educational resources for intercultural learning (statement 16, +4); having opportunities to interact with cultural other (statement 19, +4); experiencing intercultural encounters (statement 40, +4); then, these experiences helping one to cut through cultural stereotypes (statement 19, +4), helping one become empathetic to cultural other (statement 40, +4) and open-minded towards other cultures (statement 11, +3). Factor C also reveals the conditions for
successful intercultural interaction and relation: educational resources (statement 16, +4) and opportunities for intercultural interaction (statement 19, +4; statement 17, +3). Factor C can be seen as one’s intercultural field in which one experiences personal growth.

Table 7

*Characteristic Statements for Factor C-I*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Our colleagues with diverse cultural backgrounds are good educational resources for our intercultural learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Having the opportunity to have intercultural interactions with cultural other can help us cut through stereotypes towards particular cultures in our daily lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Our experiences of intercultural encounters often lead us to consider more of what cultural other are going through in their lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Working on the same project together gives us more opportunities to interact with each other, share information and ideas, and also to appreciate each other’s culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>18.</td>
<td>It is good to have intercultural dialogues on the campus. It is through dialogue that students with diverse cultural backgrounds get educated about different cultures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Close examination of the factor scores shows that statements 4, 30 and 25 at the negative pole of the distribution of scores (-4 & -3) are not distinguishing Factor C from others (see Table 8). However, one respect (statement 7) is the reverse of the relation-oriented action (Factor A) and knowledge-skill-strategy intercultural experiences (Factor B). For the students with the view of intercultural experience defended in Factor C, taking the statements in the positive pole of scores (statements 19, 40, 11 and 18) into consideration, the intercultural encounter is unavoidable. In
the intercultural field for self-fulfillment, students know cultural differences, and learn and grow in intercultural encounters. Intercultural understanding would occur in these intercultural encounters.

Table 8

*Characteristic Statements for Factor C-2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>3.</td>
<td>In order not to offend cultural other in intercultural communication, it is wise to avoid culture-specific topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>4.</td>
<td>It is unnecessary to think of culture so much while in the process of interacting with people with diverse cultural backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+4</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>7.</td>
<td>The different academic demands and goals of international and American students challenge the quantity and the quality of the intercultural interactions among them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Students don’t feel comfortable going to intercultural campus events if they don’t feel like they belong or fit in.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Statements Under Value Zero: Perception of Adaptation to Each Other**

Besides attention to those statements under the values “most agree (+4)” and “most disagree (-4),” Watts and Stenner (2012) emphasized that special attention be given to the items under value zero in the factor arrays, because “on occasion, an item ranked in this area can act as a fulcrum for the viewpoint being expressed” (p. 167). Close examination of the statements under the value zero (0) in Factors A, B, and C shows the fulcrum among the four participants’ understanding of intercultural practice on campus: the adaptation to each other in intercultural interaction (statement 27). However, the reason that statement 27 was sorted under the value zero among these three factors might not be the same (see Appendix L). The statements on the positive
and negative pole of scores (+4 to +1 and -4 to -1) need to be considered as the context for understanding why the participants sorted Statement 27 under the value zero (see Appendix L).

For the students with the intercultural experiences defined by Factor A, intercultural interactions would go easier if students would actually make efforts to adapt to each other, including being willing to go between two cultures as a cultural ambassador (statement 2, +4), sharing what they think about other cultures with people from those cultures for promoting intercultural understanding (statement 10, +4), and adapting to each other naturally (statement 6, +3). However, the students embracing action-oriented intercultural practice admit that the different academic demands and goals of international and American students challenge the quality and the quantity of the intercultural interactions among them (statement 7, +4). In addition, culture is too complicated to be explained. Collectivism and individualism are inadequate to explain the cultural differences in intercultural interactions on campus (statement 15, -4). Therefore, even if students with diverse cultural backgrounds would like to sit down and talk about critical intercultural issues, intercultural understanding might not be achieved (statement 25, -4; see Appendix L). Therefore, the students defined by Factor A cautiously put the statement (27) under the value zero, but they actually encourage actually action for adaptation to each other.

The students who focus on the improvement of intercultural knowledge, skill and strategy are aware of social reality and that living in a multicultural environment does not make intercultural interaction a natural occurrence (statement 20, +3; statement 6, -4). They have their sights on the positive impact of intercultural
dialogue on getting students educated about different cultures (statement 18, +4). They are aware of the intercultural complexity among students with diverse cultural backgrounds on campus. The cultural theory of collectivism and individualism is inadequate to explain these intercultural practices (statement 15, +4) because students in intercultural interactions are also identified in terms of nationality, religion, gender and any other social traits (statement 32, +3). In addition, the identified barriers for intercultural interaction between international students and American students consist of international students’ English proficiency (statement 35, +4) and the potential power issue of intercultural interaction (statement 14, +3). The language and power issues make intercultural relationships between international and American students quite different from other relationships such as colleagues, mentor-mentee, or co-worker (statement 34, -4). So, the students defended by Factor B put statement 27 under the value zero with consideration of actual barriers that individual students face in adapting.

The students with intercultural experiences defined by Factor C view the benefits along with adaptation to each other in intercultural interactions: the opportunities for students to have intercultural interactions can help students cut through stereotypes towards particular cultures (statement 19, +4); the colleagues with diverse cultural backgrounds are good educational resources for intercultural learning (statement 16, +4); show empathic to cultural other (statement 40, +4). However, these key points reflected in Factor C can be considered as the traits of an ideal intercultural field: intercultural interaction opportunities and good educational resource for intercultural learning. In such an intercultural field, students would not feel uncomfortable going to intercultural events on campus even if they do not feel
like they belong or fit in (statement 8, -3). Their different academic demands and
goals might not impact their intercultural interactions (statement 7, -3). Therefore, the
students aligned with intercultural experience defined by Factor C put statement 27
under value zero as part of their call for an intercultural field that encourages students
with diverse cultural backgrounds to adapt to each other.

**Knowing Self by Knowing Others and Vice Versa**

In this specific study on international and American students’ perceptions of
intercultural interaction and relation with cultural other, four research participants
(IFNS_2, IFSS_2, AFNS_3 and AMSS_1) provided three Q-sorts each: (a) self’s
view of self; (b) self’s view of others; (c) self’s view of other’s view of self. As Laing
(1969) pointed out,

> The person whom we describe, and over whom we theorize, is not the only
agent in his ‘world.’ How he perceives and acts towards the others, how they
perceive and act towards him, how he perceives them as perceiving him, how
they perceive him as perceiving them, are all aspects of ‘the situation.’ They
are all pertinent to understanding one person’s participation in it. (p. 82)

One participant (AMSS_1) thought his intercultural experience as a
combination of Factors A and B at statistical significance with loadings of 0.4126 and
0.6625 respectively (see Table 2 above). He believed that his international peers
would put him in the cross of Factors A and B too (see Table 2 above). The questions
are: What makes him define his intercultural experience as a mixed type? And, what
makes him believe that his international peers would perceive him in this mixed
situation? He sorted his international peers’ intercultural experiences into Factor B
with a loading of 0.8556 (see Table 2 above).
Participant AFNS_3 believed that her own intercultural experience fit both Factors A and B, but that her intercultural peers would sort her into Factor C with a loading of 0.7340. She claimed that her international peers’ intercultural experiences would fall into Factor A and C. The question for further consideration is: What makes her believe that her intercultural experience crosses Factor A and B while her international peers’ intercultural experience cross Factor A and C? From her own point of view, international participant (IFSS_2) thought her intercultural experience is Factor C (the intercultural field for self-fulfillment), statistically significant with a loading of 0.7245 (see Table 2 above). She believed that her American peers might think her intercultural experience as Factor B, with a loading of 0.7868. She thought her American peers experienced their intercultural interaction and relation with Factor C. The question is what makes her believe that her American peers think her intercultural experience to be like in Factor B (knowledge-skill-strategy oriented)?

The international student (IFSS_2) adhered to the perception of her intercultural experience as “relation-oriented interaction,” statistically significant with a loading of 0.7286 (see Table 2). She believed her American peers experiencing intercultural interaction with relation-orientation, with a loading of 0.7978. She strongly believed that her American peers thought her intercultural experience would be “relation-oriented” as well, with a loading of 0.8347.

In short, among these four participants (two international students and two American students), if we just read the statistical significance, there is no “law” to follow for understanding their intercultural experiences. Considering their individual intercultural stories narrated in Stage I interviews, I discuss these questions further in the discussion chapter.
Summary of the Research Findings

The research findings in Stage I and Stage II reveal “unstable othering” as the way that international and American graduate students get together with cultural other on campus. They conceptualized intercultural relations as something dynamic and contextualized, such as interpersonal-intercultural interchangeable. They fitted their intercultural practices into three primary types: relation-oriented interaction, individual knowledge-skill-strategy accumulation, and seeking the intercultural field for self-fulfillment. The Q-sorted undistinguishing statements showed the commonalities among the research participants’ understanding of the intercultural relation on campus. However, when faced with intercultural encounters, the research participants might not employ the same approaches to cultural other. They used different approaches directly correlated to whom they counted as cultural other. (See Table 9.)

