INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' ADJUSTMENTS TO U.S. HIGH SCHOOLS AND HELPFUL SCHOOL SUPPORTS FOR THEIR SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL AND ACADEMIC NEEDS

A Dissertation By

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Abstract:
The international student population continues to grow on U.S. high school campuses. According to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) data for the 2018 school year, 84,840 K-12 students were in the United States and 19.5% of them were enrolled in California schools (private and public). The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to identify the challenges faced by high school international students in the United States, in both their academic endeavors and their social-emotional adjustments. Results revealed that these students experience language barrier challenges, academic challenges, and social-emotional challenges. It was also revealed that these challenges are interconnected.

International high school students are unique and come to our campuses with different academic goals and cultural backgrounds, but they also bring different perspectives that enrich the global awareness and cultural sensitivity of our local students, teachers, counselors, school leaders, and support providers. Their presence challenges school practitioners to develop and deliver support services to guarantee student success and create globally competitive school campuses.

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To Mama and Papa,

Thank you for showing me that education is the greatest equalizer.

I hope to live your legacy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My son, thank you for inspiring me.

My wife, thank you for believing in me.

My three brothers, thank you for never doubting me.

My in-laws, thank you for accepting me.

My friends, thank you for the encouragements.

My dissertation committee, thank you for challenging and supporting me.

The participants of this study, thank you for your time and honesty.

All students and teachers in the classroom, thank you for giving my efforts meaning and purpose.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The economist Theodore Levitt is credited with coining the term *globalization* in 1985 to describe changes in global economics affecting production, consumption, and investment (Stromquist, 2002). The term was quickly applied to political and cultural changes that affect large segments of the world's population in common ways. One of these common global phenomena is schooling. For this reason, the language of globalization has entered discourses about schooling. Government and business groups talk about the necessity for schools to find ways to meet the needs of the global economy. For example, the U.S. organization Achieve, Inc. , declared that "high school is now the front line in America's battle to remain competitive on the increasingly competitive international economic stage" (Achieve, Inc., & National Governors Association, 2005, p. 1).

Globalization will continue to bring more international students here to the United States, and California is a top destination for these students. As an example, Arroyo Pacific High School's international population started with just a handful of Chinese students, but by 2016 more than 70% of its student population was made up of international students (J. Huang, 2016). Picciani's study (2000) found that although the influx of international students to the United States has been steadily increasing, research about that population has been minimal. The growth of the international student population is a national and local phenomenon; therefore, more attention and research need to be done in this field so that schools and school districts can understand these students better and provide more effective support, to help them succeed both academically and socioemotionally.

Background of the Problem

In 2014, the Institute of International Education reported on the rising numbers of international students coming to the United States for secondary education with the intention of remaining in the country for postsecondary studies (Farrugia, 2014). That report found that about two-thirds of the 73,000 international secondary students in Fall 2013 had F-1 visas, indicating that they were directly enrolled in a U.S. high school rather than through a cultural exchange program. This trend was

particularly evident in the private school sector, although both private and public schools enrolled international students.

A 2017 update of this report showed that international secondary student numbers more than tripled from 2004 to 2016. Of the 81,981 international students enrolled in U.S. high schools in 2016, the vast majority (72%) were directly enrolled on an F-1 visa, indicating their intent to earn a high school diploma. Because of this, more and more high schools are hosting international students. The number of U.S. schools enrolling international students grew from 2,300 in 2013 to 2,800 in 2016, showing a 26% growth in host schools (Farrugia, 2017). This phenomenon is real and increasing in suburban, upscale areas of Southern California (Park-Stowe, 2003), and Los Angeles suburbs such as the San Gabriel Valley, home to one of the world's largest Chinese diasporas, are particularly popular. One of the school sites (Site E) in this study is located in this particular area.

Private high schools are the most active sector for hosting international secondary students. Public schools' motivations for enrolling international students vary. Some public schools engage in international exchange programs to provide cross-cultural learning for their U.S. students, while some small or rural public school districts faced with declining local student numbers have begun international programs as a way to boost enrollment (Toppe, 2014). Another site (Site B) included in this study is a public unified school district that started its international student program in the school year of 2014 to diversify its student population and increase enrollment. This school district accepts international high school students from all over the world. Most of their international students are from China, while some are from European countries like France, Switzerland, Italy, and Norway.

Most of the Chinese students coming to U.S. high schools intend to obtain a California high school diploma and go to a university here in the United States, while the European international students are primarily interested in the cultural experience and improving their conversational English skills. Almost all European international students return to their countries of origin after a semester or a year. This is similar to the experience of another site (Site C) included in this study, also a public school district, that started their international student program ten years ago. All of the international

students attending sites B and C are assigned to a common counselor at their high school. The support services provided to the international students at these two school districts are determined by each school site's counselor and principal. This poses a problem since, according to Park-Stowe (2003), schools are often unequipped to provide necessary assistance and counseling, either due to language barriers, limited information on these students, or their caregivers' having limited information about them because most international students arrive in the United States as accompanied minors. In fact, various authors have referred to this group as "parachute kids" (Park-Stowe, 2003; C. Wu, 2016; M. Zhou, 1998).

Parachute kids are the fastest growing segment of the international student population in the United States (Cho, 2007; Farrugia, 2014; H. Zhang, 2012). These kids are accompanied by their parents for a short period of time. The parents then return to their country of origin, leaving students to relatives or caregivers. Sometimes, these international students even arrive at the United States without their parents and are only assisted by the agencies that brought them here to find a family who will take care of them while they are here.

At almost all of the sites included in this study, one person in the student services department is in charge of marketing, recruiting, and processing the paperwork of their international students. During the interview and selection process, this person will use a video interview, using either Zoom, Skype, WeChat, Facetime, or Google Meets, to make an informal assessment of the potential student's language skills. However, none of the school sites require a minimum score in a language, psychological, or IQ test for admission. Once students get to the United States, they are required to take the California English Language Development Test exam to officially determine their language skills and class placement. The door of admission for these school sites is not wide open to any and all international student wanting to come in, but at the same time, the system is not very selective. Their recruitment criteria are minimal and not standardized. This has resulted in some international students completely failing the program and returning home.

No psychological, social-emotional, or personality tests are included in the selection process, which has resulted in adjustment problems for students who are not very outgoing and sociable. Ying and Han (2006) found that extraversion, which involves the tendency to seek out others, was related to better psychological adjustment. Matsumoto et al. (2003) found that openness, which involves welcoming new experiences, was associated with better psychological adjustment and lower acculturative stress. The lack of psychological or personality screening is a big issue since almost all international students admitted to the schools included in this study (according to the statements of the persons in charge) went through an emotional rollercoaster during the first few days of their arrival to the United States. First, they are excited because everything is new and wonderful. Then, after a few weeks, especially when the school year starts, these students realize that they are expected to perform and deliver just like every other student on campus. This is when they realize the pressure and the stress of being away from home without their usual support system in a different country with different cultures, practices, and language. It must not be overlooked that multiple studies have revealed that international students face challenges as they pursue education outside of their home countries, including unfamiliar foods, financial problems, balancing work and study schedules, new learning styles, linguistic and cultural adjustments, and personal barriers. The series of transitional difficulties can range from daily life to cultural adaptation (H. Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015).

Another problem I observed in the international student programs of high schools that I reached out to prior to selecting the sites of my study is the lack of vertical alignment and communication among the district office or archdiocese head office (for private schools), the school sites accepting these international students, and the persons in charge of the programs. As a matter of fact, one of the obstacles I faced was finding the right person to talk to who would be able to answer my questions. Most individuals in charge of the international student program, whether a teacher on special assignment (TOSA), international student coordinator, or the program director, shared with me that their primary function is to advertise, recruit, screen, help with the visa process, and welcome the international students to the school sites or school district. Once these students are

placed in a high school, it is up to the counselors and the school principals to determine what support services are provided to them. As a matter of fact, smaller private high schools, like Site E, rely on outside sources or agencies to provide support for these international students because they don't have them on campus. Unfortunately, the history of international student programs in the United States and their characteristics have been marked by a lack of clarity in terms of labeling and elements of importance (Lopes, 1997; Underwood & Bruner, 1990). In addition, this phenomenon is made more complex because it is not clear who these students are and what they need to be successful.

The wave of international students coming to the United States will continue and they will challenge our high schools and postsecondary schools to evolve and adapt to their needs. There is no doubt that globalization has changed the world of education. Not only are more and more of our students coming from international backgrounds, requiring educational leaders to become competent in cross-cultural awareness and practice, but globalization requires that those we teach understand cultural differences as well.

On the positive side, these high school international students can also provide opportunities for American students, faculty, and U.S. society to experience different languages, cultures, and traditions (H. Wu et al., 2015). As one's experience of cultural difference becomes more complex and sophisticated, one's potential competence in intercultural relationships increases (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). More importantly, as individuals are exposed to diverse cultures, they have multiple opportunities to compare and construct a more diverse worldview.

As more and more international students are coming into U.S. high schools and postsecondary institutions, our establishments must be ready to meet their unique needs. In his 2014 study focused on two-year colleges and four-year universities in Southern California, Hwang stressed the importance of balancing the desire to increase the number of international students with the need to maintain the quality of international students who are admitted. If this balance is not achieved, it could divide staff or strain resources and destroy the program on campus. This would be true of any high

school international student program. Whether a private or a public institution is offering an international student program to improve enrollment numbers or to create an opportunity for students to have global or cross-cultural exposure, selection processes need to improve to identify the candidates who have higher chances of succeeding in U.S. schools.

Better support services need to be provided to these international students because they are facing higher than normal levels of academic and social-emotional stress when compared to local students. Student adjustments into a new culture are very challenging and even magnified when the students in need of support are international students because of the huge difference between the U.S. school system and the schools in their home countries. Additionally, international students might experience difficulty forming new support networks because of differences in cultural or social backgrounds (Mori, 2000). In her work, Ye (2006b) specified that among all international students studying in the United States, Asian international students might need to put greater efforts into the adaptation process due to larger cultural distance.

Finally, we need to improve or change our admission policies for international students since those policies vary widely across higher education institutions (Nicola, 2017). This wide array of admission policies can be confusing for international students and their high school counselors, many of whom report feeling underprepared to address the unique needs of their international students during the college application process. Cross-training and collaboration among admissions team members focused on international and domestic admissions are needed to ensure that all students receive the information they need from the admissions staff they encounter during school visits and college fairs (Levinson, 2017).

Problem Statement

The problem this study seeks to address is the lack of effective social-emotional and academic screening and support services provided to high school international students (pre and post selection) so that they are successful on U.S. high school campuses. A number of guides have been published that discuss the management of these populations in secondary schools (National

Association for Foreign Student Affairs, 1998; National Association of Independent Schools, 1980),

but little appears in the literature that underscores which program characteristics actually help,

especially in preparing them for college, which is the main goal for most Asian high school

international students. Information concerning these standards is rather scant (Picciani, 2000).

English language proficiency is a major factor that determines an international student's

success in a U.S. high school, yet no baseline Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score

or level of English language proficiency has been required by the high schools that are accepting

these students, including the sites mentioned in this study. Also, most of our high schools have

English language development (ELD) programs that can potentially help language learners, such as

international students, acquire language acquisition and proficiency, but according to Cummins

(2008) it takes about two years for basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) or conversational

language to develop, and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) could take an additional

five to seven years. This poses a problem because these international students are only in our high

schools for a short period of time. As a matter of fact, they are only allowed to stay in a public high

school for 12 months under an F1 visa. In other cases, as mentioned by the program directors or

TOSAs from the sites of this study, international students come to the United States with an intention

to accomplish their A-G requirements so they can apply to our prestigious four-year universities and

they might oppose being placed in ELD classes or waive their language support classes. In addition,

more attention to the personality and social-emotional profiles of international student applicants,

should be paid during the screening process prior to selection so that more social-emotional support

can be provided once they are studying here in the United States. These international students are

unique not only because of their cultural backgrounds but also because of the social-emotional

adjustments they are going through as they navigate and adjust to our school communities and

school system (H. Wu et al., 2015).

All U.S. high schools have an established counseling department, but according to Mori's

research (2000), international students underutilize the counseling services not because they don't

need it but because they don't know how to navigate the system to access it or they have a different perception of what it means to be seeking help from the counselors or going to the counseling department. This is a huge problem that needs to be addressed proactively and deliberately, especially for an international student who is finding it hard to adjust socially and emotionally but refuses to open up or does not know how to navigate our system.

The increase in international students in U.S. secondary schools indicates that students continue to expand their pathways for accessing U.S. higher education. The steady growth of diploma-seeking international students in high schools is beginning to shift the landscape of international student recruitment for U.S. colleges and universities (Farrugia, 2017). In spite of these facts, Ching, Renes, McMurrow, Simpson, and Strange (2017) noted that there is substantial research on Chinese *immigrant* students in the United States but a limited number of research articles on *international* students. The distinction between immigrant and international students is critical. According to Ye (2006a), international students are defined as a special group who live in a foreign country pursuing an educational goal, but unlike immigrants, the majority of international students plan to go back home after they finish their degree.

In addition to this gap in the literature, there is very limited research on high school international students because most of the research out there is about postsecondary international students. There is a paucity of research exploring the international students' experience beyond the struggles reported in the literature (Moores & Popadiuk, 2011). The fact of the matter is that most of these international students are coming into California. Therefore, as our schools' cultural diversity increases, we should be able to provide them with the support that they need most to adjust to our school system successfully. Failure to guarantee this can strain resources and create a division in our schools. Academic and social emotional supports need to be adjusted so that they are culturally sensitive. Counseling services need to be more proactive, and language acquisition programs need to meet the needs of international students considering their desires to accomplish the A-G

requirements. This could potentially mean developing a pre- and postorientation program to improve the quality of international students admitted and maintain high retention and success rates.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to identify the challenges faced by high school international students, both in their academic endeavors and social-emotional adjustments while in the United States. The phenomena being observed here are the experiences of high school international students during their first year of study in the United States. By understanding the adjustments faced by international students and having a better understanding of their challenges, faculty and staff members can effectively offer supportive campus resources and improve preselection and screening services so that they can be successful academically and socially.

Since international students in American schools are increasing in number, their adjustment issues and concerns should be identified and effectively addressed. In addition, understanding international students' challenges and coming up with solutions or support will help not only the international students but domestic students as well because the recent demand for internationalization and globalization has increased a cross-border student mobility around the world (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

Research Questions

In this study I have posed the following research questions:

1. How are high school international students experiencing and adjusting to the academic and social-emotional difficulties of their first year of study in the United States?

2. What types of academic and social-emotional school supports are most helpful to high school international students as they adjust to U.S. high schools?

Significance of the Study

This research is important and will make a significant contribution to educational leadership because it will help teachers, school leaders, international program coordinators and TOSAs, district

and archdiocese administrators, and school board members understand that different international students from different parts of the world react and adapt in unique ways to the different sojourning stressors that they will experience during their stay here. In addition, the knowledge gained from this study might influence schools, school districts, and archdiocese offices to incorporate accommodations and support for the growing population of international students into their administrative regulations and board policies. This study can also help bridge the gap or make the transition easier for international students to go from high school to college if they are planning to stay here in the country for their postsecondary education.

Private and public high schools who are interested in increasing their international student population for financial reasons and for increasing diversity on their campuses can definitely benefit from this research as well. American students who are planning to study abroad can also learn from this research and become better prepared for their own period of adjustment in another host country. Increasing the profile of international students can then improve the understanding of cross-cultural communication for host institutions here in the United States. As a result, opportunities for international cooperation between different institutions from different countries may also increase.