These research findings in Stage I and Stage II basically answer the following four research questions. The first research question is a fundamental one: How do international and American students conceptualize intercultural relations on their host campus? Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) relational model hypothesizes that “sojourners” and “host-nationals” define each other as stabilized cultural other with equal power. The current study found the students in intercultural interactions performing unstable othering and power dynamics. They mentioned how they benefited from their intercultural interactions and relations with cultural other. They hardly mentioned how their cultural other benefited from them. The research participants’ self-awarded and self-oriented tendency in intercultural relations and interactions indicates that the research participants conceptualized intercultural
Table 9

The Summary of the Study Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytic framework</th>
<th>Main concepts</th>
<th>Study Findings</th>
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<td>Intercultural Relational Model (Imahori &amp; Lanigan, 1989)</td>
<td>Host-national and sojourners dichotomization</td>
<td>Unstable othering</td>
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</table>
| **Host-national & Sojourner** | Adaptation to each other: Each individual contributes to the successful relational outcome | **One-way adaptation with relational nature** | 1. Self-oriented  
2. Other-oriented  
3. Relation-oriented |
| **Approach employed in IR** | Conceptualizing intercultural relations | 1. Static intercultural relation  
2. The outcome of successful intercultural communication  
3. Intercultural interactants with equal power | 1. Dynamic and contextualized  
2. Interpersonal-intercultural interchangeable  
3. Power dynamics in intercultural interactions and relations |
| **Contribution of conceptualizing intercultural relations** | Intercultural practice (IP) | 1. Previous intercultural experience as part of knowledge about appropriate or inappropriate behavior; self-fulfilling prophecy | 1. The intercultural field on campus  
2. Three types of IP  
   - Type A: Relation-oriented interaction  
   - Type B: Knowledge-skill-strategy oriented  
   - Type C: Seeking self-fulfillment in an intercultural field |
| **Intercultural practice (IP)** | Community for intercultural practice | 1. Mobilizing among the communities for intercultural practice  
2. Intercultural field for self-fulfillment: Practical sense of intercultural interaction and relation mixing with individual preference, values and habits  
3. International community of practice |
adaptation as a one-way relation. This conclusion is supported by the consensus of the statements among Factors A, B, and C in Stage II. The participants mentioned the power difference induced by gender, language proficiency, and academic discourse. However, in their community of intercultural practice, they make a commitment to their successful intercultural relation. With this commitment, they have the tendency to minimize the cultural difference and identify this relation as interpersonal instead of intercultural. They conceptualize intercultural relation as something dynamic, contextualized and interpersonally-interculturally interchangeable.

Caution could be advisable when interpreting the phenomenon of “unstable othering.” This “unstable othering” might be used as an interpretive device for their diverse intercultural experiences. The second research question attempts to find out: “How do international and American students experience intercultural interactions with cultural other at their host campus?” The research participants viewed their intercultural experience on campus as: (a) Relation-oriented interaction; (b) Knowledge-skill-strategy oriented; (c) Seeking for self-fulfillment. These three types of intercultural practice reveal three different goals and motivations, and the ways of approaching cultural other. Some research participants fitted their intercultural experiences into the mixing of two types. It might be hard to say that one’s intercultural experiences belong to one type solely. This can be concluded from the statistical significance of correlations among three Factors. In addition, the commonalities and discrepancies among four research participants (IFNS_2, IFSS_2, AFNS_3, and AMSS_1) on how they perceived their own intercultural experience, how they perceived others’ intercultural experience and their perception of how others
perceive theirs are all pertinent to understanding the students in intercultural interactions on campus.

The third question was designed to determine: “What are some commonalities and/or discrepancies among the participants in their understandings of intercultural relations with cultural other at their host campus?” The research findings with Q-method reveal the research participants’ consensus regarding the practical field for intercultural interactions on campus. This field is characterized by the common grounds valued by students including the same work ethics in team work, the similar social and academic experiences on campus, the similar scholarly goals, and similar hobbies. Within this field, they worked together, shared and got through academic struggles together. Within this intercultural field, they were capable of mobilizing different communities of intercultural practice, such as the co-national community and the international community. Also, the research findings with Q method reveal the research participants’ consensus concerning the ideal intercultural field for self-fulfillment on campus. Within this field, they have opportunities to become educated about diverse cultures through intercultural dialogues or arguments. Within this field, the institution is capable of featuring structured social and cultural events on campus that could get students out of their comfort zones and into intercultural dialogues. Most importantly, within this field, international and American students could practice mutual adaptation.

However, among the four research participants in Stage II, except for IFSS_2, the participants’ own view of their intercultural experience was different from what they thought about the other’s perception of their intercultural experiences. For example, participant IFNS_2 believed her intercultural experience as Factor C, but
she thought her American peers would fit hers into Factor B. What makes her believe that her American peers would fit her in Factor B? This inconsistency is tentatively addressed in the discussion chapter.

The last research question focuses on the approach constructed in participants’ intercultural interactions with cultural other. The research participants, even though they mentioned the relation-oriented approach and the relation-awarded goal in intercultural relation, highlighted the self-awarded goal and self-oriented approach. In addition, given the other-awarded approach and the other-oriented approach, both were rarely mentioned among the research participants. The self-awarded goal and self-oriented approach could constitute a one-way and relational adaptation.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Through exploring how both international and American graduate students conceptualize intercultural relations, the current study contributed to a better understanding of the nature of their meaningful intercultural practices on campus. The current study identified the impacts of unstable othering on their perception of each other’s relationship in an interchangeable interpersonal-intercultural manner. At the individual level, “unstable othering,” the ethnorelative conceptualization of culture (Colvin et al., 2014) shapes the way for students with diverse cultural backgrounds to gather together on campus. This research finding challenges the institutions’ shared conception of relationships among international and domestic students as stabilized “intercultural” ones.

The present study also identified three types of intercultural practices among research participants. Some students are action-oriented. They prefer active intercultural interactions as meaningful intercultural relations. Some students focus on knowledge-skills learning through intercultural interactions. The other students seek an intercultural field for self-fulfillment and well-being among students with diverse cultural backgrounds. It is problematic to model students’ intercultural adaptation into one prototype. It is appropriately cautious to say that intercultural practices between and among international and domestic graduate students are made up of individual choices and skill/strategy-based actions (Shi, 2007).

The current study also contributed to a better understanding of the approaches that international and American graduate students use and construct in intercultural practices on an American campus. All research participants employed self-oriented
approach to cultural other avoiding stereotyping cultural other. This finding complements the literature on intercultural communication apprehension, which is not due to students’ language concerns (Lin & Racer, 2003a, 2003b), and the absence of the similarity and common in-group identity (Imamura & Zhang, 2014). Being afraid of stereotyping cultural other could be the important factor inducing intercultural communication apprehension.

In addition, the current study contributed to a better understanding of the nature of the community of intercultural practices on campus. International and American graduate students might not live in a world “apart.” They cut through the conventional conception of group identity bipolarized as “international” and “domestic” through unstable-othering for forging connection and developing relationships. It is problematic to observe students’ intercultural interactions and relationships while they continually partake in their own private world, within which they define “intercultural” development apart from any other subject. This research finding echoes Yeboah and Young’s (2012) concerns about the current intercultural development models taking a one-sided perspective. For example, only the intercultural experiences of students studying abroad are highlighted in the models. The current research findings add to the intercultural literature the on-campus intercultural experiences of American graduate students without study-abroad experience. The present study pinpoints the misconception of intercultural interaction and relation as the intercultural practice putting burden on one party.

In this chapter, the issues mentioned above are discussed in detail. Through discussing the contributions of this study to the intercultural literature, it hopes to give a clear illustration of the meaningful intercultural practices among international and
American graduate students on campus. The discussion section focuses on how international and American graduate students conceptualized and experienced “intercultural” on campus, how they understood intercultural practice on campus, and their approaches employed in intercultural interactions and relations.

**Conceptualizing and Experiencing “Intercultural” on Campus**

The current study found that unstable othering among the international and American graduate students on campus. The “unstable othering” as the mode of the research participants experiencing intercultural interactions and relations reflects the ethnorelative conception of “intercultural” in intercultural practice. This research finding positively responds to Lin and Rancer’s (2003a) call for empirical evidence on the effects of ethnocentrism on intercultural communications between international and Americans students. This finding also echoes Dervin’s (2016) notion of othering as an unstable phenomenon: interpersonal-intercultural interchangeable. The finding confirms the proposal by Colvin et al. (2014) that domestic students’ conceptualization of culture and diversity impacts their intercultural experiences. This finding also complements Ruble and Zhang’s (2013) notion of the impacts of institutionalized ethnocentrism on the way of defining the common in-group identities among international students and American students. At the expense of dealing with intercultural issues, most universities and colleges are only focusing on domestic diversity (Ruble & Zhang, 2013). As a result, American students tend to depict their intercultural encounters as impersonal, short-term, and exotic (Root, 2014).

The findings in the present study doesn’t provide empirical evidence to Root’s (2014) argument. However, the present study finds that institutional ethnocentrism mythologizes the interactions and relationships between international and American
students on campus as “intercultural” and deemphasizes the “interpersonal” aspects of their interactions and relationships. For example, many campus intercultural events have been initiated within this frame, discouraging domestic and international students from taking the risk of moving out of their comfort zone (Ramia, Marginson, & Sawir, 2013) without reciprocal socialization (Martinez & Plough, 2018). The present study captured the attributes of an intercultural field on campus: institutionalized stable othering and students’ unstable othering, intercultural norms constructed by students, students’ communities of intercultural practice, and goals and motivations of intercultural practices among students.

**Institutionalized Stable Othering: Ethnocentric Phenomenon on Campus**

The current study problematizes the existing institutional stabilized and structural othering, which has signified and organized intercultural practices among students of diverse cultural backgrounds as being framed between “domestic” and “sojourner” individuals. Institutions rely on this discursive practice to construct and sustain the students’ “institution-identity” (Gee, 2000) in terms of “American” or “international.” The mission statement of the university studied in this research states that internationalizing the university is intended for the benefit of all students, aiming to “organize a series of lectures by visiting international scholars on diversity issues” for the sake of “preparing students for life in an increasingly multicultural society and flattening world” (Five Year Equity Action Plan, Kent State University, 2012, p. 13). Within this model international students have been legitimated as “the other,” the counterpart of American students. Hospitality becomes the universal concept and driver for the university, welcoming international students.
Another way of exploring the role of the institutional view in shaping and framing intercultural practices between international and American students is by looking at individual students’ framework of interpretation and their motivations for intercultural interactions on campus (Halualani, 2008). American students in this study wanted their international peers to feel welcomed. They emphasized their tolerance of international students sitting together in classes and talking in their native languages as one of respects and professionalism. Their explanations were aligned with the institution’s hospitality discourse. However, the international and American research participants did not decode the phenomenon of American students’ preference of sitting together in class as “self-isolation” but as an unspoken policy that worked for all parties involved. The research findings confirmed Halualani’s proposal. In this sense, international and domestic students live in a “world apart” (Montgomery, 2010). Dervin and Layne (2013) pointed out that this challenge in intercultural practices is caused in part by the norms embedded in institutional hospitality discourses.

**Intercultural Norms Governing Intercultural Relations on Campus**

Who constructs the intercultural norms governs their intercultural relations on campus, such as keeping good work ethics, sharing, working through struggle together, being open-minded, respecting each other, and adapting to each other. Evanoff (2006) argued that intercultural norms are mutually agreed upon guidelines among a particular group of people in intercultural communication. Their purpose is to solve particular problems in particular intercultural situations. According to Imahori’s and Lanigan’s (1989) relational model, an institution endorses the intercultural norms for “domestic” and “sojourner” through the language embedded in
international student handbooks. These institutionalized norms can be generalized to any intercultural practice in which the host country’s larger culture is used as the reference to define “sojourners” as “cultural other”—the counterpart of “domestics.” These norms might differ from those that the students mutually agree to in the process of adaptation such as work ethics. Students would have immediate reactions to “sanction” those undesired behaviors listed in their commonly agreed on norms in intercultural practices. The research participants in the current study employ “they” to describe those who didn’t follow these agreed on norms instead of using nationality or national “big culture” as the reference to define them as “cultural other.”

The empirical findings in the current study support Evanoff’s (2005) notion of intercultural norms. The students employed intercultural norms chosen within their own community to decide which people were counted as cultural other, which interactions and relations could be considered as interpersonal or as intercultural, and which behaviors were unacceptable or improper. For example, among the research participants, letting cultural other stay in their comfort-zone, such as sitting together with their co-nationals and speaking their native language, is the expected intercultural practice on campus.

The students also endorsed other intercultural norms to regulate their own behavior. For instance, after intercultural encounters, the research participants employed self-oriented adaptation, within which students only focus on what they should do. A relation-oriented approach indicates the two parties in intercultural interactions to adapt to each other. However, after intercultural encounters, international and American research participants both became more reserved and cautious for fear of stereotyping their cultural other. Political correctness wedges in
the American students’ intercultural experiences (Halualani, 2008; Root, 2014). The relation-oriented approach became a one-way relational adaptation. The international students were not free from political correctness either. The expectations for what the cultural other should and shouldn’t do in intercultural interactions were difficult to perceive. This “other-awarded” tendency in intercultural relations is perhaps a form of “altruism,” but focusing on the well-being of others can also be considered a method of self-fulfillment (Tanaka, 2015).

One-way relational adaptation with the self-oriented nature is the norm, governing the intercultural relations among students with diverse cultural backgrounds. If they operated under the regulation of self-oriented intercultural norms with a relational nature, then the common feelings, shared meanings, and cohesive behavior formed among the students in their communities of intercultural practice could develop into what is known as “small culture” (Holliday, 1999, 2012).

Using Small Culture Decoding Students’ Intercultural Experiences on Campus

The institution in question was “othering” international students through emphasis on the large (American) culture, an action Holliday (2012) considered “prescriptive and normative.” The “large culture” approach might not work on today’s campuses as a valid tool to guiding or interpreting intercultural practices among international and American students. Some scholars suggest the alternative of using small culture (Holliday, 2012; Montgomery, 2010) as an interpretative device for understanding specific behavior and avoiding culturalist ethnic, national, and international stereotyping. Broadly, “unstable othering” can be decoded as forming a small culture among international and American research participants, which challenges using American culture, the term used in international student handbook,
as a reference in the absence of a common cultural group identity. Students in intercultural relations might make unnecessary and sometimes confrontational divisions between interpersonal and intercultural interactions. Whether an interaction is counted as “interpersonal” or “intercultural” depends on whom the students consider the “cultural other” in that certain situation. The use of unstable othering observed in the current study challenges the previous research studies on intercultural interactions and relations between international and domestic students in institutional ethnocentric discourse (Dervin & Layne, 2013).

**Ideal Intercultural Field for Self-Fulfillment**

Within the described intercultural interactions and relations, students gave privilege to and prioritized their own personal growth. The ideal intercultural field proposed in the current study is thus designed for self-fulfillment.

The concept “field,” borrowed from Bourdieu’s (1990) core concept, shows a setting in which international and American students have established intercultural practices. The intercultural field operates with its own set of rules, including the institutional regulations informed in student handbooks and the norms agreed among the students in their intercultural practices. The rules that research participants follow and use in intercultural fields are then integrated into the rules used in their academic and social life on campus. The current study finds that the students who prefer acting within the relation orientation (Factor A) and improving individual knowledge-skill-strategy for successful relational outcomes (Factor B) have a strong desire to seek self-fulfillment (Factor C) as well, and they adapt an intercultural field to that purpose (See Table 2). For seeking self-fulfillment including academic
success, the research participants dynamically positioned their relations and interactions with cultural other.

This theoretical logic illuminates how the concept of “intercultural” interactions has been redefined by and in the intercultural field on campus by students as “intercultural-interpersonal interchangeable.” The research participants might not have a full overview of all aspects of the intercultural field on campus, but they had a practical sense of the operating intercultural practice. For example, the research participants indicated that they are likely to mingle together on campus when they discover common ground—such as the same work ethics and academic goals, or the same hobby—which allows them to have the same shared discourse power in interactions. They converted their intercultural interactions to interpersonal interactions by working together, sharing experiences with one another, and supporting each other academically and socially. Being open-minded becomes essential for redefining their position in this intercultural field in order to achieve self-fulfillment and move toward interpersonal interactions. Within their intercultural relations, they emphasized cultural similarities while exploring differences (Bennett & Volet, 2013).

The theoretical logic of “field” is also helpful in understanding students’ intercultural habitus and how it is connected to the rules of the intercultural field on campus. The students’ habits, preferences, and values in intercultural interaction and relation mix with the rules of the intercultural field, thus making the intercultural field an internal part of their habitus. This inspires researchers to view students’ unstable othering as intercultural capital in the form of embodied capital, which would eventually become a long-lasting mental disposition when defining their interactions
and relationships with each other on campus. Through “unstable othering,” students are able to mobilize among and between the communities of practice on campus. Students overcome cultural barriers and fulfill their academic socialization goals in diverse communities for personal growth.

**Experiences in the Communities of Intercultural Practice**

The intercultural field of most college campuses is characterized by its institutional stabilized and structural othering. This idea of the “cultural other” is about who we are and who they are, and what happens when the two groups of people meet (Sanderson, 2004). This binary opposition roots in the general concept of “otherness,” a quality of not being alike, found when comparing two or more groups with distinguishing features. “‘Otherness’ is a way of defining one’s own ‘self’ or one’s own ‘identity’ in relation to others . . . Education as one of [the] major agents can construct or deconstruct ‘otherness’” (Mengstie, 2011, p. 7). Mengstie emphasized that the “central idea of otherness lies on the divide” (2011, p. 8). Like outsider and insider, when talking about international and domestic students, it is painted as the issue of “Us” and “Them.” According to Mengstie, this division leads to stereotyping, which maintains the insider and outsider order in a community of practice.

Higher education institutions working to change this insider and outsider order employ the internationalization strategy of integrating intercultural and international elements into teaching and learning, thus (in theory) developing a culturally responsive and inclusive campus. Micro- and macro-level factors co-define international students’ sociocultural experiences in their host universities (Zhang & Goodson, 2011), including their individual experience of adjustment to the new
sociocultural environment and the institution’s educational programs and policies. American graduate students face similar challenges (Perry, 2016). Glass and Gesing (2018) proposed campus organization involvement as a mechanism for international students to develop a strong sense of belonging and attachment to their university. American graduate students, especially first-generation graduate students, need this kind of attachment support from institutions as well (Gardner, 2013). International students identify other international students as similar others and form an international community of practice (Montgomery, 2010). They develop social capital through friendships with each other (Cheng & Erben, 2012; Glass & Gesing, 2018; Montgomery, 2010). Within this international community of practice, there is a noticeable absence of the characteristics of conventional intercultural learning, such as overly advising or lecturing. In the current study, American graduate students in an international community of practice ably experienced practice-based intercultural learning—what they described as “legitimate peripheral participation”—and become quasi-members of an international community of practice. Their international peers shared with them the social capital constructed within this international community of practice.

Within this intercultural field, the students construct the norms for intercultural practice, and they practice self-fulfillment. They attribute their self-fulfillment in the intercultural field to their ability to move among the communities of intercultural practice. Their unstable othering allows them to move among multiple communities, bringing with them their social and cultural capital.
Quasi-Membership in the Communities of Intercultural Practice

In the current study, the research participants mobilized among communities of intercultural practice. Their interactions and relations were multilayered. This echoes Rose-Redwood’s and Rose-Redwood’s (2013) empirical finding: international students exhibit multilayered intercultural interactions with their co-nationals, other international students, and domestic students. The research participants in the current study move between a community of practice with their co-nationals and the international communities. The academic and social resources coming along with them are also then mobilized between two communities or among multiple communities; they in turn enjoy the advantages of belonging to multiple communities, which allows them extra educational resources and academic socialization. However, it is unnecessary for them to have full memberships in their communities of practice. In fact, their unstable othering is what allows them to freely mobilize among these communities of practice. Within these communities, they defined those who did not follow the norms of the small culture in the community of practice as “cultural other” and defined these interactions as “intercultural.” One American research participant (AFNS_3) and one international participant (IFNS_2) excluded some international peers who didn’t follow the academic ethics from their international communities. They said that those international peers are so different from them.