According to Lillyman and Bennett (2014) and Perry (2016), there are benefits to institutions hosting international students. For the host institution, financial gain is one benefit. Most international student funding comes from personal and family sources or other sources outside of the United States (H. Wu et al., 2015). Other benefits include an increased profile and exposure of a school or institution among international students, which can improve the understanding of cross-cultural communication for the host institution. A large population of international students may broaden the international student program and services of a school. It can also increase opportunities for international cooperation between different institutions from different countries. H. Wu et al. (2015) also state that it is critical to embrace international students on U.S. campuses because their contributions have positively influenced the student population on so many different

levels. These levels that are influenced include academic prestige, cultural exchange, and financial revenue.

Another area that can be improved or changed as a result of this study is the admission policy for international students as they transition from high school to postsecondary education here in the United States (should they choose to apply) since admissions policies for international high school students vary widely across higher education institutions (Nicola, 2017).

Scope of the Study

This study focused on high school international students in the United States who have been studying (in private or public schools) in the country for one year. National and international data will be discussed in the literature review, but only students from California's Orange County, San Bernardino County, and Los Angeles County schools were used as this study's sample population. Personal interviews were conducted. As results were collected, disaggregated and analyzed, caution about generalizing results as representative of every international student in the country were exercised and maintained.

Assumptions of the Study

High school international students are coming to the United States to get cultural exposure or a U.S. high school diploma that will improve their chances of being admitted to prestigious universities in their home country, or of having a better chance of being accepted by our country's postsecondary institutions and universities. I am therefore assuming that all high school international students have a goal of adjusting and doing well and succeeding academically and socioemotionally in their respective U.S. high schools. I am also assuming that all U.S. high schools want these international students to succeed and are therefore looking for ways to support them more effectively.

Additionally, it is assumed that all interviewees who are in the field of high school international education gave an honest and reflective answer during the interview and discussion process. Finally, it is assumed that all participants of this study willingly volunteered their time and were cooperative because they wanted to benefit from the outcome of this and similar studies.

Study Delimitations

I delimited this study to high school international students only because of the limited research about them and how unique their needs are. Delimiting my subjects to high school international students also allowed me to focus on the dynamics and resources of high school campuses and school districts or school archdioceses. This delimitation also paved the path for high school counselors and college admission officers to communicate more frequently and methodically.

At present, admission policies for international students vary significantly from university to university, and high school counselors are finding it hard to navigate and standardize their practices to help international students. I also delimited my study to the high school international students of Orange County, San Bernardino County and Los Angeles County in California. This geographical area was chosen for convenience, proximity, and availability. This delimitation should prevent readers from making sweeping generalizations regarding every finding about international students in the United States. Readers must be reminded that every state, every school district or archdiocese, and every school site is unique.

A final delimitation was that the data for this study was collected from August to November of 2020 to meet the timeline designed for this dissertation. I strongly feel that this study is stronger because of these delimitations.

Study Limitations

This study was limited by the population from which participants were selected. Every attempt was made to make sure that a diverse group of professionals primarily working with high school international students from different sites (private and public), different levels (site based, district office, or archdiocesan main office), and from different counties (Orange, San Bernardino, Los Angeles) were selected. The sample population's job titles may vary, but they are all directly involved in dealing with international students. However, I had no control over what type of international students (their country of origin, language spoken, age, gender, socioeconomic status, psychological

or emotional profile, etc.) are enrolled in the schools chosen as the setting, nor how many of them are studying in each school site.

Another limitation of this study was the length of time I to interview and do follow-up interviews with the selected samples after all of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements were met. The length of time was determined by the doctoral program and when the final version of the dissertation was due. In order to address this limitation, all efforts were made to accommodate interview times and location preferences. It must be noted that the data was collected through phone interviews due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Definitions of Key Terms

Cross-cultural adjustment. Cross-cultural adjustment is experienced by individuals who have to go through the stages of living within an unfamiliar culture and environment and learning new organizational procedures.

Cultural distance. Cultural distance describes the differences between a person's home country and the host country. The more differences there are in language, practices, and laws, the greater the distance.

Culture shock. This term is used to denote the tension, emotional and/or physical, that manifests itself as a result of a person's immersion in a new culture.

English as a second language (ESL). This is a program of study, often with several levels of proficiency, designed to improve the English skills of nonnative speakers of English in hopes of their achieving fluency.

F-1 Visa. This visa allows a high school student to be directly enrolled in a U.S. high school with the intention of obtaining a U.S. high school diploma. Students with an F-1 Visa enrolled in a public school can only be in that high school for one school year. Students who choose to enroll in a private school can stay longer.

International students. International students include those who are "nonimmigrant" visitors who come to the United States temporarily to take classes and/or get a high school diploma. In this

study, the term also refers to high school students who are studying in the United States for two years or less, either as diploma-seeking candidates (F-1) or through an exchange student program (J-1).

J-1 Visa. This visa allows a high school student to be enrolled in a U.S. high school as a cultural exchange program student. These students are not allowed to get a U.S. high school diploma, and they are normally only allowed to stay in the United States for a short period of time and must return to their home country after the visa expires.

Limited English proficiency (LEP). The term is applied to international students and/or American students who were not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English and have not met the language proficiency standards test.

Parachute kids. This is applied to minor students from different parts of the world who are initially accompanied by their parents who then return to the country of origin, leaving the students to relatives or paid caregivers here in the United States. Sometimes, these students even arrive at the United States without their parents and are only assisted by the agencies that brought them here to find a host family who will take care of them while they are in the United States.

Sojourning student. A sojourning student is one who has moved from their country of birth to a different country to study and who has to make the cultural adjustment necessary to survive in a new culture and environment.

Stress. Stress is a psychological reaction to a situation that causes a negative emotional effect when one appraises the situation as threatening or otherwise demanding but does not have an appropriate coping response.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The TOEFL is one of the standardized tests commonly used by colleges and universities to determine admission eligibility of international students.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 provided a context for the changing demographics of our high school student population due to the effects of globalization. Then, I defined the problem and purpose of this study. I

further discussed the significance and scope of the study and provided definitions for key terms.

Chapter 2 presents a theoretical framework and the conceptual framework as well as my critical

review of the literature pertaining to the research question. Chapter 3 contains the research design,

including data collection and analysis methods. Chapter 4 presents the study's findings, and in

Chapter 5, I discuss conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations for policy and practice.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The number of high school international students coming to our schools will continue to increase as globalization changes the dynamics of student mobility. Unless teachers, counselors, and school leaders address students' unique needs and challenges, our host high schools will not be able to provide them with adequate and appropriate support. The problem this study seeks to address is the lack of effective social-emotional and academic screening and support services provided to high school international students (pre and post selection) so that they are successful in U.S. high school campuses. The limited literature on this topic focuses on their struggles but fails to address the social-emotional support and the academic support that they need to successfully adjust and adapt to our high school campuses.

The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges faced by high school international students, both in their academic endeavors and their social-emotional adjustments while in the United States so that school leaders, teachers, counselors, international program coordinators or TOSAs, and admission specialists can provide them with appropriate and adequate support in these areas. This study also explored the types of academic support that international students find most helpful. This information will help in the development and design of the academic support programs offered to these unique groups of students so that our high schools will continue to become globally competitive.

At the beginning of this chapter, I review the historical and theoretical foundations that guide this study. I then provide an extensive review of related scholarly empirical literature. The last section will show the conceptual framework that this study is founded on and conclude with a summary of the chapter.

Historical and Theoretical Foundations

This section will present the historical overview of the enrollment trends of international students in the United States, followed by the theoretical foundation that supports this study.

Historical Foundation

The history of secondary student mobility dates back to the 1920s, when the first youth exchanges were begun by several Rotary Clubs in Europe (Page, 2013). Traditionally, most of these secondary students were engaging in exchange programs and some were enrolling in boarding schools outside of their home countries. Recently however, these international secondary students are deciding to go to another country with the intention of also studying there for their postsecondary education to position themselves to become more globally aware and competitive.

In fall 2016, there were 81,981 international students enrolled in U.S. high schools, a substantial increase from 73,019 in 2013. This phenomenon is driven by the fact that families of international students believe that a U.S. educational experience at the secondary level will make their children more competitive applicants to American colleges and universities should they choose to stay in the United States for their postsecondary education (Farrugia, 2017). This trend resulted in more U.S. high schools becoming active hosts of international students. The number of U.S. schools enrolling international students grew from 2,300 in 2013 to 2,800 in 2016, a 26% growth in host schools. This increase, both in the private and public sector, has sparked a wave of innovative high school models competing for these students. As an example, some high schools have worked in collaboration with local colleges and universities to create formalized pathways or dual enrollment programs for international students to bridge secondary and postsecondary study in the United States (Redden, 2016). These expanding models help widen the opportunities for international students to receive a U.S. high school education that provides a clear pathway to U.S. higher education.

Private high schools are the most active sector for international secondary student mobility: Just over 94% of F-1 diploma-seeking students enroll in private high schools. Public schools are also accepting international students, and their motivations vary. Some public schools engage in international exchange programs to provide cross-cultural learning for their U.S. students, while some small or rural public school districts, faced with declining local student numbers, have begun international programs as a way to boost enrollment (Toppe, 2014). Because federal student visa

policies allow international students to study in a public school for only one year, some of them seek to transfer to a private school after that time frame. Other international students come to a public school during their senior year in high school and then apply to a college or university for their postsecondary education the following year. The states of California, New York, and Texas are the top three sites hosting international students (for both F-1 and J-1 Visa holders) at the secondary and postsecondary levels. This is a function of both their large education sectors and the international engagement of their educational institutions. The other states hosting large numbers of J-1 exchange students are Michigan, Oregon, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Ohio, Washington, Indiana, and Illinois (Farrugia, 2017).

China, South Korea, Vietnam, Mexico, Japan, and Canada are the top six sending countries of diploma-seeking secondary students in the United States. Together these countries make up 78% of international high school students holding an F-1 Visa. China alone accounts for 58% of international secondary students in the United States. China has aggressively promoted modernization through international scholarly and technological exchanges since the late 1970s. The number of Chinese students coming to the United States soared from nearly zero at the beginning of 1978 to a total of approximately 20,030 by 1988. This figure doubled by 1993, and tripled by 2003 (Institute of International Education, 2006). In 2018, the SEVP website updated these numbers and Table 1 shows the top five countries of origin for K-12 international students for the 2018 school year.

This poses a threat to our school systems if not addressed appropriately since Chinese students are also one of the international groups who experience greater challenges adapting to the American educational system (Y. Yeh, 2000). These two countries have been identified as having maximum cultural distance (Samovar & Porter, 1991). Given that Chinese international students represent the largest number of international students in the United States, and that they encounter a culture very different from their own, it is worth developing a deeper understanding of how these students cope with such stress (Yan & Berliner, 2011).

Table 1. Top Five Countries of Origin for K-12 International Students (2018 School Year)

Country of origin	Number of international K-12 students in the U.S.[a]	Percentage of all international K-12 students in the U.S.
China	42,122	49.70
South Korea	7,241	8.60
Vietnam	6,038	7.10
Mexico	2,756	3.30
Brazil	2,285	2.70

[a] Numbers represent K-12 international students holding F1 visas

Adapted from *SEVIS by the numbers: Annual report on international student trends*, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2018. https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/sevisByTheNumbers2018.pdf

Theoretical Foundation

The success of international students is dependent on how well they can adjust to our high schools, both socioemotionally and academically. More importantly, the challenges they face can be remedied quickly and effectively if they are successful in their social and cultural adjustment. As students navigate an unfamiliar high school environment, with fellow students who have culturally different practices, they must not only adapt and adjust but also remove their prejudice. American psychologist Gordon Allport in 1954 introduced the intergroup contact theory. He maintained that contact between groups under optimal conditions could effectively reduce intergroup prejudice (Allport, 1954). After World War II, some social scientists, such as Goodwin Watson (1947) and Robin M. Williams (1947), began to theorize about intergroup contact.

Allport's intergroup contact hypothesis proved the most influential. According to this theory, four key conditions must exist in order for intergroup contact to have positive effects: equal group status within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and the support of authorities, law, or custom. This theory has been derived from early field research into various situations, including the desegregation of the Merchant Marines in 1948, public housing in racially desegregated housing projects in New York City, and public transportation in London (Pettigrew, 1998). Allport's theory provides the theoretical backbone for this research since the four key conditions need to be

established by host institutions in order for international students to feel supported and eventually succeed in their academic and social adjustments in U.S. high schools.

In the intergroup group contact theory, different groups should be able to expect and perceive equal group status in any situation. First, Jackman and Crane (1986) show negative effects from contact with outgroup members of lower status. Second, prejudice reduction through contact requires an active, goal-oriented effort. In other words, students within racially integrated groups or teams should share common goals. The third condition is intergroup cooperation. Attainment of common goals must be an interdependent effort without intergroup competition (Bettencourt, Brewer, Rogers-Croak, & Miller, 1992). Intergroup cooperation in schools provides the strongest evidence (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Desforges et al., 1991; Johnson, Johnson, & Maruyama, 1984; Slavin & Madden, 1979). Finally, support of authorities, law, or custom must be present for intergroup contacts to have positive outcomes. Authority support establishes norms of acceptance. With explicit social sanction, intergroup contact is more readily accepted and has more positive effects. Using this theory, campuses that offer high school international student programs must provide these conditions to have a positive impact and produce successful international students.

Numerous reviews show general support for this theory (Cook, 1984; Jackson, 1993; Patchen, 1999; Pettigrew, 1998). Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) conducted a meta-analysis test of intergroup theory and found that intergroup contact generally relates negatively and significantly to prejudice. Their findings supported Allport's theory. In addition, they found that intergroup contact effects typically generalized beyond participants in the immediate contact situation:

> Not only do attitudes toward the immediate participants usually become more favorable, but so do attitudes toward the entire outgroup, outgroup members in other situations, and even outgroups not involved in the contact. This result enhances the potential of intergroup contact to be a practical, applied means of improving intergroup relations. (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, p. 766)

This suggests that international students must attempt to expose themselves to the new environment and the new culture that they are in to remove their prejudice and also to remove the prejudice of their American peers. The more contact they have with other students from different cultures, the better it is for them. Cultural researchers (Li & Gasser, 2005; Yan & Berliner, 2011, 2013) maintain that contact between international students and members of the host culture is a significant factor in influencing the adjustment experience of international students. These researchers suggest that the more frequent and positive contact international students have with host nationals, the better their adjustment to the new environment will be. This is congruent with the contact theory.

International students experience unique stressors, such as language difficulty and social isolation, that their American counterparts (in general) do not. In order for them to increase or maintain their ability to function or to respond to a new environment they have to make huge adjustments. Young Yun Kim (2001) calls this cross-cultural adjustment. It is also extremely important to recognize that not all international students adjust in the same way (K. Wang et al., 2012). Two of the most dominant models about cross-cultural adjustment, which are used as a theoretical backbone to this study, are the "recuperation model," focused on psychological adjustments or feelings of well-being and satisfaction, and the "learning model," focused on sociocultural adjustments or ability to "fit in" (Reiko, Frazier, & Syed, 2015). In Ward and Kennedy's (1993a) study, the authors argued that "it's important to note that psychological well-being, as assessed by a measurement of mood disturbance, was predicted by life changes, locus of control, homesickness and socio-cultural adaptation. In contrast, socio-cultural adjustment, as measured by a social difficulty index, was dependent on cultural distance, quality of sojourner-host relations, language ability, cultural separation, and psychological adaptation" (p. 142).