Regarding membership in a community of practice, Wenger (1998) emphasized that the members should be mutually engaged. Graduate students with different cultural backgrounds from the other as teaching and research assistants work together in the same building, even on the same floor. It is difficult to distinguish their talks about work from their personal exchanges because each is woven into their
daily conversations. In this sense, they seem to be the full participants of this international community of practice. Even though they have different research projects, they help each other and form sustainable relationships. As graduate students, more so than undergraduates, for the sake of academic success it is critical to know how to ask for help and who the best person would be to grant that help. Then, mutual engagement occurs (Wenger, 1998). Graduate students also go through academic and social situations tied to their specific programs. In the process of mutual engagement, the graduate students construct their shared experiences of being a teaching assistant or a research assistant. This is what Wenger defined as a “joint enterprise,” in which these graduate students find a way to do things together. In addition, the graduate students create a logical sense of identity and community as researchers and graduate students. Students value academic prowess and work ethic within their community of practice as accountability of one’s behaviors. Therefore, within these communities of intercultural practice, it is understandable that the research participants had the tendency to identify their interactions with peers of diverse cultural backgrounds as “interpersonal” instead of “intercultural.”

Even though the research participants engage in these communities of practice, they do not necessarily have full membership in the communities between which they mobilize freely. According to Wenger (1998), individuals in this situation seem to have full membership because they can handle themselves competently in these familiar territories. However, when asked, they indicate that they did not commit to “this group of people.” I interpret individual student memberships in intercultural communities of practice as “quasi-memberships.” In the current study, taking the research participant (AFNS_3) as an example, she did not need to be a
member of the Chinese student community. She still could mobilize among communities: that of her co-nationals, the international community of practice in her program, and the Chinese student community in her school. The educational resources flowing through her interpersonal relationships with Chinese students did not define her membership in the Chinese community of practice. In her co-national community and international community of practice, she positioned herself in the peripheral of practice in some situations, focusing on her academic success. Another research participant (IFNS_2) of Chinese ethnicity stated that she did not fully participate in the Chinese student community of practice in order to avoid the conflict triggered by political issues between mainland China and Taiwan. She mobilized among multiple communities based upon her needs. She gave major attention to her own academic success and self-fulfillment.

Despite the option for mobility, there is a boundary between any two communities of practice. Wenger (1998) believed that the communities of practice themselves can be both the sources of boundary and the contexts for creating connections. For example, people can use their multi-membership “to transfer some element of one practice into another” (Wenger, 1998, p. 109). He called this feature of the community of practice “brokering.” Accordingly, students can broker new connections across communities of intercultural practice by adapting to these communities. The research participants’ contributions to their communities of practice lie within neither being completely in nor completely out. The mobilization of the research participants (and their cultural and social resources) between the community of practice with their co-nationals and the international community of practice can be decoded as a brokering practice.
In their communities of practice, the research participants are impacted by their unstable othering. In critical terms, this unstable othering is their discourse-identity as related to their cultural other in academic socialization, including intercultural communication and adaptation. Aligning with Gee’s (2000) viewpoint of identity as “being recognized as a certain kind of person in a given context” (p. 99), international and American research participants described their dynamic insider-outsider position in various diverse intercultural encounters. Because of their fluid and context-specific positioning, they are capable of being involved in multiple communities of practice with diverse people and forming multiple dynamic identities. Therefore, I would argue that “quasi-membership” might be a more accurate way to interpret the phenomenon of “unstable othering” in the communities of intercultural practice on campus. This finding supports previous scholars’ viewpoint that identity is dynamic, contextualized, and multiple (Gee, 2000; Zhu, 2017).

**Identities in the Communities of Intercultural Practice**

In the communities of intercultural practice on campus, the students primarily perceive intercultural practice as: (a) acting with relation orientation; (b) improving individual knowledge-skill-strategy for successful relational outcomes; and (c) seeking the proper intercultural field for self-fulfillment. Taking their demographic information and their individual intercultural experiences into consideration, the current study argues that each student in the current study demonstrated their own unique practical sense of operating in intercultural interactions and relations on campus. It was also observed that students might not internalize the intercultural practices on campus in the same way. Each student’s habits, preferences, and values in intercultural interaction and relation are mixed with their sense of what it means to
be intercultural in practice on campus. Institutions’ discursive practices construct and sustain the students’ institution-identity (Gee, 2000) as a dichotomy of international and American. However, the students can reconstruct and sustain new identities though discourse and dialogue (discourse-identity).

One research participant (AMSS_1) has a strong motivation to learn foreign languages and cultures. He actively befriends international students. He interprets his intercultural experience as a “personal growth journey”: the more he knows (about other cultures), the more he wants to learn. Thus, he perceives his own intercultural experiences with a focus on “individual knowledge-skill-strategy reserve.” Besides his own intercultural learning, he is willing to teach his international friends English language and American culture. He perceives his international peers’ intercultural experience as the process of accumulating their own “individual knowledge-skill-strategy.” He thought his international peers would perceive his intercultural experience as a mixture of “individual knowledge-skill-strategy reserve” and “relation-oriented interaction.” This research participant (AMSS_1) recognizes his identity in his intercultural dialogue with his cultural other (international students). this discourse-identity, in his view, he is fashioning himself in a particular way: being different from other Americans and open-minded to different cultures. He feels his nature-identity (American) alone cannot sustain these, but his discourse-identity can sustain his open-mindedness and ability and interest in befriending international students. He believes his international peers think of his intercultural experience as “relation-oriented interaction” because of his achieved discourse-identity.

The female American research participant (AFNS_3) thought her international colleagues would perceive her intercultural experience as one of “self-fulfillment.”
She believes it has characteristics of relation-oriented interaction and self-fulfillment at the same time. She also thought her international colleagues would experience interculturalism on campus in the same way she did. Because of the nature of her program of study, all of her projects are team-based. Most of her co-workers are international students. Intercultural interaction is integrated into her daily work and life; it is hard to identify a sharp line between “interaction” and “self-fulfillment.” She is proud of her strong connection with Chinese student community, explaining that she is in the minority in her program as an “American female” graduate student. She knows the importance of ably mobilizing between the American community and the international community. As a member of an affinity group—she shares commonalities with her group members in terms of rigorous work ethic in scholarship—she has necessary intercultural experiences through her participation in these practices, such as the assembly of test equipment in the lab. Therefore, she is willing to dedicate effort into maintaining this relation-oriented interaction with her international peers. For this participant (AFNS_3), discourse-identity becomes a site of negotiation in which she expects her international peers to confirm and support her hard work in academia, which she believes that her nature-identity (being American) and her institution-identity (being an American graduate student and research assistant) can’t sustain. However, her assumption that her international colleagues would think of her as only focusing on “self-fulfillment” might be a mirror effect of her institution-identity (the dichotomy of institutionalized student population as international and American).

The international participant labeled as IFNS_2 gives all attention to self-fulfillment, specifically in terms of academic success. She participates in activities in
order to booster her personal development, such as graduate scholar meetings and mentoring high schoolers in a science program. She confirms that she seeks intercultural experiences for “self-fulfillment,” but thinks her American peers would believe her focus is on learning American culture and how to communicate with Americans (individual knowledge-skill-strategy reserve). As for her American colleagues, she believes that they choose to focus on their self-fulfillment as well. In her case, she doesn’t fashion the typical discourse-identity—one that would label her as focusing on self-fulfillment in intercultural interactions—for herself. She works hard to sustain her institution-identity of being an international student and a doctoral student. She insists on what is good for her, such as academic success, having a strong understanding of intercultural relations, and being a capable teaching and research assistant. The university realities create a position and role for her, one describing how she as an international graduate student is expected to act. She believes her American peers perceive their intercultural experience in the same way. The underlying institution-identity might make her believe that American students would think of her assimilation to the U.S. campus with focus on individual knowledge-skill-strategy reserve.

Another international student (IFSS_2) is consistently engaging in intercultural events on campus. She used to be the organizer of an international student organization with the mission of initiating intercultural dialogue on campus. For her, the primary reason for international students to be in the United States is for the purpose of “educating and getting educating about cultural diversity.” She lived with her American host mom for several years. She adheres to her perception of her intercultural experience as “relation-oriented interaction” because of her collectivist
cultural heritage. She believes her American peers also experience intercultural interaction with a relation orientation; she strongly believes that her American peers thought her intercultural experience would be “relation-oriented” as well. Her distinctive experiences in intercultural interaction and relation got her recognized by her graduate peers as a relation-oriented student. Her discourse-identity (intercultural activist) and affinity-identity (cultural ambassador) sustain her interactions with people of diverse cultural backgrounds. (See Table 10.)

Table 10
The Intercultural Practices of the Participants in Q-Sorting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Preference/habits/values</th>
<th>Intercultural experiences on campus</th>
<th>Intercultural relation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IFNS_2</td>
<td>Self-fulfillment for academic success</td>
<td>Taking classes Research in lab Science Fair</td>
<td>Colleague Co-worker Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFSS_2</td>
<td>Self-fulfillment, sharing, educating and getting educated in different cultures</td>
<td>Teaching class Intercultural events Organizing events Living with the host family</td>
<td>Colleague Instructor-student Translator Friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFNS_3</td>
<td>Self-fulfillment for academic success, seeking respect</td>
<td>Taking classes Group-projects Research in lab</td>
<td>Colleague Mentor-mentee Friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMSS_1</td>
<td>Preferring interaction with people from different cultures; learning foreign languages and cultures; travelling abroad; teaching abroad</td>
<td>Taking classes Intercultural events/activities In-class group projects Intercultural Association</td>
<td>Friend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All people have multiple identities connected to their “performances” in society (Gee, 2000). This kind of person is one that is recognized as existing or “being” only in a certain context, and that kind of “being” is unstable (Gee, 2000). In
an international environment, identity becomes parallel to intercultural interactions, and in this study it acts as a powerful lens to analyze the students’ intercultural practice (Zhu, 2017).

**Commonality Among Diverse Intercultural Experiences**

Beyond their different perceptions of the intercultural experience on campus, there is a consensus among these four students regarding the essential element of intercultural interaction and relation on campus: a work position on campus. The students in the current study are either teaching assistants or research assistants. They have great opportunities to work with students with diverse cultural backgrounds. They contextualize their intercultural relationships in specific situations such as group projects, teamwork, mentor-mentee, or colleague relations. They identify their adaptation to each other as an important norm for intercultural practices. They don’t demark their social and academic life with a clear break. They, as graduate students, integrate their social life into their academic life. As they said, even at parties, their conversations revolve around something happening in their departments or schools. Intercultural communication skills and strategies are embedded in their daily communications with each other in labs or offices. Their strong motivation for intercultural interactions reduces the barrier induced by potentially limited English language skills, which has been empirically identified as a significant barrier preventing international students from building up intercultural relationships with domestic students (Montgomery, 2010).

There is an assumption that American students are more willing to communicate with assimilated and integrated international students (Imamura & Zhang, 2014). For successful intercultural relationships in a practical sense, the
current study argues that international and American graduate students are more willing to communicate with those who follow the same intercultural norms in intercultural practice. “All graduate students are [in] the same boat” (AFNS_1). International graduate students’ English proficiency wouldn't impact their living negatively because their intercultural communication is primarily confined to their daily routine as teaching assistants and/or research assistants (Cheng & Erben, 2012). In addition, scholarship is the overarching concept that supersedes intercultural conflict. In terms of individual scholarship, the students in the current study commonly employ a self-oriented approach to personal growth, with self-awarded goals for intercultural interactions and relationships. They expect the relation-oriented approach they take to result in relationship “awards,” including the formation of a small culture with shared core values (respecting scholarly work ethics, willingness to learn diverse cultures, self-reflectivity, etc.) within their communities of intercultural practice.

Returning our focus to the three types of intercultural experience identified (acting with relation orientation; improving individual knowledge-skill-strategy for successful relational outcomes; and seeking the proper intercultural field for self-fulfillment), student individual agency plays an essential role in forming intercultural relationships (R. J. Bennett et al., 2013). Through exploring how certain students (those described in full and theorized within the relational model above) perceive and act toward cultural other, how their cultural other perceive them and act toward them, and the students’ own perception of how they are perceived, the current study argues that the students are not the only agents in the intercultural field on campus. The institution’s ethnocentric adaptation theory shapes the intercultural
events on campus. The institution’s ability to feature structured social and cultural events in which different cultures on campus are valued equally was questioned by the students in the current study. However, these students could not identify a particular chosen ethnocentric adaptation in the university’s design of these intercultural events, even one that is unspoken. The institution might overlook the potential power differentials among students when designing intercultural programs (Jon, 2013). Scholars (Lin & Rancier, 2003a) suggested including the impact of one-way adaptation in future research on intercultural interaction between international and American students.

**Power and Empathy**

Most would agree that the most reliable way for students to transcend ethnocentrism is through immersion in a new sociocultural environment where they can develop intercultural competency and understanding. However, employing American culture as the reference to evaluate international students’ intercultural competency might have ethnocentric biases (DeTurk, 2001) and signify one-way adaptation from sojourners to domestics and one-way empathy from American students to international students. In addition, this one-way adaptation indicates that only international students benefit from intercultural interactions. This one-way benevolence is identified as passive xenophobia (Harrison & Peacock, 2010) and neo-racism (Lee & Rice, 2007; Qin, 2009).

International and domestic students are in a power imbalance in potentially several social categories, such as language, gender, and age (Dervin & Layne, 2013; Lobnibe, 2009; Rhee & Sagaria, 2004; Ryan & Viete, 2009). The power issue could also appear in the marginalization of one party in intercultural practices. Even
without the formal barrier, “the institutions can alienate the students from the communities which are significantly different from the majority” (Lobnibe, 2009, p. 365).

Power issues in intercultural interactions were decoded as unpleasant moments in the international participants’ intercultural experiences, though they did not refer the experiences back to the cause of the power imbalance. They did not articulate the forces socializing them as “others,” which fixes their place in the social structure in their host institution. Their lack of source identification, or the forces controlling socialization can be traced in the Q-sorting data. The research participants all agree with the viewpoint that there is a potential power differential and that there has been discrimination imposed on them in intercultural interactions and relations (Statement 14 in Q sorting). However, only the students focusing on individual knowledge-skill-strategy development give high value to this statement at +3, compared to the relation-oriented students that value it at 0 and the self-fulfillment students at value +1 (See Appendix L). This could be interpreted to mean that the students recognize the power differential in intercultural interaction and relationships, at a knowledge level. However, in a practical sense, the relation-oriented students focus on their belief that intercultural interaction is a basic human interaction that minimizes cultural differences and might minimize power differences as well. The students with a self-fulfillment focus might espouse the holistic nature of the intercultural field for self-fulfillment and think of potential power differentials as only occurring at an individual level. Or, they might not identify themselves as a force shaping this power differential in their intercultural interactions. They might not find a way to affect situations with power issues.
Empathy has been regarded as an important criterion for intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2009; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Forming intercultural friendships is viewed as an important strategy for developing skills of empathy (M. J. Bennett, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). The question remains, what do we mean by “empathy”? DeTurk (2001) suggested defining empathy through its likelihood to occur in intercultural interactions, taking into account the power issues involved in empathy and the unequal relations. The international research participants didn’t mention empathy for their American peers, who might not know how to interact with international students with greatly diverse cultural backgrounds. In the current study, American students explain their apprehension about intercultural communication when they interact with their international peers. The terms “empathy” and “intercultural understanding” are both missing among the research participants. Furthermore, in the participants’ narrations of intercultural experiences, there is no mention of other-awarded tendencies as the alternative to empathic understanding in communities of intercultural practice. This might be due to the interview questions directing them to narrate their “self” intercultural experiences instead of their intercultural understanding of cultural other. Therefore, there is still much that is unknown about their perceptions of empathy in intercultural practice on campus and the approaches constructed by them for intercultural understanding in their intercultural practices on campus. It is essential to clarify what we mean by intercultural understanding and establish what its goals should be (Bredella, 2003).
Approach Students Constructed in Intercultural Interactions: Two-Way Adaptation or One-Way Adaptation

Intercultural interactions and relations between international and domestic students have been discussed in terms of the individualistic knowledge-skill approach. Individuals can gain intercultural competence if they master intercultural knowledge, communication skills, and strategies, which requires specific goals and strong motivation. Shi (2007), from the intercultural communication perspective, problematizes intercultural education taking this individualistic knowledge-skill approach. The issue lays in the fact that intercultural problems are often attributed to the cultural other. It is taken for granted that it is the problem-laden cultural others’ responsibility to adapt to their host peers during intercultural interactions.

Research proves that this ethnocentric adaptation approach doesn’t promote intercultural interaction between international and domestic students. The current study captures the fulcrum viewpoint (found among the statements under the value Zero in Factors A, B, and C) among four research participants: it is important to adapt to each other in intercultural interaction (Statement 27). In this study, “adaptation to each other” does not mean “two-way adaptation.” Two-way adaptation is the mechanism for eventual “adaptation to each other,” which is the building of shared meaning in intercultural interactions for intercultural understanding, while both parties maintain an equal balance in power. Within adaptation to each other, the domestic and international students are empathic to each other. They would employ self-oriented and other-oriented approach with self-awarded and other-awarded goals simultaneously for the purpose of intercultural understanding.
However, in intercultural interactions, the research participants employed a self-oriented and self-awarded approach, rooted in relational considerations such as avoiding cultural offense or resisting the urge to stereotype diverse cultures in intercultural interactions. This one-way, self-oriented adaptation becomes meaningful to dyadic members in intercultural interactions because they see their own well-being (Tseng & Newton, 2002) and the well-being of others as part of their own growth or self-fulfillment (Tanaka, 2015). During interactions, individual agencies affect each other either negatively or positively (Bennett, Volet & Fozdar, 2013). The current study suggests viewing self-oriented adaptation with a relational focus as a “one-way self-oriented adaptation,” underscoring the importance of individual agency in maintaining intercultural relations. However, the approaches for intercultural understanding constructed by students in their intercultural practices is still much unknown.

**Conclusion**

For international and American graduate students, a “cultural other” is not a social entity, but a functioning perspective shaping their intercultural experiences (Colvin et al., 2014). Institutions’ discursive practices construct and sustain the students’ institution-identity (Gee, 2000) as a dichotomy of international and American. However, the students reconstruct and sustain the shared meanings of their communities of intercultural practice through their common discourse-identity, emphasizing cultural similarities while exploring differences (R. J. Bennett et al., 2013; Evanoff, 2006). In communities of intercultural practice where both their social and cultural capital is valued, students are willing to step out of their comfort zone for intercultural dialogues.
The answer to the first research question—“How do international and American students conceptualize intercultural relations at their host campus?”—was sorted out through the participants’ thick descriptions of their positive and negative intercultural experiences on campus. The “cultural other” in their intercultural stories are dynamic and contextualized. They conceptualize intercultural relationships as something dynamic and contextualized as well. The Q-sorting data indicates that the research participants conceptualized intercultural relations as a field for their own self-fulfillment.

The answer to the second research question—“How do international and American students experience intercultural interactions with cultural other at their host campus?”—heavily relies on the study participants’ viewpoints as identified in Q-sorting analysis. The research participants identify their intercultural experiences on campus as falling under three categories: (a) relation-oriented interaction; (b) knowledge-skill-strategy; and/or (c) seeking the intercultural field for self-fulfillment. Mostly, their intercultural experiences crossover these three types.