In the recuperation model, psychological recovery follows the initial shock of the cross-cultural contact. The most widely known recuperation model is the U-curve theory, which proposes that psychological adjustment, characterized by an initial euphoric state, followed by a period of

adjustment difficulty or culture shock and eventual recovery, follows a U-curve shape (Lysgaand, 1955; Oberg, 1960). The TOSAs, international student counselors, and program directors of the high schools included in this study have described situations with their international students that fits this theory perfectly. According to these professionals, most high school international students come to the United States extremely excited about their new environment, new home, new school, and new living situation. Then, after a few weeks, especially once the school year has started, these same students begin to feel the pressure of the cultural and academic adjustments that they have to make and begin to experience culture shock. Their excitement goes away and the stress of living away from their home, without their support system and friends, starts to change their demeanor. Eventually, some of them are able to adjust and navigate through the school system and the American society just fine. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), psychological adjustment is best understood within a stress and coping framework. Accordingly, they suggest that personality and social support would be the most relevant predictors of psychological adjustment.

The learning model, on the other hand, is described by Furnham and Bochner (1986) as a model where cross-cultural adjustment is a process of social communication and behavioral learning, with adjustment following an ascending learning curve. The most prominent learning model is the sociocultural adjustment model (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1999). In contrast to the U-curve theory, in the learning model, sociocultural adjustment is hypothesized to increase over time and then level off. Longitudinal studies examining the course of sociocultural adjustment find that international students report the lowest level of sociocultural adjustment at the beginning of their stay, while adjustment increases over time, often within six months post arrival (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & Van Horn, 2002). According to the learning model, the strongest predictors of sociocultural adjustment should be social relationships and cultural tools (like language) that facilitate social integration (Searle & Ward, 1990).

Understanding both dominant models is important because international students are adjusting not only socially but psychologically as well. It is also crucial to remember that cross-cultural

adjustment is a complex process, and a single model is likely not going to be enough to describe it (Anderson, 1994; Y. Kim, 2001).

Review of the Scholarly Empirical Literature

This section focuses on the cross-cultural adjustment that international students undergo and what the research says about its effects on them and how they can successfully navigate it. It also discusses the language barrier they encounter and how it affects their academic adjustments as well as social interactions. I then present the significance of social support and how it determines the successful adjustment of international students in their school campuses.

Cross-Cultural Adjustment

Cross-cultural adjustment is a huge challenge for international students, with language barriers, being away from home, and learning a new social structure identified as some of the many sources of their struggles (H. Wu et al., 2015). A correlational study was conducted by Hwang (2014) using a 65-item survey instrument. The population that he investigated comprised 368 international undergraduate students, from three public higher education institutions in Southern California, who had been studying in the United States for at least one academic year. In this study he found that one of the most significant challenges for international students is the need to adjust to the new social setting in the United States (Hwang, 2014). Maladjustment of international students in the host country can negatively impact their psychosocial development and put them at risk (Andrade, 2006; Chen, 1999; J. J. Lee, 2010; Mori, 2000; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002; Ramsay, Jones, & Barker, 2007; Rice, Choi, Zhang, Moreno, & Anderson, 2012; Sandhu, 1995; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994; Wadsworth, Hecht, & Jung, 2008). As Mori (2000) stated, "It is not uncommon, therefore, to find international students who are afflicted with persistent lack or loss of appetite and sleep, low stamina and energy levels, headaches, gastrointestinal problems (Thomas & Althen, 1989), and ulcers" (p. 139). Hwang (2014) cited Mori (2000) and Winkelman (1994) in saying, "The constant strain of processing new cultural, social, and academic information leads to a form of cognitive fatigue and mental exhaustion that can end with international students' burnout" (p. 26).

As most international students arrive here without their parents, necessity dictates that they learn many new skills, such as communicating with their new homestay family, budgeting and allocating their money, and buying and wearing appropriate clothing. They will have to make travel arrangements, open bank accounts, go shopping, and address their personal safety. International students will be facing the challenges of studying things they may not understand, feeling pressure to fit in, developing relationships with teachers, and experiencing concerns about their future (Byrne, Davenport, & Mazanov, 2007). During cross-cultural contact, people perceive themselves in a much broader context, like little fish in bigger ponds. This can lead to anxiety-provoking changes in perceptions of self and identity, especially where identity was previously constructed largely from local social interaction (Picciani, 2000). H. Wu and colleagues (2015) conducted a qualitative case study with 10 participants who were identified as international students from different countries, including China, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and Mexico. This study made it clear that international students cannot escape the cultural shock and change they experience during their studies in the United States These changes occur across physical, biological, cultural, social, and psychological (behavior and mental health status) domains. Undoubtedly, the most arduous challenge for any international student is adjustment to their new environment (Chen, 1999; Li & Gasser, 2005; Wadsworth et al., 2008). According to Hwang (2014),

> Individuals experience stress when they encounter a situation that is perceived as threatening or demanding that exceeds their ability to cope with it (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Lazarus, 1993; Monat & Lazarus, 1991). A situation can also induce stress when individuals feel it is important to respond but are unable to do so. In the case of international students, upon departure from their home country, they immediately lose access to any social support they have that can help them to deal with the demands and challenges of living and functioning in a new environment. With limited cultural knowledge and a social network that needs to be reconstructed, their ability to cope with the stress of adjusting to their situation is compromised. (p. 38)

According to Berry (1997), cross-cultural experience is a major life event that is characterized by stress, demands cognitive appraisal of the situation, and results in affective, behavioral, and cognitive coping responses. According to this study, an individual's psychological health and adjustment are influenced by their acculturation experience, their appraisal of acculturative stressors, and the coping skills used. In addition, the differences between the society of origin and society of settlement play an important role in the level of stress that sojourning students face. Berry further added that stress and coping are influenced by characteristics of the individual and the society (situation). This was supported by Yan and Berliner (2011) who found that Chinese students' stress-coping and adaptation are influenced not only by group-level acculturation factors but also by individual-level factors.

Y. Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, and Todman (2008) cited multiple sources in claiming that adaptation is influenced by a number of variables, including general knowledge about a new culture (Ward & Searle, 1991); length of residence in the host culture (Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima, 1998); language or communication competence (Furnham, 1993); quantity and quality of contact with host nationals (Bochner, 1982); friendship networks (Bochner, McLeod, & Lin, 1977); previous experience abroad (Klineberg & Hull, 1979); cultural distance (Ward & Kennedy, 1993a, 1993b); cultural identity (Ward & Searle,); and cross-cultural training (Deshpande & Viswesvaran, 1992). Adjusting to new and unfamiliar culture is difficult enough when the newcomer is aware of the differences in advance, but even more difficult when the newcomer is unaware and falsely assumes that the new society operates like their home country (Y. Zhou et al., 2008). Additional evidence suggests that international students experience different levels of adjustment based on their country of origin. J. J. Lee (2010) sampled 491 international students at a large public university in the U.S. Southwest and found that international students from predominantly non-White regions experience greater difficulties adjusting socially to life in the United States than do international students from predominantly White regions of the world.

The goal of every high school campus should be to support every student that it serves so they can be successful in either college or the career that they choose to pursue after high school. However, not all students are similar, and the increased population of international students on our high school campuses is beginning to shift the landscape of our schools. International students, in particular, have unique needs. In order for them to be successful, their host high school needs to provide them with the most appropriate layers of support, both academically and socioemotionally. One of their biggest needs is help adjusting to a new culture away from their home country.

Language Barrier

International students encounter the same stressors experienced by American students in addition to the unique stressors impacting sojourners, such as language difficulty and social isolation (Hirai, Frazier, & Syed, 2015). In their 2015 study, H. Wu et al. found that international students had communication and interaction difficulties in the classroom. One student expressed this about a teacher: "I want to participate, but I worried about that he cannot understand me. I guess he might be question that I did not study hard if I can express myself clearly" (p.5).

The language barrier is considered one of the greatest academic issues hindering smooth adjustment for international students (Galloway & Jenkins, 2005). Proficiency in the language of the host country is thought to facilitate social interaction with host nationals, leading to opportunities to obtain cultural knowledge and cultivate support networks that, in turn, increase sociocultural adjustment (Church, 1982; Oberg, 1960). In another study, by Yan and Berliner (2011), where 18 Chinese international students were interviewed, results revealed that newly arrived students expressed anxiety and frustration with regard to the language barriers, academic challenges, and general culture shock. Robertson, Line, Jones, and Thomas (2000) surveyed staff experiences with international students and found that the staff were not empathetic, due to the students' limited language proficiency. In this study, international students were criticized for not taking responsibility for their academic advancement. Liu (2009) used her own experiences as an example to discuss her struggles as an international student in Canada and expressed that her lack of English proficiency

became a barrier to successful participation in the host community, which included understanding her instructors. The results of Liu's study are similar to what Terui (2011) found. Liu (2009) found that international students had to pretend to understand the conversational contents exchanged with native English speakers due to their limited language proficiency. At times, low English proficiency levels resulted in negative impressions by a professor who perceived that the international student was not well-prepared for class. In a study of eight undergraduate international students from China, by Bertram, Poulakis, Elsasser, and Kumar (2014), one participant discussed his difficulties understanding his professors in class, stating, "So, when, when I come here, I cannot understand like, uh, I go to school, I just can understand like 30% of what the professor is talking about" (p.116). Another participant commented on her difficulty understanding American students in daily conversations. Generally, participants noted that their difficulty with the language impeded them in social situations and led to missed social engagement.

Social isolation can be caused by language difficulties and/or cultural differences. International students in Russia who were interviewed in Baklashova and Kazakov's study (2016) reported that when they attended social events they had to deal with different communication patterns, including radical differences between the behavior of people in Russia and those from other countries when receiving gifts. When entering into a new culture, they had to deal with different systems of values, models of communications, signs and symbols, or social communication and patterns of interpersonal relations (Baklashova & Kazakov, 2016).

English language proficiency is understood to be very important for the success of international students, and all post-secondary institutions require international students to take and pass the TOEFL as a requirement for admission. The TOEFL is considered the standard measure of linguistic competency for nonnative university applicants (Abraham, 1990), and preparation for the TOEFL is an important part of preparing for international university study (Abraham, 1990; Haase & Caffrey, 1984). High school campuses all over the United States who accept international students, including the sites for this study, share the same belief. Gradman and Hanania (1991) argue that international

students often rely on their secondary schools to provide instruction in the areas covered by the test: listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. However, although the TOEFL is considered the primary instrument used in admission of international students to postsecondary institutions (Walker & Crandall, 1999), a number of studies over the years have indicated that the scores of the test may indicate language proficiency but may not be indicators of academic success (Des Brisay & Ready, 1991).

Academic Adjustment

It is rather obvious, as Ying (2005) found, that academic challenges are the greatest acculturative stressors for international students since education is the main purpose of their stay here in the United States. These academic challenges are also related to sociocultural adjustment. For example, greater academic self-efficacy was related to better sociocultural adjustment among international students (Poyrazli, Arbona, Nora, McPherson, & Pisecco, 2002). Hirai and collegues (2015), in studying 252 international undergraduate and graduate students at a large public Midwestern university, found that perceived control over academic stress was one of the most important predictors, significantly predicting trajectories for all forms of adjustment, particularly psychological adjustment. Given that international students are in the United States to study, it is not surprising that those who believe they have more control over academic stress tend to have fewer adjustment difficulties (Hirai et al., 2015, p. 449). The authors further found that the many challenges encountered in the cross-cultural transition (e.g., studying in a nonnative language, navigating a new educational system) may temporarily lower positive self-regard.

In contrast, Severiens and Wolff (2008) found that students who feel at home, who are well-connected to fellow students and professors, and who take part in extracurricular activities are more likely to be retained in school and to successfully graduate from the university. C. Yeh and Inose (2003) in their study at a large urban university in the northeastern part of the United States, which included 359 international undergraduate and graduate students from 77 different countries, found that academic adjustment is more challenging for Chinese international students in the United States

(who are the vast majority of international students) because of the vast differences in social and cultural norms. They further found that students from China are often brought up in a traditionally collectivistic culture:

> Because of cultural teachings focused on students' maintaining a respectful and attentive silence in Chinese classrooms, Chinese international students may find it difficult to adjust to the academic and social differences they experience within American classrooms, such as teachers' encouragement of active participation and discussion. (p. 108)

These international students, when referring to study experiences in the United States, commented on how the interactive teaching style in the United States is different from the lecture-based teaching style in China (C. Yeh & Inose, 2003). In addition to this cultural difference, Mori (2000) found that international students underutilize the counseling services, not because they don't need them, but because they don't know how to navigate the system or they have a different perception of what it means to be seeking help from the counselors or going to the counseling service departments (Komiya & Eells, 2001).

C. Wang and Mallinckrodt (2006) also cited the collectivistic nature of Asian society as a reason for the difficulty of adjustment for international students from Asia as they sojourn to Western, individualistic societies, like the United States. This finding and many others like it illustrate the connection between academic stress, psychological well-being, and the social support necessary for international students to successfully adjust to U.S. schools. In addition to the huge cultural distance between the United States and China, C. Wu (2016) found that the majority of Chinese students came to the United States with little or no preparation before attending American secondary schools. Her study was conducted among 51 international high school students (both private and public) originating from 19 cities and 15 provinces in China and Taiwan.

From among the more than four million students who studied abroad in 2012 globally, the United States has consistently recruited the highest number of international students worldwide (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014), proving that an American education is highly sought by

students from around the world. However, acquiring a U.S. secondary education, is not that easy and, according to Ying (2005), academic challenges are the greatest acculturative stressors for international students since education is the main purpose of their stay here in the United States.

Social Support

According to the literature, one of the most important forms of support for international students is social support. Social support has been viewed as a major resource in the stress and coping literature and as a significant factor in predicting psychological adjustment during cross-cultural transitions (Berry, 1997). Literature on the topic of stress and stress coping theories also suggest that social support is an effective buffer against stress (J. S. Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004). Furthermore, empirical studies have shown that various forms of social support can mitigate the acculturative stress levels experienced by international students during the adjustment process (Crocket, Kotzé, & Flintoff, 2007; J. S. Lee et al., 2004; Li & Gasser, 2005; Liu, 2009; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007; Rice et al., 2012; Sandhu, 1995; C. Yeh & Inose, 2003; J. Zhang & Goodson, 2011). In fact, evidence suggests that the lack of a strong social network can lead international students to suffer from depression, loneliness, and feelings of helplessness (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Sandhu, 1995; Sandhu & Asarabi, 1994). Furthermore, the lack of a stable social network can have a significant and negative influence on their psychological well-being, thus prohibiting them from adapting to a new cultural and academic environment (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, Jaakkola, & Reuter, 2006; J. S. Lee et al., 2004; Mori, 2000; Sandhu, 1995; Wadsworth et al., 2008; C. Yeh & Inose, 2003).