The third question—“What are some commonalities and/or discrepancies among the participants in their understandings of intercultural relations with cultural other at their host campus?”—is answered by the participants’ vivid narratives of the intercultural field for successful intercultural relationships, including the common-ground perspectives and the opportunities for intercultural interactions. They also recommend that the institution should feature the structured social and cultural programs on campus in order to get students out of their comfort zones and into intercultural dialogues. With Q methodology, there are three patterns of intercultural practice identified: (a) acting with relation orientation; (b) improving individual
knowledge-skill-strategy for successful relational outcomes; and 9c) seeking the proper intercultural field for self-fulfillment.

The last research question—“What kind of approach(es) do participants/graduate students employ in their interactions with cultural other?”— focuses on the approach students constructed in their intercultural interactions with cultural other. In the research participants’ intercultural experiences, they use a self-oriented approach, motivated by self-fulfillment through intercultural practice.

**Theoretical Contribution**

The current study contributes in multiple ways to our understanding of the nature of intercultural interactions and relationships among international and American students with diverse cultural backgrounds on campus. In view of the relational framework (Imahori & Lanigan, 1989), a successful intercultural relationship is understood in this study to be a result of the students adapting to each other using a self-oriented approach. For example, the student primarily focused on self rather than another in intercultural interactions. This one-way adaptation becomes meaningful due to the students’ belief in the well-being of others in intercultural interactions as part of their own growth. International and American students conceptualize “intercultural relations” as something dynamic and contextualized. Their conceptualization changes depending on the circumstances. They conceptualize intercultural practice as a field for personal growth.

The empirical findings of the present study reflect Wenger’s (1998) more dynamic definition of membership of community of practice. International and American students move within multiple communities, in some of which they don’t claim full membership. Their intercultural interactions show an interchangeability
between “intercultural” and “interpersonal.” The current study also confirms Wenger’s (1998) community theory. In addition, the study contributed to Montgomery’s notion of an international community of practice (Montgomery, 2010) through extending the idea of international community of intercultural practice.

The study contributed to the notion of “small culture” (Holliday, 2012) to the notion of the community of intercultural practice. Holliday’s (1999) small culture paradigm attaches ‘culture’ to small social groupings with cohesive behavior, common beliefs and shared meanings, and thus avoids international stereotyping (Holliday, 2012; Montgomery, 2010). Small culture explains how American and international graduate students can form a community of intercultural practice around their shared norms. The present study adds the dimension of shared intercultural norms and small culture to the functional community of practice and strengthens the term “community of practice”. Small culture and community of practice allow for a more inclusive approach to capture students’ intercultural practices on campus. This challenges the institutional ethnocentric discourse (Dervin & Layne, 2013), which mythologizes the relationships between international and American students as a stable intercultural one.

The study shows the institutions’ discursive practices that construct and sustain the students’ institution-identity (Gee, 2000) as a dichotomy of international and American. However, the students reconstruct and sustain identities through discourse and dialogue (discourse-identity) within their communities of intercultural practice. They employ the intercultural norms agreed upon in these communities in terms of “small culture” to define their relationships as “intercultural” or “interpersonal.”
**Delimitations and Researcher’s Positionality**

The current study has the following delimitations. The intercultural practice of international and American graduate students on campus identified in the current study might not be generalized to all international and American graduate students on the U.S. campus. However, the theoretical findings and the three types of intercultural experiences identified through Q factor analysis may be found in other higher education context too. The present study contributed to a better understanding of their meaningful intercultural interactions and relations on campus. For example, being afraid of being labeled as “stereotyping” and “discriminating against” cultural other, the research participants talked about their negative intercultural experiences on campus with self-oriented approach which shape intercultural adaptation as an one-way relation. They didn’t narrow the meaningful intercultural practice down to only “positive” experiences. For them, positive and negative intercultural interactions and relations both are sources for intercultural learning.

My researcher positionality as an international graduate student might be perceived as introducing bias into the study. It might direct the participants’ responses to the interview questions in a specific way. I found out that my insider position couldn’t direct my research participants in the process of data collection. For the data collection in Phase I, since the interview questions are open-ended, I couldn’t direct the research participants how to share their intercultural experiences with me and share what with me. For the Q-sorting in Phase II, I couldn’t control how they sorted those 42 statements from the most agree to the most disagree. Their Q-sortings objectively recorded their own reflection on their intercultural experiences related to the specific intercultural events in their own lives. I was the recorder and observer of
their Q-sorting. My insider position couldn’t impact the validity and the reliability of their Q-sortings.

**Practical Implications**

The current study suggests looking at intercultural programs as a way to promote intercultural interactions between international and American students and create an environment where the cultural capital of individuals in both groups is valued. The current study found that students might like to step out of their comfort zone, but they were not provided adequate opportunities. In addition, as Burkiardt and Bennett (2015) pointed out, cultural events on campus should be specifically designed to promote intercultural interactions between American and international students in everyday contexts. The campus environment is critical in influencing the quantity and the quality of intercultural interactions (Burkiardt & Bennett, 2015). Burkiardt and Bennett pinpointed that the mode by which international students are introduced to their U.S. campus has affected their integration and future interaction pattern. By having participated in a segregated orientation, international students are forced to find immediate comfort in fellow international students. In the current study, the participants were a part of an integrated two-day orientation for all graduate students. They had the opportunity to bond with each other during orientation. This intercultural relationship was sustained in their communities of intercultural practice.

Consistent with Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) relational model, the current study suggests viewing successful relational outcomes within the intersubjective perspective of “small cultures.” For the graduate student population, small cultures primarily consist of institutional organization, academic department, evaluation methodology, and the U.S. immigration policy related to international graduate
students. The institution should consider the impacts of these small cultures on on-campus intercultural practices among international and American students when designing the intercultural education programs. Secondly, the intercultural education programs should be designed with a participatory approach aiming at students’ intercultural competence development. These programs should be delivered on daily base within the concept of the community of practice, which “embodies a belief in and the commitment to the contributions of every member in a community” through the reciprocal learning (Martinez & Plough, 2018, p. 1828). In addition, the program designers should be sensitive for the asymmetry in intercultural interactions on campus (Otten, 2003). The present study suggests the institution should take ideas from stakeholders to develop intercultural educational programs.
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Appendix A

Interview Protocol

a. How do you understand cultural diversity on campus?

b. Could you give me an example of an on-campus intercultural interaction from your own experience? (With whom, where, when and how, walk me through this interaction)

c. Could you give me an example of your previous experiences of intercultural interactions in your own country or community before coming to this university? (With whom, where, when and how, walk me through this interaction)

d. Have you had any intercultural interactions with cultural other, which brought conflicts with your knowledge, beliefs, feelings, values or worldview? If so, how did you handle them?

e. When you try to solve these conflicts, have you experienced any changes in your value and view of the world? What is/are the outcome(s) of such changes?

f. From your intercultural experiences, how do you describe your intercultural relations with cultural other? Give me an example.

g. In what ways do your views of intercultural relations change because of your intercultural interaction with culturally dissimilar others?

h. Could you give me an example of your intercultural interactions that support(s) intercultural relations formed?

i. Could you give me an example of your intercultural interactions that challenge(s) intercultural relations formed?

j. Are there anything about intercultural relations between international and American students that you would particularly like to see to change?

k. Are there any opportunities that give you hope that authentic intercultural relation between international and American students is achievable?

l. What would you be your vision for the future of meaningful intercultural interactions between IS and American students?

m. What do you see as the opportunities or obstacles to achieving the kind of vision you have laid out for meaningful intercultural interaction and relation?
n. From the intercultural perspective, do you have a strong sense of affiliation with your college/university? Could you give me some examples on what support(s)/challenge(s) you to be affiliated with your college/university?
APPENDIX B

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS LINING UP WITH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
## Appendix B

The Research Questions Lining Up With Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Interview Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do international and American students conceptualize intercultural relations?</td>
<td>1.) How do you understand cultural diversity on campus?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.) In what ways have your views of intercultural relations changed because of your intercultural interaction with culturally dissimilar others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.) From your intercultural experiences, how do you describe your intercultural relations with cultural other? Give me an example of your intercultural relations with cultural other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do the participants experience intercultural interactions with cultural other on the host campus?</td>
<td>1.) Could you give me an example of an on-campus intercultural interaction from your own experience? (With whom, where, when and how, walk me through this interaction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.) Have you had any intercultural interactions with cultural other, which brought conflicts with your knowledge, beliefs, feelings, values or worldview? If so, how did you handle them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.) When you try to resolve these conflicts, have you experienced any changes in your value and view of the world? What is/are the outcome(s) of such changes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.) From your intercultural experiences, how do you describe your intercultural relations with cultural other? Give me an example of your intercultural relations with cultural other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.) Could you give me an example of your intercultural interactions that support(s) the formation of intercultural relations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.) Could you give me an example of your intercultural interactions that challenge(s) the formation of intercultural relations?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS LINING UP WITH DATA ANALYSIS
Appendix C
The Research Questions Lining Up With Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data analysis and discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. How do international and American students conceptualize intercultural relations? | • Qualitative data analysis in Phase I  
• Description of the themes and subthemes identified  
• Discussion of how the themes align with issues identified in the literature  
• Draft of the conceptual framework                                                                 |
| 2. How do international and American students experience intercultural relations with cultural other on the host campus? | • Qualitative data analysis in Phase I  
• Q-sorting: how international and American students relate to one another in terms of intercultural relation: 1) self’s view of self; 2) self’s view of others; 3) self’s view of other’s view of self.  
• Factor analysis in Phase II to identify the commonalities and/or discrepancies among the participants  
• Discussion of the research findings related to the conceptual framework proposed in Phase I  
• Implications for international and intercultural education policy, administration and teaching and learning |
| 3. What are some commonalities and/or discrepancies among the participants in their understanding and practicing intercultural relations with cultural other at the host campus? | • 3 Q-sortings & partial data in Phase I  
• Factor analysis in Phase II to identify their preferred approach(es)  
• Factor analysis engaging in the marginal and dominant perspectives  
• Discussion of the marginal and dominant perspectives in the community of intercultural discourse and its potential impact on the approach formed through intercultural learning |
| 4. Which approach(es) is/are constructed in their intercultural interactions with cultural other: individualistic knowledge-minded approach or/and the approach of self-in-the-other and the other-in-the-self? | • Q-sorting: how international and American students relate to one another in terms of intercultural relation: 1) self’s view of self; 2) self’s view of others; 3) self’s view of other’s view of self.  
• Factor analysis in Phase II to identify the possibilities and conditions  
• Discussion of the research findings in the context of internationalization of higher education at home campus  
• Implications for international and intercultural education policy, administration and teaching and learning |
| 5. What are the possibilities and conditions for forming “meaningful intercultural interactions” between international and American domestic students on campus? | • Q-sorting: how international and American students relate to one another in terms of intercultural relation: 1) self’s view of self; 2) self’s view of others; 3) self’s view of other’s view of self.  
• Factor analysis in Phase II to identify the possibilities and conditions  
• Discussion of the research findings in the context of internationalization of higher education at home campus  
• Implications for international and intercultural education policy, administration and teaching and learning |
APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY
Appendix D