Yan and Berliner (2011) in their study of 18 Chinese international students who attended a large public university in the Southwestern United States, with a Chinese international student enrollment of approximately 1,500, representing almost 3% of the total enrollment, found that Chinese students' preferred sources for seeking help were family members and friends. This is the type of social support that they find most helpful. Numerous studies have shown that social support is linked to psychological and physical health outcomes (Aneshensel & Frerichs, 1982; Berkman & Syme,

1979; Billings & Moos, 1982; Henderson, Byrne, & Duncan-Jones, 1981; Holahan & Moos, 1981; House, Robbins, & Metzner, 1982; Blazer, 1982; R. Turner, 1981; A. Williams, Ware, & Donald, 1981). A generalized, beneficial effect of social support could occur because large social networks provide persons with regular positive experiences and a set of stable, socially rewarded roles in the community (Cohen & Wills, 1985). The sense of predictability and stability in one's life situation can improve well-being and self-worth. In the same study by Cohen and Wills it was mentioned that social support can act as a stress buffer, where it may intervene between the stressful event and a stress reaction by attenuating or preventing a stress appraisal response (p. 312). This is proof that social integration into a group influences well-being.

In addition, it has been cited by various authors as a key element in the negotiation of adapting to a new culture (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Mori, 2000; Sakamoto, 2006). Steinglass, Denour, and Shye (1985) argued that the social network is critical to social adjustment, and individuals with larger and more stable social support networks are less likely to experience adjustment difficulties. International students who lose their social support networks upon moving to the United States are more prone to developing difficulties affecting their psychological well-being (Constantine, Anderson, Berkel, Caldwell, & Utsey, 2005; Hayes & Lin, 1994). Mori (2000) noted that international students might experience difficulty forming new support networks because of differences in cultural or social backgrounds. Chinese international students are more susceptible to this according to C. Yeh and Inose (2003) because of the vast differences in social and cultural norms between China and the United States. The sense of predictability and stability in one's life situation can improve well-being and self-worth.

Adjustment is regarded as an active process of managing stress at different systemic levels—both individual and situational. Relevant variables include degree of life change (Lin, Tazuma, & Masuda, 1979), personality factors (Ward & Kennedy, 1992), and situational factors such as social support (Adelman, 1988). One example of social support is host-national support, found by Brein and David (1971) to be the single best predictor of successful adjustment. But Yan and Berliner (2011)

found that family members are the most important resources for students when they are in crisis. They found that when seeking help from others, Chinese international students tend to look first to their family. It is the preferred help resource. Counselors and professional psychologists were the least mentioned resources (Yan & Berliner, 2011). Studies have indicated that students from Western countries have shown more openness towards counseling than Asian or African students (Dadfar & Friedlander, 1982; Masuda et al., 2005; Suk et al, 2010; Yakushko, Davidson, & Sanford-Martens, 2008).

Another type of social support is provided by local students. Relationships with Americans are thought to be particularly important for international students because such relationships enhance cultural skills (Church, 1982) and may also offer opportunities to seek social support in times of distress. A similar study also found that among social factors, social connectedness with Americans significantly predicted both psychological distress and sociocultural adjustment trajectories. International students may feel particularly comfortable living in a new environment when they feel welcomed and included by Americans, and this may facilitate cultural learning (Hirai et al., 2015). International students are often very lonely in their new environment. Such loneliness is a result of not only the lack of familiar friends and social networks but also the lack of familiar cultural and/or linguistic environments (Adelman, 1988; McClure 2007; Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008; Y. Zhou et al., 2008; Ip, Chui, & Johnson, 2009). Both social support and social connectedness are therefore very important in ensuring that international students succeed in their new environment. The number of friends an international student has in the new environment is therefore a major factor in their success (Bochner et al., 1977; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Sam, 2001). This is true for the international students traveling not only to the United States but everywhere. According to Lindenberg (2015), when unaccompanied adolescents arrive in Ontario, Canada, many of them struggle to make social contacts. Extracurricular activities offer opportunities for unaccompanied adolescents who need to spend social time with peers. Schools can help students get involved in social activities around the school such as sporting teams, bands, and clubs.

As in Canada, the schools and the curricula in the United States differ from place to place. This creates challenges for international students who need to adjust to new curricula, textbooks, bell schedules, classroom norms, and rules (Stern, 2009). They also have to adjust to a new peer group. When school systems are not responsive to international students, they encounter more difficulties.

Conceptual Framework

Globalization has changed student mobility worldwide. More and more international students are coming into our private and public high schools. When the right support systems are in place, these international students can improve U.S. high schools' global competitiveness and increase our students' and teachers' multicultural awareness, . Failing to provide necessary supports can challenge students to the point of creating a divided campus. Recruiting international students is only the beginning of creating a multicultural campus. Understanding their challenges and needs is paramount and must be dynamic.

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) for this study is grounded in the belief that when international students, who have unique needs and challenges, are given the right social-emotional, academic, and psychological supports, and not just one or the other, they will become successful in our high school campuses and make our high schools more globally competitive. Along with that, the host high schools should also have adequate and appropriate support programs to help them adjust and adapt to their new environment. This includes the establishment of policies and practices that are intentionally developed to prepare international students before arrival to the United States, welcome high school international students, and make their transition smoother. These policies and practices will then dictate where the financial and human resources will be focused. Failure to provide the immediate and appropriate support system will not only cause these international students to be unsuccessful in our campuses, but it can also divide the school campus or cause its employees and all stakeholders to be frustrated. The success of these international students is our schools' success as well.

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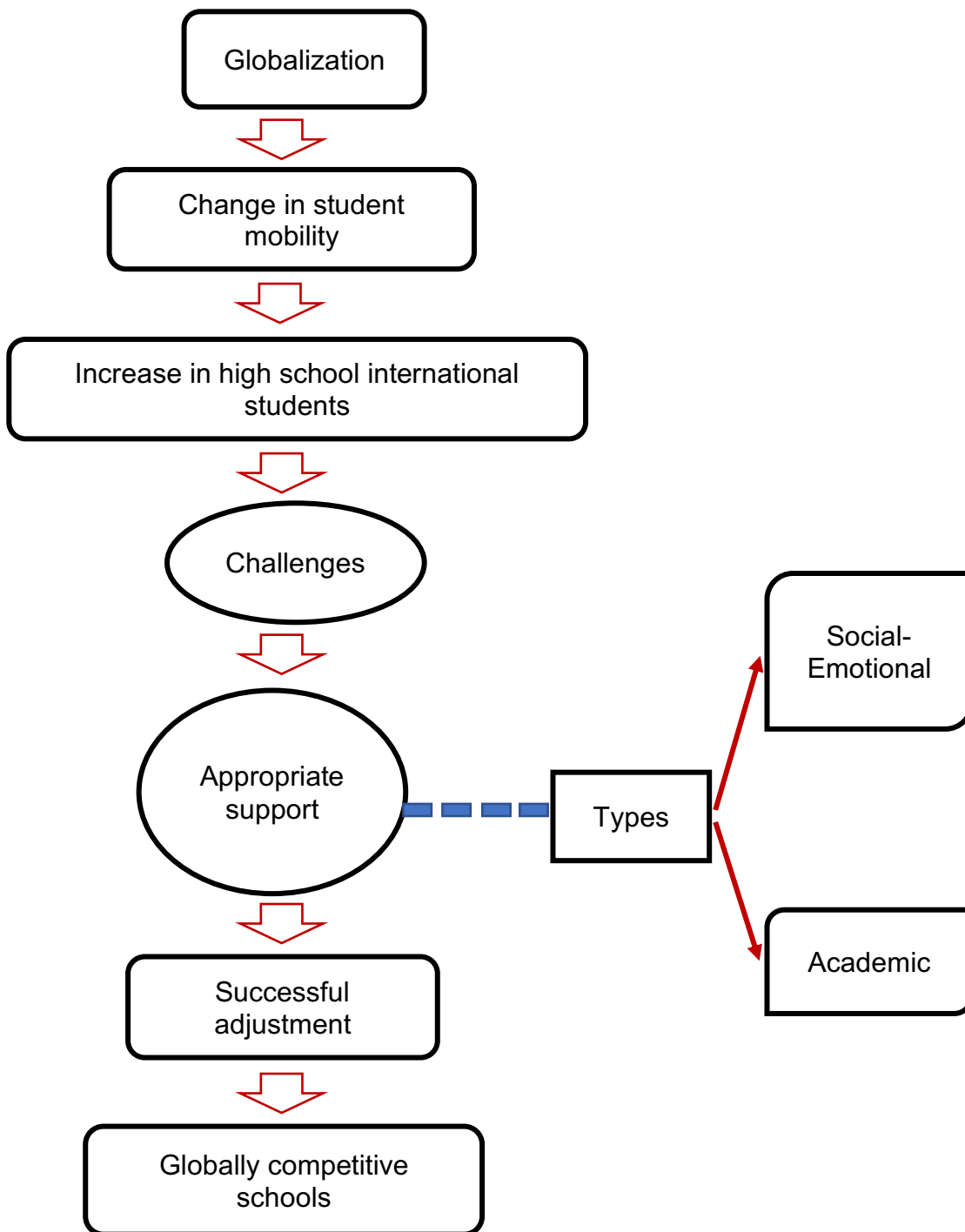
Figure 1. Types of support for international high school students.

Chapter Summary

More and more international students will continue to come to U.S. high schools because globalization has changed the dynamics of student mobility. Some of these students will go back to their country of origin after obtaining their U.S. high school diploma or when their visa expires, while others will continue to stay here to pursue their post-secondary education in our local colleges and

universities. How these international students adjust in our high school campuses and unique educational system will determine if they are successful in their endeavors or not. What our high schools do to support them is paramount.

There is limited literature on high school international students here in the United States, and even less literature on social and emotional supports that they need in order to adjust and navigate through our school systems effectively and successfully. This study will help address that gap. Findings from this study will shed light on the unique social and emotional needs that these high school international students have. In effect, it will guide school administrators, leaders, counselors, and support providers on how to address their unique needs and what types of support should be provided to them.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD OF INQUIRY

As globalization transforms student mobility all around the world, our high school campuses' demographics will continue to change in unique and challenging ways. More and more international students are coming into our private and public high schools to get their secondary diploma or to experience being an exchange student with the intention of either becoming globally competitive students or to enroll in U.S. post-secondary institutions. Because of this radical change, our high school campuses are faced with the challenge of adapting and making sure that the needs of these international students, who come from different regions of the world, bringing with them their different cultures, practices and values, are met and supported.

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to identify the challenges faced by high school international students, both in their academic endeavors and social-emotional adjustments while in the United States. As mentioned in the purpose statement, the phenomena being observed here are the experiences of high school international students during their first year of study in the United States. Understanding in depth the issues of adjustments faced by international students studying in the United States and having a better understanding of their challenges, faculty and staff members can effectively offer supportive campus resources and services so that they can be successful academically and socially. In order to accomplish this purpose, I have posed the following research questions:

1. How are high school international students experiencing and adjusting to the academic and social-emotional difficulties of their first year of study in the United States?

2. What types of academic and social-emotional school supports are most helpful to high school international students as they adjust to U.S. high schools?

In this chapter, I will first present the methodology for this study, including discussion of why this methodology is best suited to answer my research questions. I will also include a discussion of the philosophical foundation and assumptions of my study, along with their strengths and

weaknesses. Next, I will provide a description of the research design within my selected

methodological approach. After the research design, I will detail the specific research methods,

which include the steps I will take to apply the research design into my study. This description

includes information about the setting; sample; data collection and management, including

instrumentation and procedure; and data analysis, including validity/trustworthiness and the role of

the researcher. I will conclude with a chapter summary.

Qualitative Research

This study utilized a qualitative approach to answering the research questions posed.

Qualitative research is preferred because, according to Creswell (2013), when this method is

employed the researcher can empower the subjects of the research to share their stories, to hear

their voices, and to minimize the power relationships that exist between a researcher and the

participants in a study. In addition, Yin (2011) states, "qualitative research is the act of studying the

meaning of people's lives, under real-world conditions to represent the views and perspectives of the

people in a study" (pp. 7-8). This statement captures the main objective of this study. The advantage

of a qualitative methodology is that it can reveal life experiences of people and how they think and act

regarding a specific phenomenon. Yin (2011) further asserts that "qualitative study covers the

contextual conditions within which people live and contribute insights into existing or emerging

concepts that may help to explain human social behavior; and strives to use multiple sources of

evidence rather than relying on a single source alone" (p. 8).

The paradigm that was used when conducting the study was that of a naturalist-

constructionist. Unlike positivists, who claim that there is a single, objective reality that can be

observed and measured without bias, naturalists emphasize that all meaning is sifted through

people's prior experience and biases. They believe that people build or construct their understanding

of the external world (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

One limitation of a qualitative study is the limited capacity for participants to accurately reflect

on their own experiences. Also, a qualitative research study can be rendered nearly worthless if the

researchers fail to disclose their biases, predispositions, and connections to the topic of the study (McEwan & McEwan, 2003). However, Rubin and Rubin (2012) have reasoned that the naturalist-constructionist paradigm in qualitative study accepts that researchers and research subjects make interpretations; therefore, it is neither possible nor desirable for the researcher to eliminate all biases or expectations. Instead, "researchers need to be cautious not to impose their expectations on interviewees and should remain aware of how their expectations affect what they see and hear" (p. 16). Under the naturalist-constructionist paradigm, the fact that interviews or observers reach different conclusions is not considered problematic, since meaning is always contextual and always interpreted.

Naturalistic researchers read the literature very differently, they do not ignore the literature, but they are careful not to allow research that has gone before to overly influence what they look at and how they understand it. Naturalistic researchers, rather than deny that they influence what they are studying, monitor the impact they have. Because these researchers acknowledge that they have influenced the results, they describe their own roles, often write in the first person, and accept the subjectivity of what they report (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

The qualitative methodology of conducting this study, using a naturalist-constructionist paradigm, best fits this study's purpose of understanding in depth the issues of adjustments faced by high school international students studying in the United States and having a better understanding of their challenges. The process of interviewing professional experts in the field of high school international education, listening to their personal experiences and professional reflections on the academic and social-emotional challenges faced by high school international students, instead of just conducting a survey, enabled me to dig deeper into their professional experiences and personal stories to find recurring themes and patterns that can then be the foundation for the development of theories to improve academic and socio-emotional support practices for students. These findings then would be extremely beneficial for educators and support providers to ensure that these international students are given the support that they need to succeed in our high school campuses.

Research Design

The logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions is called the research design (Yin, 2009). This research was a qualitative study that involved interviewing nine professional practitioners in the field of high school international students from nine different locations in Southern California in order to identify and understand the academic and socioemotional challenges that high school international students experience as they adjust into our high school systems. Five of these locations are public institutions and four are private institutions. Because I was attempting to capture, describe, and analyze the common meaning of several international high school students' lived experiences as they adjust to our high school campuses and educational institutions, I conducted a phenomenological study using the naturalist-constructionist paradigm. Naturalists emphasize that all meaning is sifted through people's prior experience and biases. They believe that people build or construct their understanding of the external world. This paradigm fits this phenomenological qualitative study because the basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence (a "grasp of the very nature of the thing"; Van Manen, 1990, p. 177)). My focus was on describing what all interviewees report as common among high school international students adjusting to U.S. high school campuses and what types of support they find most helpful. Hence, I used a semi-structured interview along with the open-ended questions to enable me and the interviewee to discuss and reveal more information and details about the research topic.