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

**Study Title:** Meaningful Intercultural Practice: International and American Graduate Students on the U.S. Campus

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Vilma Seeberg and Tianhong Zhang (Doctoral candidate)

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This consent form will provide you with information on the research project, what you will need to do, and the associated risks and benefits of the research. Your participation is voluntary. Please read this form carefully. It is important that you ask questions and fully understand the research in order to make an informed decision. You will receive a copy of this document to take with you.

**Purpose**
I want to explore the co-constructive nature of intercultural competence through the lens of intercultural relations between international and American students. I want to gather insight into international and American domestic students’ conceptualizations and experiences of meaningful intercultural relations.

**Procedures**
If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to have a one hour and a half face-to-face interview, held at your convenience. We will be asking you the questions related to your perceptions of meaningful intercultural relations and your intercultural experiences with cultural other on the campus of Kent State University. The interview will be recorded for data analysis and discussion.

After the interview, at your convenience, you will be asked to have a Q-sort of 81 statements regarding intercultural relations and meaningful intercultural interactions on a continuum of -6 to +6 as to how these statements you have most agreement to (+6) on this topic or the least agreement to (-6) on this topic. The Q-sorting will take approximately 30-45 minutes. I would also like to conduct a post-sorting interview which will take approximately 10-15 minutes. The purpose of this interview is to more fully understand your subjective reasoning as to why you put a certain statement at a certain place in the 6(-) to 6(+) continuum.

**Benefits**
This research will not benefit you directly. However, your participation in this study will help us to better understand meaningful intercultural interactions between international and American students. The research findings may help the U.S. higher education institutions develop effective intercultural programs for promoting intercultural interactions rate between them and for booster of their intercultural competence development at their home campuses.
Risks and Discomforts

There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life. Some of the questions that you will be asked may cause you uncomfortable answering them. You may ask to see the questions before deciding whether or not to participate in the study. Or, if you do not wish to answer a question, you may skip it and go on to the next question.

Privacy and Confidentiality

No identifying information will be collected. Your signed consent form will be kept separate from your study data, and responses will not be linked to you. Your study related information will be kept confidential within the limits of the law. Any identifying information will be kept in a secure location and only the researchers will have access to the data with the password. Research participants will not be identified in any publication or presentation of research results; only aggregate data will be used.

Voluntary Participation

Taking part in this research study is entirely up to you. You may choose not to participate or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact Dr. Vilma Seeberg at 330-672-0604 or Tianhong Zhang at 617-947-2697. This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at 330.672.2704.

Consent Statement and Signature

I have read this consent form and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that a copy of this consent will be provided to me for future reference.

Participant Signature

Date
APPENDIX E

AUDIO TAPE/VIDEO CONSENT FORM
Appendix E

Audio Tape/Video Consent Form

I agree to participate in an audio-taped interview about my perception of meaningful intercultural relations and my experiences of meaningful intercultural interactions with cultural other on the KSU campus as part of this study and for the purposes of data analysis. I agree that Tianhong Zhang may audio-tape this interview. The date, time and place of the interview will be mutually agreed upon.

______________________________  __________________________
Signature                      Date

I have been told that I have the right to listen to the recording of the interview before it is used. I have decided that I:

____ want to listen to the recording  ____ do not want to listen to the recording

Sign now below if you do not want to listen to the recording. If you want to listen to the recording, you will be asked to sign after listening to them.

______________________________  __________________________
Signature                      Date
APPENDIX F

Q-SORTING SCORE SHEET 1
Appendix F

Q-Sorting Score Sheet 1

Most Disagree  Neutral  Most Agree
-4  -3  -2  -1  0  +1  +2  +3  +4  Number

Code __________________________  Date __________________

Condition of Instruction: (1) My own Point of View

During your time at Kent State University, you have had the opportunity to interact with other students from a diversity of cultural backgrounds. Thinking of your intercultural experiences as a whole, use these 42 statements to represent your own point of view by ranking the statements from those with which you most agree (+4) to those with which you most disagree (-4).

Comments:
APPENDIX G

Q-SORTING SCORE SHEET 2
Appendix G

Q-Sorting Score Sheet 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Most Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Condition of Instruction: (2) The Other’s Point of View

In your previous interview, you represented your own point of view about your intercultural experiences at Kent State University. In this response, represent your perception of how you think that international students, *in general*, view their intercultural experiences. That is, if international students could speak with one voice and if you could step into their shoes, how do you think that they would report their collective intercultural experiences? Perform this task by ranking the statements from those with which you think international students would agree (+4) to those with which you think they would disagree (-4).

Comments:
APPENDIX H

Q-SORTING SCORE SHEET 3
Appendix H

Q-Sorting Score Sheet 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Disagree</th>
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<th>Most Agree</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Condition of Instruction: (3) The Other’s Perception of My View

In your first interview you reported your viewpoint about your own intercultural experiences, and in your second interview you reported your perception of the experiences of international students. In this final interview, you are asked to represent how you think that international students perceive your viewpoint. That is, if international students collectively could provide their perception of what your point of view is about intercultural experiences, with which statements would they think that you would agree most (+4) and with which would they think that you would disagree most (-4)?

Comments:
APPENDIX I

Q-SORTING SCORE SHEET 4
Appendix I

Q-Sorting Score Sheet 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Most Agree</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Code ___________________________  Date ___________________

Condition of Instruction: (2) The Other’s Point of View

In your previous interview, you represented your own point of view about your intercultural experiences at Kent State University. In this response, represent your perception of how you think that American students, *in general*, view their intercultural experiences. That is, if American students could speak with one voice and if you could step into their shoes, how do you think that they would report their collective intercultural experiences? Perform this task by ranking the statements from those with which you think American students would agree (+4) to those with which you think they would disagree (-4).

Comments:
APPENDIX J

Q-SORTING SCORE SHEET 5
Appendix J

Q-Sorting Score Sheet 5

Most Disagree Neutral Most Agree
-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

Condition of Instruction: (3) The Other’s Perception of My View

In your first interview you reported your viewpoint about your own intercultural experiences, and in your second interview you reported your perception of the experiences of American students. In this final interview, you are asked to represent how you think that American students perceive your viewpoint. That is, if American students collectively could provide their perception of what your point of view is about intercultural experiences, with which statements would they think that you would agree most (+4) and with which would they think that you would disagree most (-4)?

Comments:
APPENDIX K

Q SAMPLE (N = 42)
1. There is nothing really to be afraid of when we want to learn from cultural other. Intercultural interact is just a basic human interaction.
2. It would really be helpful if there was someone willing to help us from very beginning someone to go between our culture and their culture and to explain why people from their culture behave in that way.
3. In order not to offend cultural other in intercultural communication, it is wise to avoid culture-specific topics.
4. It is unnecessary to think of culture so much while in the process of interacting with people with diverse cultural backgrounds.
5. Following intercultural encounters, I become more sensitive to cultural clash and diversity issues such as racism.
6. Interacting and learning with cultural other is something that happens naturally rather than being forced.
7. The different academic demands and goals of international and American students challenge the quantity and the equality of the intercultural interactions among them.
8. Students don’t feel comfortable going to intercultural campus events if they don’t feel like they belong or fit in.
9. Within intercultural relationships, we look to and rely on each other in the process of working together, sharing, and getting through struggles together.
10. Sharing what we think and feel about other cultures with people from those cultures helps intercultural understanding between them and us.
11. Intercultural interactions help people become more open-minded toward other people’s viewpoints and cultures.
12. Only when we find common ground that we both value do we get past cultural differences and begin to mingle with one another.
13. People with diverse cultural backgrounds naturally encounter intercultural conflicts that arise from their different definitions and understandings of the important concepts in life.
14. There is a potential power differential and discrimination that we impose on each other in the course of intercultural relations between international and American students.
15. Cultural differences such as collectivism and individualism are not adequate to explain our differences in intercultural interactions on the campus.
16. Our colleagues with diverse cultural backgrounds are good educational resources for our intercultural learning.
17. Working on the same project together gives us more opportunities to interact with each other, share information and ideas, and also to appreciate each other’s culture.
18. It is good to have intercultural dialogues on the campus. It is through dialogue that students with diverse cultural backgrounds get educated about different cultures.
19. Having the opportunity to have intercultural interactions with cultural other can help us cut through stereotypes towards particular cultures in our daily lives.