This qualitative interview process allowed participants to add more details to a certain answer and gave me the opportunity to explore their answers at deeper levels. Merriam (1998) indicates that a qualitative study paves the way for subjects to expose their experiences of the real-world environment rather than that of a laboratory environment. This enabled me to build a complex, holistic picture, and report detailed views of informants. This research design is most suitable to help me answer the research questions in this study. Figure 2 outlines my research design.
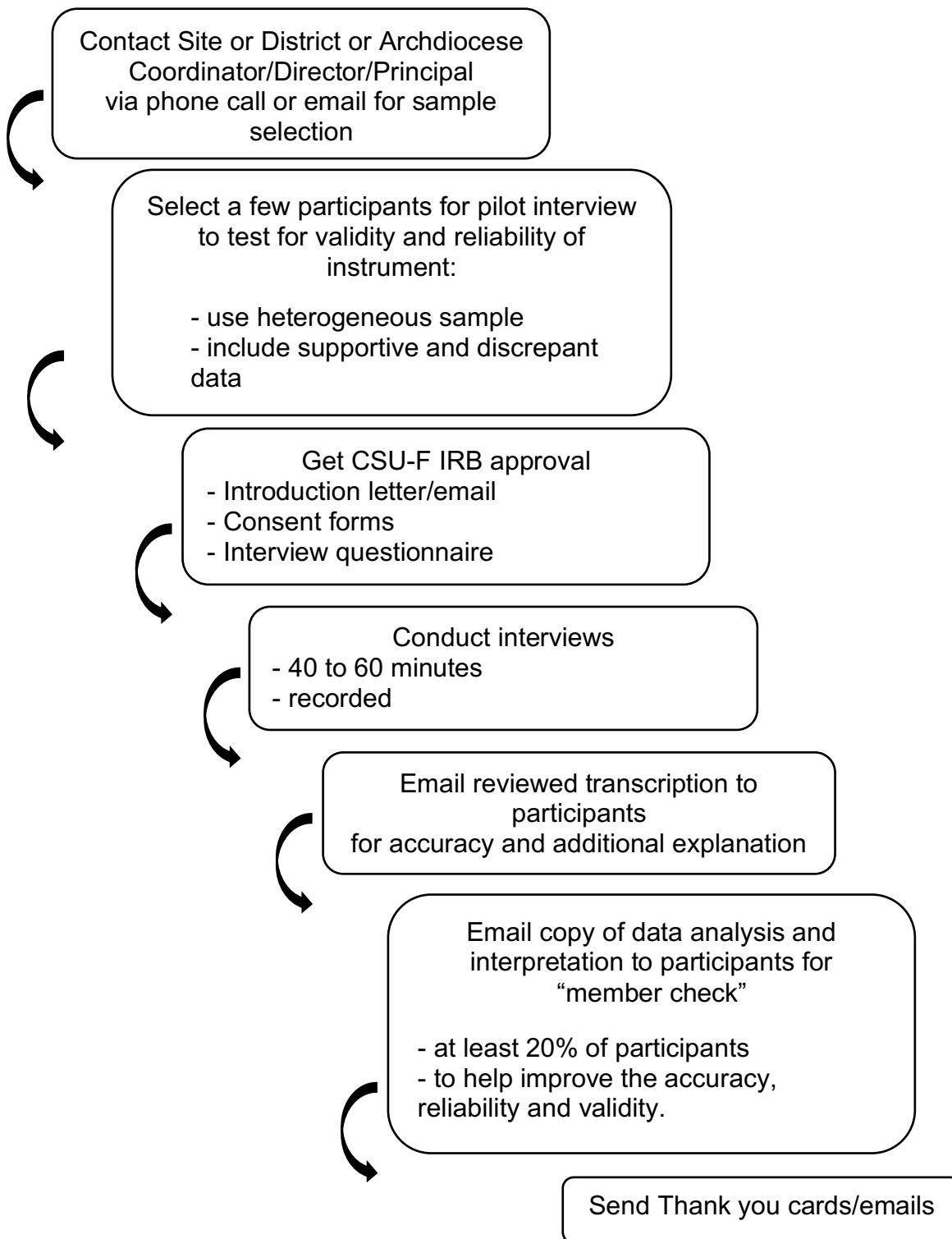
Figure 2. Concept map of the research design.

Research Methods

In this section, I will describe the specific research methods that I utilized to apply the

phenomenological design in this study. Specifically, I will discuss the setting, sample, data collection,

data analysis, and steps taken to ensure validity or trustworthiness.

Setting

      Nine sites were selected as the setting for this study. Five of these sites are public

institutions and four are private. Three institutions are from Orange County, five from LA County, and

one from San Bernardino County. These three counties were selected to gather contrasting and

diverse data on campus culture and dynamics, policies, procedures and practices. The type of

institutions (public or private) was also intentionally selected to explore if it plays a factor into the

types of support international students get and how it affects their adjustment process. The following

is a description of each site's demographics and unique setting as reported in each school's annual

School Accountability Report Card (SARC). Fictitious names will be used to maintain confidentiality.

Site A

      Founded in 1898, this public school district has a student population of approximately 31,000,

making it one of the largest school districts in the state. It oversees eight junior high schools (Grades

7-8), eight high schools (Grades 9-12), and one nonmagnet, secondary selective school. Students

speak 49 different languages in their homes, attend 21 campuses, and come from five feeder

elementary districts. Site A has established 28 career pathways in 12 industries, all designed to lead

to meaningful postsecondary employment. Enrollment in Career Technical Education pathway

courses totals more than 11,000 students.

      The district also has about 600 students enrolled in 17 online courses, from health to

accounting to advanced placement (AP-level) classes. It was the first school district in Orange County

to offer graduates a Seal of Biliteracy on their diplomas. To attain the seal, students must show

mastery of English plus Spanish, Japanese, Mandarin, French, Korean, Vietnamese, or Arabic. The

program recognizes that mastery of two languages is a valuable asset for participation in the diverse

21st-century economy. More than 21,000 students are enrolled in visual and performing arts classes,

more than 9,000 students participate in after-school and extracurricular activities, and more than

6,500 students participate in athletics. Site A enjoys strong relationships with the parent communities

and also builds lasting partnerships with local businesses, public libraries, colleges, and universities.

Site B

This public school district is located in northeast Orange County, California. Student enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year w roughly 24,500. The district's 34 school sites include 20 elementary schools, five middle schools, a K-8 school, four comprehensive high schools, one special education school, one continuation high school, a K-12 home school, and online school. High schools in this district are consistently named to "America's Best High Schools" rankings issued by *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and other news organizations. Staff members have also been honored for their expertise and contributions to education. Recently, one district teacher received and award former First Lady Michelle Obama. The community clearly values its schools. Working and nonworking parents participate in school activities, and the local Parent Teachers Association is one of the largest in the county. The school district dates back to 1874 and has always maintained a rich, historical tradition.

Site C

This public school district in San Bernardino County, California. It was founded in 1860 and now encompasses 88 square miles and serves about 32,000 students from kindergarten up to 12th grade. It serves four high schools, five junior high schools, 21 elementary schools, one continuation school, an adult school, and one charter school. The district is one of 547 school districts in the United States and Canada honored by the College Board with placement on the 5th Annual Advanced Placement (AP) District Honor Roll for increasing access to AP coursework while simultaneously maintaining or increasing the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher on the AP exams.

Site C has thriving performing arts and athletic programs, nationally recognized marching bands, and invigorating parent programs. The district is responsive to the needs of students and families through a wide variety of programs. Before- and after-school care is available for students. The HOPE Family Resource Centers assists with food and clothing, counseling, housing information, tutoring referrals and more. The district provides all students a rigorous and relevant education in a

safe learning environment. Students, parents, families and staff are connected to and engaged with their school to ensure student success, and all students are prepared for college and career beyond graduation.

Site D

This site is a private, coeducational Roman Catholic high school in one of the suburbs of Los Angeles. It is located in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles and is in the heart of the San Fernando Valley. Founded in 1959, the district's goal is to prepare students for their future by providing a quality academic and moral education. The small environment gives teachers, coaches, and administrators availability for one-on-one attention to every student. Site D's graduates are ready not only for college but also for life as effective communicators, technology users, collaborative workers, critical thinkers, problem solvers, and lifelong learners. In short, they're young men and women of character prepared to lead.

Site D prepares students for their future by providing a quality academic and moral education. At this site, the whole goal is to make the school experience inclusive for all students by fortifying their hearts as well as their minds and creating a campus that values every student. It has 575 students from Grades 9 through 12. The student body is made up of five ethnicities: The largest ethnic group is Hispanic (45.6%), followed by Asian (44.5 %), White (6.1 %), Black (3.7 %) and Indian (0.2 %). Annually, approximately 10% of its student population are international students.

Site E

Site E is a private school accredited with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). Originally founded in the city of Pasadena in 1991, it had moved to a new location in 2019. It is unique in many ways and offers a sound education with a global perspective for both American and international students. Many missionary children and international students are part of the student body. Since 2008, Site E has been authorized to issue the form I-20 and has seen its program for international students grow significantly. The student body, while largely local, represents over 20 countries. Many of its highly

qualified teachers have lived overseas. All of its international students stay with their own families or host families. It has a school demographic made up of 65% American students and 35% international students coming from more than 20 countries. The student body is made up of six ethnicities: The largest ethnic group of the 97 students is White (47.4%), this is followed by Asian (29.9 %), Hispanic (10.3 %), Pacific Islander (8.2 %), Black (3.1 %) and students of two or more ethnicities (1.0 %). It is located in the county of Los Angeles and is under the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Its SAT scores are in the 80th percentile and students have received acceptances to nationally ranked universities and colleges such as University of California Santa Barbara, University of Southern California, Chapman University, Biola University, California State University, Loyola Marymount, and Pepperdine. Extracurricular activities include Associated Student Body (ASB), musical theater, chaplaincy, worship band, art club, and dance club. The site has a fantastic athletic program and offers 13 sports teams for high school and junior high girls and boys.

Site F

Opened in 2009, this is the newest high school in the unified school district that it belongs to. It is located in the Northeast corner of Orange County. Total enrollment is 1,835, with an ethnic distribution of 53% White, 23% Asian, 18% Hispanic, 4% mixed ethnicities, and 2% other. High schools in this district are consistently named in "America's Best High Schools" rankings issued by *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and other news organizations, making it a highly desired school district. Today, the district's future looks very prosperous. The school has earned a reputation for excellence, and the community is proud of it. Families proudly state that they moved to this area because of its schools. It has a wide array of high-level honors and AP classes and boasts of their business academy program, MBA application, and culinary/hospitality programs. They also have a German Club and a Japanese Club among many others. The Unified School District that Site F belongs to has an International Student Program for students who want to attend one of their comprehensive public high schools for one academic year. This international student program has

been established for six year now and it has served students from China, France, Switzerland, Italy, and Norway.

Site G

This site is within an archdiocese with more than 250 Catholic schools. The system began in 1903 with 19 parochial schools, five academies, and a total enrollment of 2,895. Today, it is the fourth-largest diocese in the United States in number of Catholic schools and students enrolled. In all, there are a total of 214 Catholic elementary schools and 51 Catholic high schools and over 73,750 students enrolled. Together they comprise one of the three largest school systems in California in either the public or private sector. Ethnic services in a very culturally mixed environment are offered to 72 different groups. Its schools strive for academic excellence and have specific measures by grade and competency that help students excel academically. Most of its high schools accept international students and it graduates around 600 or more students per academic year.

Site H

This site is a private Roman Catholic college preparatory high school in Lancaster, California, affiliated with the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles. It was established in 1963 on the old Antelope Valley Fairgrounds. It has a student population of 612, with the following demographic breakdown: Hispanic (32.2%), White (26.6%), Multiracial (14.1%), African American (13.6%), Asian (7.8%), Pacific Islander (4.7%), Native American (1%). Curriculum is college preparatory, giving special attention to meeting the University of California admissions requirements. Each student is required to attend at least six classes a day, but students who wish can take an extra class before school starts or after school. Site H offers 13 AP classes and many pre-AP and honors courses. As a Catholic high school, it also requires four years of religion classes.

Site I

This high school is located in the Antelope Valley in the city of Lancaster and is part of a rapidly growing school district. Enrollment for Grades 9 through 12 was 3,027 in August of 2019. This enrollment reflects an increase of student population moving into this area partly due to a U.S. Air

Force base nearby. This Air Force base has multiple families from all over the world moving in and out of the area, based on military deployment. The ethnic breakdown of its student body is as follows: Asian (5%), Black (9%), Hispanic (44%), White (33%), Other (9%). It is a comprehensive high school with many programs offered for a wide range of student interests and abilities. Some of its biggest academic programs are English as a Second Language, Honors and International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, Advancement Via Individual Determination, Project Lead The Way, Virtual Academy and Television Academy. The mission of the English learners program at this site is to provide high-quality programs and services to ensure students acquire full proficiency in English rapidly and effectively.

Sample

Professionals working directly in the high school international student field were interviewed. I used a purposive sampling, which, according to Yin (2011), means "to select specific study units in order to have those that will yield the most relevant and plentiful data about the study" (p. 88). Creswell and Poth (2018) have also described this strategy as selecting individuals and sites for the study because they can purposefully inform and provide understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study. To ensure depth and breadth of data and gain a wider perspective and to eliminate possible cultural biases, I selected professionals from various sites, school districts or archdiocese, and from various counties. Creswell and Poth (2018) calls this maximum variation sampling: "This approach is often selected because when a researcher maximizes differences at the beginning of the study, it increases the likelihood that the findings will reflect differences or different perspectives" (p. 158).

Obtaining access to these experts involved several steps, including the inquiry strategy and permissions that needed to be sought from a human subject review board. I contacted either school district and diocesan main offices, school principals, and the international student program coordinators of these sites through phone calls and emails.

Data Collection and Management

In this study, I conducted qualitative research about international students. I used an interview protocol to conduct interviews, and the interviews were recorded. The informed consent forms were presented and explained to all participants. All audio recordings from each interview were kept in a password-protected computer to which I alone have access. I use semistructured and open-ended interview questions. The phone or virtual interviews were 40 to 60 minutes long.

Instrumentation

Prior to collecting data, I designed the interview question protocol. This was done after extensive research about international students' challenges and adjustments into U.S. schools. I drafted my interview protocol and organized it so that it had (a) one opening question to gather personal and professional information and questions to gather site demographics; (b) six introductory questions to gather background information about the international student program at their site; (c) four main questions organized into subtopics about (i) social and emotional supports and challenges, (ii) school or academic support and challenges, and (iii) academic and social-emotional supports that are most effective; and (d) six open-ended questions that addressed suggestions for improvement.

This instrument was designed to identify the challenges that high school international students face as they try to adjust and adapt to our high school campuses, as well as to identify the types of support that are most helpful to their academic and socio-emotional adjustments. The interview process is key to many qualitative research studies because the researcher can elicit special kinds of information through interviews that reflect the ideas of the individuals regarding a special question that might be very helpful and can be neglected through quantitative methods of study (Creswell, 1998).

The interview questions included semi-structured and open-ended questions. It enabled me and each interviewee to discuss and reveal more information and details about the research topic. This makes the interview different from a conversation between two friends or equal partners, as the researcher introduces and controls the topic and discussion. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) have said,

"It is defined as an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena" (p. 3). This gave me the space to allow some participants to add more details to a certain answer. For example, when I asked participants a question, I was able to probe them for more details.

I used a semistructured approach with a combination of broad and focused questions and a lot of follow-up questions that were open-ended. The interview questions were piloted, tested, and then revised. In my interview I made sure to collect and document the following after redacting private or confidential personal information: (a) each interviewee's professional profile information and (b) each school sites' information. My objective for this interview is to answer my research questions:

1.   How are high school international students experiencing and adjusting to the academic and social-emotional difficulties of their first year of study in the United States?

2.   What types of academic and social-emotional school supports are most helpful to high school international students as they adjust to U.S. high schools?

This approach was chosen since some qualitative researchers recommend keeping prestructured designs to a minimum. They consider social processes to be too complex, too relative, too elusive, or too fluid to be approached with explicit conceptual frames or standard instruments. They prefer a more loosely structured, emergent, inductively grounded approach for gathering data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) have pointed out that during an open-ended interview much interpretation occurs along the way. "The person describing his or her 'life world' discovers new relationships and patterns during the interview; the researcher who occasionally summarizes or reflects what has been heard is, in fact, condensing and interpreting the flow of meaning. Data are not being collected but rather co-authored" (pp. 37-38). Qualitative research lives and breathes; concepts are inductively grounded in local meanings. As a researcher I need to avoid researcher impact. "The meanings emerging from the data will have to be tested for their plausibility, their sturdiness, their confirmability—that is, their validity (Miles et al., 2014, pp. 13-14).

Processes were in place to ensure content validity. I selected international students from different parts of the world, from different school districts, and from public and private institutions to eliminate cultural or local biases. The questions did not reflect have philosophies or contextual suggestions that might influence the interviewee's answers. The follow-up questions are also in place to make sure that their answers were explored deeper, and misconceptions or misinterpretations were eliminated.

Piloting the interview protocol beforehand ensured the content was valid. I also made sure to test for reliability. If, and when needed, a follow-up interviews were conducted later. It is important to know that I introduced myself as an educator who came from another part of the world (the Philippines) so that my interviewees could understand that I also experienced some of the challenges and adjustments that international students are currently experiencing. This enabled them to see what my goals as a researcher were and allowed me to build a relationship based on trust. Because interviewees shared their personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings, building a trusting relationship allowed them to express themselves openly, especially if on embarrassing topics.

Procedures

In order to recruit the participants, I contacted either the school district or diocesan main office, the school principal, or the international student program coordinator of each sites through phone calls and emails. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all county restrictions were strictly followed. In addition, California State University, Fullerton, required approval by its IRB for any research involving human services conducted by its students, faculty, or staff, so these protocols were observed. All study participants were given the option to either do a phone interview or an interview using virtual meeting platforms, such as Zoom or Google meeting. Day, time, and location of the interview was dependent on each participant's availability. The goal was to conduct an interview that would allow the interviewees to feel comfortable and not feel restricted or uncomfortable about sharing information. This helped all participants to share their information openly and honestly.

Consent to be interviewed and recorded (audio only) was solicited from interviewees before they participated in the research study. The form, included the title, the purpose of the research study, the reason for the subject's participation in the research study, assurance of confidentiality, and explanation of their rights as research participants. The consent form gave a clear explanation of how the recording will be stored in an offline, secure, external data device that is password protected. The participants were informed that upon completion of the research, all audio recordings would be erased. I also informed the interviewees that pseudonyms and aliases will be used to protect their identities.

The interviews took approximately 40 to 60 minutes. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded. I used Dedoose to organize and code my data in the analysis section. A "thank you" card and email was sent after each interviews was done to express my gratitude and appreciation.

Data Management

The next step was collecting data. I gathered all interview responses and stored them in a password-protected computer that I alone have access to. The email address that was used to gather the google survey responses is a password-protected account that is only accessible by me. All names and identities of the participants and the school sites have been replaced with pseudonyms and aliases to protect their identity and maintain confidentiality. All interview notes and consent forms are stored in a secure location in my office that will be kept private and locked.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Research questions embed the values, worldview and direction of an inquiry. They also are influential in determining what type of knowledge is going to be generated (Trede & Higgs, 2009). The first research question of this study addresses the different types of academic and social-emotional challenges experienced by high school international students during their first year of stay in the United States. The second research question sheds light into the support services that have been effective in helping international students succeed, both academically and socioemotionally, in our high school campuses. Because each qualitative study is unique (Patton, 2015), the analytical

approach used in this study is also unique. Some researchers feel that more than one coding method and at least two different analytic approaches should be explored in every study to enhance accountability and the depth and breadth of findings (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2005; Mello, 2002).

The interviews have been transcribed and coded for commonalities. The data obtained has been put into a narrative format, with tables and charts creating a simple, readable, and understandable final report. A final analysis was conducted once all the codes emerged and were recoded, and final categories/themes were used. The emergent codes have been categorized and analyzed. The findings of interviews were compared and contrasted after being coded through the Dedoose program in order to provide enough information regarding the similarities and differences between the interviewee's responses.

Data Analysis

One of the most common coding errors Saldaña (2016) observed for interview transcript data is choosing descriptive coding as a default method. "Descriptive coding generates a sufficient list of subtopics—what is talked about—but generally does not offer the analyst insightful meanings about the participants and their perspectives" (p. 76). I used multiple coding techniques in this study. The Dedoose software was the main tool used for organizing and analyzing the data collected. One method that was used in this study will be what Bernauer (2015) developed and called "oral coding." Saldaña (2016) outlined the process of this method:

Audio recordings are listened to repeatedly over several days to gain intimate knowledge of their contents, to extract significant quotes, and to document emergent codes, themes, and concepts. The researcher then orally re-records salient participant passages along with personal analytic reflections as they relate to the research questions of interest. These become consolidated into abstracts which are then used as material for the final report. This form of oral coding keeps the researcher deeply embedded in the literal voices of participants, allowing nuanced inferences and interpretations of vocal tones, rates, subtexts, and the like. The

interweaving of participant quotes with researcher comments simulates a dialogic exchange resulting in cumulative and transformative insights. (p. 74)

Another coding method that was used in this study incorporated attribute coding logs. In these logs, information about the data and demographic characteristics of the participants was recorded for future management and reference. Saldaña (2016) used various sources to describe this: "Richards (2015) refers to this type of coding grammar as 'Descriptive Coding.' Bogdan and Biklen (2007) classify this type of coding grammar as 'Setting/Context Codes,' with Kuchartz (2014) labeling it 'Socio-demographic Coding,' and other sources labeling it 'Mechanical Coding' and 'Descriptors'" (p.83). He further added that attribute coding is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, but particularly for those with multiple participants and sites. This study fits this description.

Once the main codes were identified, entered and organized, subcoding was utilized. In this approach, a second-order tag after a primary code is assigned to detail or enrich the entry. The method is appropriate when general code entries will later require more extensive indexing, categorizing, and subcategorizing into hierarchies or taxonomies, or for nuanced qualitative data analysis (Saldaña, 2016, pp. 82-83). Gibbs (2007, p. 74) explains that the most general code is called the "parent" code while its subcodes are the "children"; subcodes that share the same parent are "siblings" in a hierarchy.

This study involved intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions, especially in matters of social relationships, reasoning, decision-making, judgment, and risk-taking. Because of this, emotion coding was also utilized. Since emotions are a universal human experience, our acknowledgement of them in our research provides deep insight into the participant's perspectives, worldview, and life conditions (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Finally, "theming the data" was done. Theme is an outcome of coding. DeSantis and Ugarriza (2000) ultimately proposed that a theme (similar to a code and category) "brings meaning and identity to a recurrent experience and its variant manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole" (p. 362). In exploring the participant's

psychological world of beliefs, constructs, identity development, and emotional experiences, "theming the data" is appropriate, especially because this research work is a phenomenological study (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003; J. Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; J. Smith & Osborn, 2008; Wertz et al., 2011).

Neither typological nor sequential models of design are a good fit for qualitative research, because they attempt to establish in advance the essential steps or features of the study (Maxwell & Loomis, 2002). Because my first and second research questions are interrelated, and academic and social-emotional challenges cannot be isolated from each other, I was flexible with my methods in analyzing my data, rather than fixed. However, I always exercised self-conscious awareness of the relationships between methods used and the conceptual understandings developed from an interpretative perspective. Using the multiple coding methods discussed above facilitated this.

Oral coding was used for both research questions, allowing nuanced inferences and interpretations of vocal tones. Attribute coding logs or sociodemographic coding were used for the first research question because I was interviewing multiple participants and school sites. It was also necessary since the participants' professional profile and site demographic characteristics are essential to understanding their points of view.

Finally, emotion coding and theming the data were used for both research questions. Emotion coding helped me gain insights into each participant's perspective, worldview, and life conditions.

Procedures to Ensure Validity and/or Trustworthiness

I used different methods to ensure the validity or trustworthiness of the interview protocol. Piloting the interview beforehand ensured that its contents were acceptable, understandable and clear. The first step in ensuring the validity of my findings was interviewing professionals from different school sites (private and public) of different counties (Orange, San Bernardino, and Los Angeles), at different office levels (school site, district office, archdiocesan main office). Through this I exercised maximum variation sampling. This was intentionally done to adequately capture the heterogeneity in the population sample. The purpose here was to ensure that the responses and

conclusions presented adequately represent the entire range of variations, rather than representing only those of the typical members (Maxwell, 2013).

Second, during the interviews, I used "respondent validation." This step, according to Maxwell (2013), is "systematically soliciting feedback about your data and conclusions from the people you are studying" (p. 126). This is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying my biases and misunderstandings of what I have observed. Third, I identified and analyzed discrepant data and negative cases, which is a key part of the logic of validity testing in qualitative research. The basic principle here is that you need to rigorously examine both the supporting and the discrepant data to assess whether it is more plausible to retain or modify the conclusions. Asking others for feedback on your conclusions is a valuable way to identify your biases and assumptions and to check for flaws in your logic or methods (Maxwell, 2013, p. 127).

Fourth, I used peer review and debriefing to confirm the interview protocol with the chair of the committee. I conducted peer reviews to confirm that the results of the interviews accurately reflect the experiences and the perceptions of the participants and is free from researcher's bias. Fifth, I emailed all the participants the final transcripts of the interview in order to confirm that the participants' interview transcriptions reflected what they meant to say. How a researcher perceives and interprets what is happening in the data depends on what type of filters they are using and from which angle they are viewing the phenomena (Saldaña, 2016). Therefore, as a final step, after the analysis, I did a member check by emailing 20% of the participants to ensure the validity of the data analyzed. I did this to make sure that I was coding and analyzing appropriately and wearing a researcher's analytic lens that was free from biases and misconceptions.

Role of the Researcher

For qualitative studies, the researcher becomes the research instrument, the lens through which information is filtered. While there is no such thing as absolute objectivity during research, I

mitigated my personal connection or opinions about the research topic and the interviewee's responses by focusing strictly on the data collected regardless of outcome. A positive aspect of my role as a researcher and a student who also came from another part of the world is that, since I am familiar with the processes and the interviewee's experiences, I could have a greater understanding of the various responses that can come out of my interviews. Researcher reflexivity is paramount in a qualitative study. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), "research design should be a reflexive process operating through every stage of a project" (p. 24). The activities of collecting and analyzing data, developing and modifying theory, elaborating or refocusing the research questions, and identifying and addressing validity threats are usually all going on more or less simultaneously, each influencing all of the others (Maxwell, 2013, p. 2).

Since my topic is about international students from different countries of the world, I reviewed literature on the different cultures and practices before beginning the interview process. This helped me understand and analyze responses through a different cultural lens. My personal and professional story may help or hinder the interview process, but it was important for me to acknowledge that nearly all responsive interviewing requires crossing cultural boundaries. As a researcher who originated from a different country and had to adjust to the U.S. schooling system when I arrived here, I disclosed my positionality and objective for this research.

Chapter Summary

This research study was conducted to address the socioemotional and academic supports that high school international students need as they navigate and adjust into United States high school campuses. To answer the research questions, a qualitative approach using a naturalist-constructionist paradigm was used in the creation of a semistructured and open-ended interview protocol. This research design is best suited for this study since the data that were collected are personal and professional accounts of challenges and adjustments as seen by professionals who work directly with high school international students who are coming from different countries of the world.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to identify the challenges faced by high school international students, both in their academic endeavors and social-emotional adjustments while in the United States. This study examined the difficulties of adjustment experienced by high school international students through the following two research questions:

1. How are high school international students experiencing and adjusting to the academic and social-emotional difficulties of their first year of study in the United States?

2. What types of academic and social-emotional school supports are most helpful to high school international students as they adjust to the U.S. high schools?

I begin Chapter 4 by describing the relevant sample demographic data, followed by a description of how the findings from the nine interviews conducted were analyzed and organized. Using the background knowledge gained from the literature reviewed on Chapter 2, I then present the themes that emerged from the interviews relative to the two research questions on the topics of academic and social-emotional difficulties experienced by high school international students and the school supports that are most effective in helping them succeed. I conclude the chapter with a synthesis of my findings and insights gathered from this data.

Participants

All participants in this study work directly with high school international students. Table 2 outlines the participants' demographics and their job site locations.

All interviews were done over the phone, as preferred by the interviewees, and in compliance with COVID-19 restrictions. Most of the participants were in their offices, while some were working from home, during the interviews. The phone interviews were 40-60 minutes in duration. Consent was solicited beforehand and permission to record the interviews was requested before any questions were asked. All interview questions were transcribed using Scribie.com. The audio recordings were then compared to the transcriptions and corrections were made to maintain accuracy. The final copy

of the interview transcripts were then emailed to all research participants to give them an opportunity to see if their answers were captured accurately and whether they had additional comments or points to clarify. In keeping with the promise of confidentiality, participants and their work locations were given pseudonyms.

Table 2.Profile of Participants and Their Work Sites

Participant	Job title	Years in current position	Level	Type	Year international student program started
A	Program administrator	7	District	Public	2018
B	TOSA for student services	3.5	District	Public	2013
C	International counselor	3	district	Public	2010
D	Academic counselor of international students	3	Site	Private	2005
E	Director for international students	6	Main office	Private	2000
F	High school counselor	23	Site	Public	2013
G	SEVIS coordinator	2	Archdiocese	Private	2015
H	International student program advisor	2	Site	Private	2012
I	Head counselor	8	Site	Public	1999

Analysis of Findings

Once interviews were transcribed, the software Dedoose was used for coding, followed by careful data analysis. From the codes generated through multiple cycles, and the analysis done, meaningful themes emerged, and patterns developed. During the first round of analysis, theming was conducted. Study participants' responses were organized into themes and their frequencies were tallied. In the second round of analysis, the themes were sorted according to the two research questions they addressed. Finally, during the third round, the overarching themes that emerged after careful analysis were used to organize how the findings from the interviews were presented. These overarching themes regarding the difficulties experienced by high school international students and the most effective school supports for them are summarized under each of the research questions in the study.

First Research Question

The first research question this study was trying to investigate was the high school international students' experiences in adjusting to the academic and social-emotional difficulties of their first year of study in the United States. H. Wu et al. (2015) found that international students can face a series of transitional difficulties, ranging from daily life to cultural adaptation. These obstacles can arise when adjusting and adapting to different foodways, balancing work and studying schedules, learning new styles, and making linguistic and cultural adjustments. In addition to this, I discovered through my interviews that the academic and social-emotional adjustment challenges experienced by high school international students are interrelated. The academic struggles or success of international students affect their social-emotional adjustments. Similarly, their social-emotional struggles and success affect their academic performance. Furthermore, since international students come from various countries with different cultural practices and traditions, their academic and social-emotional adjustments and struggles vary significantly.

It became evident during the interviews that the different personalities of international students, their living situations while in the United States, their academic goals for coming here, their country of origin, their academic background, social supports, and the school campus where they are enrolled all affect how well they are adjusting academically and social-emotionally.