20. Living in a multicultural environment makes intercultural interaction a natural occurrence. We get used to diverse ways of talking, thinking, and doing things.

21. Students who have had a greater number of intercultural experiences usually have less intercultural communication apprehension and are more open-minded.

22. Having different working and academic ethics is more likely the result of personal differences, not cultural differences.

23. From knowing nothing about other cultures to seeking out intercultural relationships is a personal-growth journey: the more we learn, the more we want to know about other cultures.

24. The structured social and cultural events on campus are a way of getting students out of their comfort zones and involving them in the intercultural dialogue.

25. In intercultural interactions, the understanding between people with diverse cultural backgrounds wouldn’t occur unless they would actually like to sit down and talk about critical intercultural issues such as gender and race.

26. I tend to think of a person’s improper behavior as something that is individualized rather than as general to a whole culture.

27. Intercultural interactions would go easier if we would actually enjoy the effort of adapting to each other.

28. American students’ decision to interact with their international peers depends in large part on whether they can perceive similarities.

29. In intercultural interactions, argument is not a bad thing: it is essential for our intercultural understanding and for promoting intercultural relationships that have depth.

30. Intercultural interactions on campus benefit only international students.

31. If someone’s viewpoints happen to conflict with mine with respect to cultural issues, I wouldn’t mind being frank about which views are improper in my culture.

32. My intercultural relationships would be much freer if others didn’t expect me to be solely identified in terms of my nationality, religion, gender, or any other trait.

33. I think of myself as a lingerer among different cultures.

34. Intercultural relationships are no different from other relationships, such as mentor and mentee, colleague, or co-worker.

35. International students’ decisions about whether to interact with their American peers depend on whether they are confident in their English-language proficiency.

36. We must be vigilant against the stereotypes that we have towards cultural other. Self-reflexivity is necessary.

37. If international and American students really want to learn about each other’s culture, their high motivation for intercultural interaction might reduce the language barrier.

38. The intercultural events featured on campus help bridging the gap between foreign and host cultures, thereby creating an incentive for students to attend.

39. It is important for us to be open to learn more about different cultures, which might reveal sameness.

40. Our experiences of intercultural encounters often lead us to consider more of what cultural other are going through in their lives.
41. There is a sameness to American culture so that there is nothing especially significant as far as intercultural interactions are concerned.

42. The dichotomization of student identity on campus into international and American groups creates the condition for each to regard the other as the cultural other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement Categories</th>
<th>Statement Number</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>1, 8, 15, 22, 29, 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies/ Skill</td>
<td>2, 9, 16, 23, 30, 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>3, 10, 17, 24, 31, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>4, 11, 18, 25, 32, 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way of Change</td>
<td>5, 12, 19, 26, 33, 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Experiences</td>
<td>6, 13, 20, 27, 34, 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to Interaction</td>
<td>7, 14, 21, 28, 35, 42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX L

FACTOR Q-SORT VALUES FOR EACH STATEMENT
## Appendix L

### Factor Q-Sort Values for Each Statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Factor Arrays</th>
<th>Factor Arrays</th>
<th>Factor Arrays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1. There is nothing really to be afraid of when we want to learn from cultural other. Intercultural interact is just a basic human interaction.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2. It would really be helpful if there was someone willing to help us from very beginning someone to go between our culture and their culture and to explain why people from their culture behave in that way.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3. In order not to offend cultural other in intercultural communication, it is wise to avoid culture-specific topics.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4. It is unnecessary to think of culture so much while in the process of interacting with people with diverse cultural backgrounds.</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5. Following intercultural encounters, I become more sensitive to cultural clash and diversity issues such as racism.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6. Interacting and learning with cultural other is something that happens naturally rather than being forced.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>7. The different academic demands and goals of international and American students challenge the quantity and the equality of the intercultural interactions among them.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>8. Students don’t feel comfortable going to intercultural campus events if they don’t feel like they belong or fit in.</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>9. Within intercultural relationships, we look to and rely on each other in the process of working together, sharing, and getting through struggles together.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10. Sharing what we think and feel about other cultures with people from those cultures helps intercultural understanding between them and us.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11. Intercultural interactions help people become more open-minded toward other people’s viewpoints and cultures.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>12. Only when we find common ground that we both value do we get past cultural differences and begin to mingle with one another.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td>People with diverse cultural backgrounds naturally encounter intercultural conflicts that arise from their different definitions and understandings of the important concepts in life.</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td>There is a potential power differential and discrimination that we impose on each other in the course of intercultural relations between international and American students.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td>Cultural differences such as collectivism and individualism are not adequate to explain our differences in intercultural interactions on the campus.</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td>Our colleagues with diverse cultural backgrounds are good educational resources for our intercultural learning.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td>Working on the same project together gives us more opportunities to interact with each other, share information and ideas, and also to appreciate each other’s culture.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td>It is good to have intercultural dialogues on the campus. It is through dialogue that students with diverse cultural backgrounds get educated about different cultures.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td>Having the opportunity to have intercultural interactions with cultural other can help us cut through stereotypes towards particular cultures in our daily lives.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td>Living in a multicultural environment makes intercultural interaction a natural occurrence. We get used to diverse ways of talking, thinking, and doing things.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td>Students who have had a greater number of intercultural experiences usually have less intercultural communication apprehension and are more open-minded.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td>Having different working and academic ethics is more likely the result of personal differences, not cultural differences.</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td>From knowing nothing about other cultures to seeking out intercultural relationships is a personal-growth journey: the more we learn, the more we want to know about other cultures.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td>The structured social and cultural events on campus are a way of getting students out of their comfort zones and involving them in the intercultural dialogue.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td>In intercultural interactions, the understanding between people with diverse cultural backgrounds wouldn’t occur</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
unless they would actually like to sit down and talk about critical intercultural issues such as gender and race.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>26. I tend to think of a person’s improper behavior as something that is individualized rather than as general to a whole culture.</td>
<td>-1 -2 -2</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>27. Intercultural interactions would go easier if we would actually enjoy the effort of adapting to each other.</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>28. American students’ decision to interact with their international peers depends in large part on whether they can perceive similarities.</td>
<td>-2 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>29. In intercultural interactions, argument is not a bad thing: it is essential for our intercultural understanding and for promoting intercultural relationships that have depth.</td>
<td>-1 -2 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>30. Intercultural interactions on campus benefit only international students.</td>
<td>-3 -4 -4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>31. If someone’s viewpoints happen to conflict with mine with respect to cultural issues, I wouldn’t mind being frank about which views are improper in my culture.</td>
<td>-1 -1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>32. My intercultural relationships would be much freer if others didn’t expect me to be solely identified in terms of my nationality, religion, gender, or any other trait.</td>
<td>0 3 -2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>33. I think of myself as a lingerer among different cultures.</td>
<td>-2 -1 -1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>34. Intercultural relationships are no different from other relationships, such as mentor and mentee, colleague, or co-worker.</td>
<td>-3 -4 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>35. International students’ decisions about whether to interact with their American peers depend on whether they are confident in their English-language proficiency.</td>
<td>-1 4 -1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>36. We must be vigilant against the stereotypes that we have towards cultural other. Self-reflexivity is necessary.</td>
<td>0 2 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>37. If international and American students really want to learn about each other’s culture, their high motivation for intercultural interaction might reduce the language barrier.</td>
<td>0 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>38. The intercultural events featured on campus help bridging the gap between foreign and host cultures, thereby creating an incentive for students to attend.</td>
<td>-2 1 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>39. It is important for us to be open to learn more about different cultures, which might reveal sameness.</td>
<td>1 3 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>40. Our experiences of intercultural encounters often lead us to consider more of what cultural other are going through in their lives.</td>
<td>3 0 4</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>41. There is a sameness to American culture so that there is nothing especially significant as far as intercultural interactions are concerned.</td>
<td>-3 -2 -3</td>
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<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>42. The dichotomization of student identity on campus into international and American groups creates the condition for each to regard the other as the cultural other.</td>
<td>-2 -2 -2</td>
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APPENDIX M

PARTICIPANT RECRUITING SCRIPTS
Appendix M

Participant Recruiting Script

Hello, my name is Tianhong Zhang. I am a graduate student at Kent State University in the Cultural Foundations. I am conducting research on international and American graduates’ perceptions of meaningful intercultural interactions and relations with cultural other on the KSU campus, and I am inviting you to participate because you actively engage in intercultural interactions with cultural other.

Participation in this research includes taking an interview about your perceptions of meaningful intercultural interactions and experiences of intercultural relations, which will take approximately 90 minutes. If you agree to participate in a follow-up Q-sorting about your viewpoints of meaningful intercultural interactions and relations, that will take approximately 30-40 minutes. You will sort the statements of your viewpoints from “most agree” to “most disagree.” If you agree to participate in another two Q-sorting, they will take approximately 30-40 minutes for each. One is about sorting the statements of your viewpoints of American students’ views of meaningful intercultural interactions and relations with cultural other from “most agree” to “most disagree.” The other one is about sorting the statements of your viewpoints of American students’ views of your view of meaningful intercultural interactions and relations with cultural other from “most agree” to “most disagree.” These three Q-sorting will be conducted separately at your convenience. If you participate in both the interview and all three Q-sorting, your total time commitment will be approximately 3 hours.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in the research, I can be reached at 617-947-2697 or tzhang13@kent.edu.

Thank you.
Sincerely,
Tianhong Zhang
APPENDIX N

IMAHTORI AND LANIGAN’S (1989) RELATIONAL MODEL
Appendix N
Imahori and Lanigan’s (1989) Relational Model

**Three dimensions:** skills (S), motivation (M), and knowledge (K)

These three dimensions independently or interdependently influence relational outcomes, goals (G), and/or the experience of intercultural interactions (E)
REFERENCES


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