These factors were reported multiple times by the research participants. Although there are multiple factors that affect their adjustments, multiple rounds of data analysis revealed three overarching themes: (a) international students experience language barrier challenges, (b) learning styles and postsecondary goals lead to academic challenges, and (c) social-emotional challenges are due to culture shock. These themes were not only mentioned by the research participants repeatedly but were also described as significant.

Language Barrier Challenges

Eight of the nine participants mentioned that the language barrier is an obvious and a major obstacle for high school international students, especially during the first year of their study here in

the United States. In particular, study participants were referring to academic language. Table 3

shows the findings under this overarching theme.

Table 3. Language Barrier Challenges Reported

Participant reports	Frequency
Language barrier is a major obstacle	8
Host families rarely contact the school due to language difficulty	6
Host families hear most of the problems and tend to hear it first	4
Working in groups is a challenge	3
They are hesitant to ask questions or ask for help	1
They find it hard to express their feelings and problems	1
They prefer to email teachers instead of talking to them	1
Doing everything in English is tough	1

Research participants who are directly involved in the selection and admission process of

international students in their respective sites shared that they make sure to only accept students who

they believe will succeed in their programs. This process of selection includes making sure that the

applicant can communicate, read, write, and comprehend English well. However, these same

research participants also mentioned that even if these criteria are in place, international students in

their campus still experience language barrier challenges especially during their first year of study in

the United States. Most international students think that they have a good understanding and good

command of the English language only to find out that studying and doing everything in English is

mentally and physically draining. Participant A described an additional layer that is tied to the

language barrier challenges by stating,

> Well, language acquisition is, for the most part the obvious one...outside of language being an
>
> obstacle or a challenge for international students, what comes to my mind that I hear from the
>
> students often is the ability to get in groups, because we group a lot. We are doing a lot of
>
> collaboration and the international students are not prepared for sharing in that way, nor do
>
> they have the skills to.

This finding confirms previous studies that considered language as one of the greatest academic issues hindering smooth adjustment for international students (Galloway & Jenkins, 2005). Not all international students who come to the United States are struggling to speak, read and write in English. Some of them, especially those coming from European countries, have good English skills. However, the comment that participant A shared highlights one of the major language challenge that high school international students from Asian countries experience. Most Asian international students, as shared by the participants of this study and various other studies, are brought up in a school environment that emphasizes rote memorization with very limited exposure to group discussion and collaboration. Hence, when a high school international student coming from Asia is asked to share their opinion in a group setting, the added group pressure increases the difficulty of expressing their opinion in a different language and in front of everyone else. This phenomenon was shared by almost all research participants during my interviews.

Compounding the effects of being unable to express themselves in English, it also becomes more difficult for high school international students to ask for help from the adults on campus. Participant D echoed this sentiment,

> So, they chose to be very quiet, very, very quiet. And if they do not answer the questions in class it is not because they do not understand but because they cannot express themselves. They do not ask a question, not because they don't have questions, but because they feel shy to speak in English.

Asking questions in class, participating in group discussions, and expressing their feelings are challenges faced by high school international students. Educators should be aware of and vigilant regarding the fact that even high school international students who have good social English need to be observed or monitored closely because they might not have good academic English, and they are particularly good at hiding their lack of understanding of what is going on in class. They can come across as "someone who understands, but really don't," was the statement used by one participant.

Another important factor to consider, aside from the challenges of being able to express themselves in English, either in class or in asking for help, is the fact that most high school international students are planning to stay in the United States for postsecondary education, hence, it is extremely important to them that they maintain a good academic reputation. This desire to maintain a good academic reputation can convince them to suffer in silence or not ask for help or to pretend that everything is okay. This tendency to suffer in silence, if not addressed proactively, can cause long-term repercussions.

Language barriers can hinder an international student's academic understanding, prevent them from participating in class discussions or group collaborations, and even cause them not to ask for help. On top of that, language proficiency is important not only for an international student's academic adjustments but for their social-emotional adjustment since proficiency in the language of the host country is thought to facilitate social interaction with host nationals, leading to opportunities to access cultural knowledge and cultivate support networks that, in turn, increase sociocultural adjustment (Church, 1982; Oberg, 1960).

A subtheme related to language barriers that emerged from the interviews was the limited communication between schools and host parents/guardians. This was shared by six of the nine participants, and this finding emerged when the participants were asked how supportive the host parents/guardians are or how they are reaching out for help when international students are experiencing difficulties. Although the language barrier is a major challenge that could potentially lead high school international students to fail or return to their home country, six of the nine participants in this study shared that there is very limited, or even no, proactive communication between schools and host parents/guardians. Participant C stated that communication between school and host parents/guardians "usually only happens when something goes awry." This alarming pattern is related to language barriers. If a host family also lacks the ability to communicate in English well or comfortably, then the communication line between home and school is threatened. We see this pattern even with local students whose parents speak a language other than English. The

communication line between schools and host parents/guardians. According to participant H, "I think given that they're so far (from their biological families), the host families are really critical because they have more eyes on the students and nobody else."

The host family or homestay family of an international student probably gets most of the information about the struggles and challenges that international students are facing during their stay here and they probably also hear it first. Homestay families are usually not biologically related to the international students they are hosting, but they are responsible for them during their stay here in the United States, including for the supervision of their academic performance and social-emotional welfare. Just like any biological family or legal guardian of a student, host family dynamics play a key role in how proactive or reactive an international student's homestay family is. If you add the language barrier element into the mix, then chances are schools will not hear anything from a homestay family unless things are extremely bad or escalating beyond their control.

Another factor to consider was the observation made by multiple participants about Chinese international students, who are more guarded with what is going on in their heads and are not quick to say what they are feeling. According to research participants, this information is filtered through either the host family or the students' parents back home. These observations underscore the importance of maintaining a proactive approach when establishing a communication flow between an international student's homestay family and school.

Learning Styles and Postsecondary Goals

C. Yeh and Inose's study in 2003 highlighted how Chinese international students found the interactive teaching style in the United States to be very different from the lecture-based teaching in China. Multiple participants in my study also mentioned this as one of the challenges they have observed. As an example, participant C mentioned,

> For small classes which is much smaller and more interactive, we emphasize things like group
> work and collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. They do not really have that same

emphasis in their home country, it's more about learn and memorize information. So, when they are asked to actually think for themselves or give an opinion . . . that is new to them.

This finding is significant since my interviews revealed that 80% to 99% of high school international students in the United States proceed to post-secondary institutions here in the United States after graduating from high school, especially students from Asian countries. It is worth acknowledging that all nine research participants had over 57 years of experience between them. They were coming from private and public schools and were working at different levels (site, district, main office, or archdiocesan). Through the course of my interviews it became evident that European high school international students are mostly here for the cultural experience, but Asian students, especially Chinese, are here to get a better chance of being accepted in a U.S. University. Table 4 shows the findings that are under this overarching theme.

Table 4. Learning Styles and Postsecondary Goals

Participant reports	Frequency
International students study in the United States after high school	8
No English language test, IQ test, or psychological test is required for admission	8
Asian students are here to get into a U.S. university, while European students are here for the social experience	4
Asian international students tend to find math easy	3
They will keep saying that everything is okay even if it is not	3
They are not familiar with the AP program's rigor but want to take the classes	2
They come to our sites with "messy" transcripts	2
They struggle in social studies and science classes	2
Some international students resist taking religious education classes	2
Some come here without understanding how a homestay works	1

The differences in their academic goals usually determine the classes they take, with most Asian students taking honors or AP classes. When explaining the academic challenges encountered by high school international students, participants in this study had different perspectives regarding these challenges. Participant H shared that "the more motivated students are going to be fine wherever they are, and those who are not as motivated will have issues."

The academic challenges that high school international students experience are due not only to the differences in the learning and teaching styles they are accustomed to but also the language barrier challenges that they are experiencing. This explains why study participants noticed Chinese international students were doing well in math classes, with others even taking higher level classes not commonly taken by their age group. Math can be learned and understood because it is not heavily reliant on spoken language—it is a language on its own. Whether or not an international student speaks or comprehends English very well does not greatly affect their understanding of mathematical concepts and operations. Social studies, science, and language arts classes are a different case. These are courses that require not only a broad English vocabulary but also mastery of the contextual or societal background. These are the classes where international students tend to struggle academically.

Aside from the vocabulary, high school international students lack the contextual or societal background to understand and assimilate information shared by their teachers in social studies, science, and language arts courses at the same rate as local students. Most international students would need additional time, preparation, or research, to digest and decipher information that is shared and discussed in these courses. This was a concern I heard multiple times during my interviews. international high school students who are enrolled in private schools are also struggling in religious education classes because they are coming from non-Christian countries and are not familiar with Christian teaching or doctrines. Participants in this study who work in private institutions mentioned that their international students resist being enrolled in these classes, but as the counselors on campus they have explained to these international students that they are not trying to convert them to Christianity but simply presenting them with a different way of thinking and behaving. Another perspective shared is the challenge of taking AP classes that requires a lot of self-preparation and studying outside of the classroom. A participant explained,

> For AP classes . . . it requires them to spend lots of time to read and understand, because they have never learned it before. . . . Back home [referring to Chinese students] their teachers will

let them read the article or the textbook during class, but that will never happen in our schools here. So, I told them, if a local student reads it twice or more, you should be reading it five times to make sure you understand.

The academic drive of international students, especially those coming from Asia, to do well and get the highest grades in class is fueled by their desire to get into a prestigious U.S. university. This drive motivates them to enroll in college-level or AP classes. Enrollment in AP or college-level classes can become a double-edged sword for high school international students if their English skills are not good enough. This was a concern shared by the counselors in this study. Doing well in these classes can help them get admission to prestigious U.S. universities. However, this can also increase the academic stress they are experiencing and magnify the language barrier challenges they are trying to hurdle. Because of the rigor of these courses, enrollment in these classes could potentially prevent an international student from enrolling in optional support classes, such as a language support class, or participate in before- or after-school support programs. Enrolling in AP or college level classes needs to be discussed, evaluated, and decided by the international student, guardian or homestay family, and the high school counselor, collectively.

The differences in learning and teaching styles that high school international students are accustomed to, their motivation to succeed academically and get into a prestigious U.S. university that pushes them to enroll in rigorous courses, the language and cultural adjustment challenges that they are navigating through, are just some of the factors that need to be considered when a decision to accept an international student into your high school campus is made. There appears to be a pattern, revealed during the interviews, that Asian international students are here to improve their chances of being admitted to a U.S. university, while European international students are primarily here for the cultural experience. These different motivations, along with the differences between their homeland schools and the U.S. high schools, can contribute to the academic challenges that these students encounter on top of the language barrier as mentioned earlier.

Participants in this study also mentioned that these students come with very interesting, or "messy," transcripts, either because of their country of origin or because they have been moving from private high schools to public schools or vice versa, here in the United States, due to visa restrictions and limitations. By law, high school international students entering the United States with an F1 visa can only enroll in a U.S. public high school for one school year, and they are then required to return to their homeland, but they are allowed to enroll in a private school for multiple years. This Department of Homeland and Security policy has resulted in numerous high school international students transferring or switching from school to school to maintain legal residency status. The academic and high school graduation requirements vary from school to school and district to district. It is also very different from public to private institutions.

All these factors, if not looked into, analyzed and evaluated properly, can set up a high school international student for failure or success. How students are screened and selected for admission to our high schools is crucial. All participants in this study who are involved in the selection and admission process mentioned that they do not require or administer an IQ test or a psychological or personality test, and no minimum score for an English proficiency test is required for admission. Participants all mentioned that they screen applicants using a virtual conferencing platform such as Zoom, Google Meets, WeChat, WhatsApp, Facetime, or Skype. The different responses from all participants who are involved in the selection and admission process are presented here as quotes, to clearly depict each site's unique selection and admission process.

Participant A

We actually have a visual interview, through the medium of the internet, using whatever platform that country supports. WhatsApp is pretty good, and a lot of kids can just facetime now with their iPhone, but if I have to use Skype or Google, we will use whatever we can use, and that's where again, it's through my eyes, the professionalism and the experience that I have, and it's subjective. . . . I try to look for a student through my interview process that's a good fit.

Participant B

> No. We don't require any tests. They apply, but there's no minimum requirement as far as IQ or social-emotional or language requirements. We do an interview and we do stress to students that all their classes will be in English, their textbooks will be in English, and so it's important for them to be successful that they have a basic understanding of the English language. . . . If they can't conduct the interview in English . . . if they would not be able to answer basic questions and have a basic conversation, then we might ask them to reconsider.

Participant C

> We require an application, that's number one, and re-evaluate the student's English fluency by writing. We have them do some writing samples for us, we also have them do the video chat interview with me or my director or both of us. We don't require any test scores, we just require an application, we look for at least a 2.0 minimum GPA. We look for someone who is motivated to study and we want students who are coming here for their education and not other reasons. We want to make sure that the are a good fit for our district and their educational goals. . . . We ask if there's any health or physical concerns, mental health concerns, and we ask that families disclose information to us prior to being admitted. We want to know upfront what is going on. We're relying on a lot of self-report, in our case.

Participant D

> Minimum requirement for admission is they need to pass our interview (referring to a Zoom, Skype, or WeChat video interview). We also look at their past three years of transcript.

Participant E

> We used to have minimum requirements and I actually changed that policy because I felt like it was really inaccurate - the testing, because unfortunately a lot of them cheat and when they come in, it would just be a mess. So, now I just do the extensive interview and I have them do a writing sample right in front of me.

> Participant H:

We look at their grades and we have an interview with them. During that interview we ask them

to read a document that we present to them. We ask some questions, plus we look at their

grades, and it's just an overall feeling from that interview that we decide to accept or not.

The other three participants could not make any comment on this topic because they are not

involved in the selection process.

The use of virtual interview platforms instead of a standardized language, IQ, or psychological

assessments for admission, is what all sites in this study were using. Although the participants who

are involved in the admission process feel that this is a good tool for them, some had expressed

concerns. Again, I will present their opinions as a direct quote to show their perspectives.

Participant A

Most of the students through the screening process, I think do a very good job in the

classroom. But I do have students who don't do well, and the students who don't do well, we

have to move them. We also have to educate the counselors and the school site that the

student may be here for the cultural experience and not necessarily academically driven. . . .

You really have to trust the counselors to observe, then review the transcript and put the kid in

the right classes. You really have to trust the counselors and then also trust that the student

when he or she says that the class is not really challenging him or her.

Participant B

There has been one occasion where a student from Norway was telling the counselor one

thing, and his parents were sharing another thing. He needed to have certain classes to meet

the requirements for his school in Norway in order to maintain eligibility for the academic

subsidy that Norway is giving. However, he was trying to take different classes that were more

fun or are easier.

Participant F

European kids have to meet certain things and they have to take certain classes that match

what they're going to do when they get home. But the biggest worry for the European kids is

they need to have certain courses because they have these tests to take when they get home.

The differences in the selection and admission process revealed during the interviews are not

due to differing state guidelines, since all nine sites included in this study are in California. The

differences are a direct result of board policies, administrative regulations, and the experiences of the

persons in charge of the international student program and what they found to be most effective over

the years. Clearly there is lack of uniformity or standards and these criteria tend to be very subjective.

Social-Emotional Challenges

One of the most significant challenges for international students is their ability to adjust to the

new social setting in the United States (Hwang, 2014). International high school students are not only

required to use a different language (inside and outside of the classroom) and adapt to a different

way of teaching and learning but to also navigate through a different social standard. Social-

emotional challenges were shared by most participants of this study as a hurdle that high school

international students need to conquer. Table 5 shows the findings that are under this overarching

theme.

Table 5. Social-Emotional Challenges Due to Culture Shock

Participant reports	Frequency
Asian international students tend to hang out with each other, while Europeans tend to mix with the local students	8
Very few express feeling homesick and it is not seen as a major concern	6
International students tend to isolate and stay quiet when feeling stressed	4
European students like the social aspect of U.S. schools (sports and dances)	3
Food is a tough adjustment	3
They are struggling with their homestay environment	3
Some join sports teams and clubs	3
They are well travelled	3
They are under a lot of stress to perform	2
They struggle to manage their time - too much freedom	2
They tend to share more freely with an adult who speaks their home language	2
They play videos games a lot	2
Some come here without understanding how a homestay works	1

Most high school international students need academic support, to varying degrees and in different areas, but I believe every single one of them needs social-emotional support because being away from your home, family, and close friends can become lonely, especially if you are only a teenager. When participants were asked if the social-emotional challenges experienced by high school international students are related to homesickness, six of the participants said that it is not really the main issue. Participant G mentioned that "you will have the occasional ninth grader who has now come into a whole new world, but by the tenth grade and eleventh grade they are perfectly fine." Participant E also stated, "sometimes it takes them a whole year of adjustment . . . and then they start to click over." The one year, or two years for a very few, of adjustment is also echoed by participant D. Participant H offered an explanation why homesickness is not really an issue:

Because they go home frequently enough. We had some (international students) who would go home even for their week-long Thanksgiving break, some went home for the Easter break, but majority of them would go home for the summer and for the two-week long Christmas break.

Homesickness is normal for any teenager who lives away from home or country, but as the interviews revealed, is not the main social-emotional challenge that high school international students face. It is important to remember that most international students who make it to the United States for their high school education are well travelled, global minded, and resilient and hard-working. To decide to pursue your high school education in a different country, using a different language, and having to learn a totally different culture is a major decision that requires a strong character, a burning desire to succeed and do great things, and a lot of maturity and independence. But you can never fully prepare, nor cognitively be ready for the effects of culture shock.

Through the responses shared by all research participants, it became clear that the biggest social-emotional challenge for high school international students is culture shock. Participant I explained it as, "there are definitely cultural differences, and the understanding of that culture changes things." Culture shock for high school international students can be as obvious and basic as their difficulty in adjusting to the different food served in their new environment or it could be as complicated as the new societal or classroom norms that they must adhere to. For some, it is the challenge of having to adapt to a new homestay environment. Here's what one participant shared:

> Some of our (international) students who are living with a host family have a harder time because they are living within a culture or a dynamic that they're not accustomed to, or they come with maybe preconceived notions about how homestay works. Some of them, think it's like a hotel service, and families are there to serve them. . . . We also find that a lot of our international students who are coming from very privileged homes are not used to following rules—they are more accustomed to getting whatever their heart desires.

The data that I was able to collect showed me that the quality of an international student's homestay environment is a significant factor that can make their adjustment either smoother or more challenging. The dynamics within the family, the food they serve, the language they use, the structure that they enforce, and the social-emotional support that they can provide to the international student are interrelated factors that influence the successful adjustment of an international student.

Eight of the nine participants in this study expressed the tendencies of Asian high school international students to hang out with other international students. This finding is concerning since, according to Y. Kim (2001), in order for international students to increase or maintain their ability to function or to respond to a new environment they have to make gigantic cross-cultural adjustments. Their tendency to talk and interact with each other can potentially prevent them from improving their English skills or expanding their understanding of the American culture, norms, and practices. However, this tendency is also natural and serves as a coping mechanism. It is only normal for any teenager to gravitate towards someone who shares their interests, speaks the same language, and shares their struggles.

Past research on this topic has produced results that see this behavior as both positive and negative. Some encourage it, while others are against it. What my research has shown is that it exists because there is a natural tendency for teenagers to hang out with individuals who they feel comfortable with or share more things in common, and it tends to manifest more among Chinese international students than European students. I believe that this difference is due to language and the cultural gap that exists between the United States and Chinese culture, as well the international student's goals for studying here. The response I got from participant C summarizes this well:

> They are usually with the other international students. As much as we try to help them acculturate, to meet the local students, they are just not comfortable doing that. I think that is mostly for our students who are coming from China. The students that I get from Europe, it's very different for them, I feel like their goal has been different from the Chinese students. The Chinese students come here to get to the University, but my European students are coming here for more social reasons—they want to see the American lifestyle, they want to see places . . . and it's not difficult for them because they are better with their English skills.

This response clearly depicted the natural tendencies of high school international students to hang out with those with whom they can communicate more comfortably and have more in common. This is an area that needs to be addressed to facilitate social-emotional and cultural adjustment, but

at the same time we need to remember that this behavior also serves as an outlet or an emotional coping mechanism that is sometimes needed for a successful adjustment.

Second Research Question

The second research question was designed to determine the types of academic and social-emotional school supports that are most helpful to high school international students as they adjust to U.S. high schools. According to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, studies have shown that maladjustment of international students in the host country can negatively impact their psychosocial development and put them at greater risk (Andrade, 2006; Chen, 1999; J. J. Lee, 2010; Mori, 2000; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002; Ramsay et al., 2007; Rice et al., 2012; Sandhu, 1995; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994; Wadsworth et al., 2008). Because academic and social-emotional support services provided by all sites included in this study were intertwined, and in most cases, offered together, not separately, I organized them based on the themes revealed after the interviews. Results revealed six areas where effective support services are provided: (a) teacher support, (b) counselor support, (c) before- and after-school programs, (d) wellness specialist and mental health support, (e) recruitment agency support, and (f) onboarding programs.

No data table will be presented in the discussion of the second research question since the relationships between the types of supports are not linear, and no single support service is more effective than another. These support services are interconnected and cannot be offered separately or in isolation. Their effectiveness relies on how well aligned they are to each other.

Teacher Support

International students will be facing the challenges of studying things they may not understand, feeling pressure to fit in, developing relationships with teachers, and experiencing concerns about their future (Byrne, Davenport, & Mazanov, 2007). When study participants were asked about what they believe are the most effective support services provided to international students, they acknowledged that support services are interconnected, but multiple participants also made it particularly clear that it is the teacher who is most important. For instance, participant C said,

Definitely, the most effective support is going to their teacher. . . . They tend to be more

successful when they are getting the help from their teacher. The teacher will scaffold the work

to help them with the language hurdles that they are facing.

This response connected the first and the second research questions accurately. The answers

to the first research question revealed that the language barrier is a major challenge for the

adjustment of high school international students. Participant C's response to the second research

questions makes it clear that teachers are the most effective supports since they can scaffold the

work and help with the language hurdles. The importance of teacher support was noted by all

research participants. When on campus, teachers are the first line of support for international

students since these students spend most of their school day with their teachers and interact with

them daily.

Answers to Question 2 also revealed that most international students find their teachers in the

United States to be more receptive, open, and approachable than their teachers back home. This

creates a level of comfort that encourages international students to be open and more receptive to

seek and receive support from their teachers here.

The daily interaction with international students allow teachers to see their struggles more

accurately, and it also allow teachers to determine what type of support works best. This was

repeatedly emphasized by research participants. The ability of teachers to tailor and adjust support

provided to international students is key since, as participant H mentioned, "just like our local

students, high school international students are in different levels [academically and social-

emotionally] and it's hard to support them at all levels." To assume that any support service provided

by a teacher, at any level, to any international student, will be effective is not only a mistake but

foolish. International students have different challenges, come from different countries, have different

levels of English proficiency, and have different personalities, so it is important for teachers to provide

individualized assistance. It is also important for teachers to remember that, because international

students are here to either get a better chance of being admitted to a U.S. university or to fully

experience the U.S. culture, they will normally claim everything to be fine, even if it is not. So, teachers need to pay attention to subtle signs, such as declines in grades and attendance or mood swings, and proactively offer support or at least start probing for more information.

My interviews also revealed that teachers who spoke a language similar to the international student's home language were more effective in supporting them and were able to build a stronger relationship with the international student community. The teacher's ability to speak their language, and in some cases, share the same experiences they had growing up, often removed the affective barriers that international students had and made them more open and appreciative. If capable and able, school sites and/or school districts should therefore consider hiring teachers and support providers who speak the home languages of their international students.

Counselor Support

Aside from the host families, counselors seem to be the next adults on campus who hear about the problems that high school international students face, according to research participants. This is true especially if the international student counselor is also the person in charge of the international student program on campus. This is one of the many reasons why participants of this study cited counselor support as one of the most effective and important support services for high school international students. All sites included in this study had a counselor or counselors designated to serve all of their international students. Some of these counselors are site based while others are district or main office based. The job titles of these counselors vary from high school site counselor, international student counselor, to international student advisor. Their main function is to help high school international students with both their academic and social-emotional needs. When these counselors encounter a situation that requires expertise beyond their training, they refer the students to the correct agencies or channels. A participant who happens to also speak Chinese shared,

They usually contact me first because I speak Chinese . . . Most of the time, I think, I am able

to stop the problem. They prefer to talk to me and express their feelings in Chinese instead of

CPLA (an outside agency) in English.

Counselors can serve as the conduit between the support services provided inside the

classroom and the support services that are available outside the classroom, even outside the school

site or school district. Since the goal of every site is to have a well-rounded and comprehensive

support program, the counselors can serve as the facilitators and gatekeepers. The counselors' ability

to adjust and tailor the support they provide to international students, similar to what teachers are

able to do, is what makes them an effective support for international students. One participant (a

counselor) talks to her international students every day either about academics, homestay issues, or

whether their biological parents want to know about their performance in school. These meetings can

be for academic reasons, social events, or anything. This response underscores the significance of

the various support services provided by counselors to international students.

Before- and After-school Programs

Another effective support service provided to high school international students that surfaced

multiple times in the interviews are before- and after-school programs that sites offer. A research

participant mentioned that "if the school supports are good enough for resident students, they should

be good enough for international students." However, because international students generate

additional revenue to school sites, school principals have the ability to allocate funds to provide

additional support to every student on campus, including international students. As examples, site H

has zero period support class that starts at seven in the morning, site F offers tutoring after school

from 2:45 PM to 3:45 PM, and site C also has an after-school program. During these sessions,

international students get all types of support, from academic tutoring, assistance with college

applications and essay writing, planning for extracurricular events for bonding, to credit recovery if

they need to catch up on graduation requirements. These additional supports, using the funds

generated from the tuition that they pay, help them as well as all students on campus. At the private

schools included in this study, additional support is provided to international students during their religious education class time.

These additional support services provided either before or after school do not only serve as additional opportunities for international students to absorb or process information and get much needed additional support, but also allow them to have the option of recovering credits or making up classes without having to give up another class if they are enrolled in rigorous pathways or college-level classes. This option is extremely helpful for international students who are coming into our campus with "messy" transcripts, as a result of transferring from multiple high schools to maintain legal residency status, or if they are coming from unusual academic backgrounds.

Wellness Specialists and Mental Health Support

Cross-cultural experience is a major life event that is characterized by stress, demands cognitive appraisal of the situation, and requires affective, behavioral, and cognitive coping responses (Berry, 1997). According to this study, an individual's psychological health and adjustment are influenced by their acculturation experience. In addition, the interaction between the society of origin and the society of settlement plays an important role in the level of stress that sojourning students face. This probably explains why almost all sites included in my study, except for the smaller private schools, have wellness specialists who are available to provide support.

The support of wellness specialists was found to be one of the most essential and effective support services provided to international students who are trying to adjust to multiple sojourning stressors. Participants B and F shared that for more intensive support, or services that their school counselors cannot provide, they use CareSolace. It is an online community health service that gives students, parents, and staff a one-stop web resource to assist in finding drug treatment and mental health related resources. Site D uses Counseling Partners of Los Angeles. The mission of Counseling Partners of Los Angeles is to serve at-risk and underserved students living in Los Angeles by providing a low-cost, school-based program that delivers essential counseling and support services students need in order to grow toward their full potential emotionally, intellectually, morally, and

socially. Site C works with mental health counseling through the city and also with the Consortium for International Students within their area.

The support of wellness specialists and mental health support providers are found to be essential and very effective, since teachers and counselors can only do so much. There are special circumstances and social-emotional or psychological challenges that teachers and counselors are not trained to handle nor capable of providing support for.

Recruitment Agency Support

Since international students experience unique stressors, such as language difficulty and social isolation, that their American counterparts (in general) do not (Y. Kim, 2001), additional supports are also provided to school sites or school districts from the agencies that help them recruit high school international students. In most cases, it is not out of courtesy but as a way of building a stronger business relationship and create trust and loyalty. The extra support provided by recruitment agencies was found to be extremely effective by the participants of this study. Interviews revealed that site H has a full-time teacher aide and a host family coordinator paid by the recruitment agency to support international students academically and connect them to the right department for any types of support needed. The aide is not paid by the school site but by the recruitment agency. Site C receives additional support from the international students' local coordinator, who is employed by the recruitment agency. According to participant C, the agency also organizes social events for their international students—weekend activities, excursions and meals together to help with the bonding process. These activities were highly valued and found by my study participants to be essential for the international students' adjustment to the U.S. culture.

While school sites might be able to provide the best and most effective academic support for international students, sometimes due to budget constraints, school sites are unable to provide social event opportunities to help international students with their social-emotional adjustments. This is where the recruitment agencies are able to step in and provide effective support services that will be beneficial for them as well as for the school sites/districts that they are working with. Support from

recruitment agencies was seen by multiple research participants as key to the success of their programs.

Onboarding Program

Every participant in this study mentioned that their onboarding process is highly effective in supporting their international students transition smoothly. Each site has developed their unique program schedule and delivery method based on the insights and experiences gleaned over the years. Participant A does the onboarding presentation for all international students at his site, himself, and he also allows the school sites to implement their own, new student onboarding presentations (for all students). At site B, the onboarding presentation is usually done before the school year starts and is usually on a Saturday, with international students and host families invited.

One of the biggest challenges observed by participant B is the ability of host families to complete the online enrollment. This process seems to be the trickiest, so site B has included this topic in their onboarding presentation, and they require host families to finish the online registration before the international student arrives in the United States, if possible. Site C recommends all high school international students arrive two to three weeks before the school year starts. As part of the onboarding presentation, site C presents different classroom and on-campus situations and asks international students to explain what they would do if they were in that situation. In other words, they are trying to train them how to ask for help and find the right department or adult who can assist them in finding solutions for a particular issue.

Site C also trains international students how to navigate Aries to check for grades and attendance. Site H indicated that their onboarding orientation is usually two to three full days. This is then followed up with weekly meetings after school for the first few weeks of the school year to see how the international students are doing. International students are also paired up with a local student and sometimes with an experienced international student who has been in the school system for over one school year. This allows the new international student to ask any question related to the school system, technology, and other areas of concern.

Site D has compiled and is using video tutorials to help host families and international students find out what apps or websites can be used for navigating day-to-day stuff, like where to shop and how to make restaurant reservations and doctor appointments. All of these resources are presented during the onboarding meetings or presentations to alleviate the stress experienced by international students and their host families and make their transition easier.

Making sure that international students are given the support and preparation they need to guarantee that they can integrate or assimilate into their high school campuses smoothly is in every site's best interest. The different onboarding programs offered by every site included in this study has evolved over time and have been modified based on what each program director believes to be effective. Although each site has different onboarding requirements and presentations, the ultimate goal for offering this support service is to ensure that contact between different groups of students (local and international) take place under optimal conditions to effectively reduce intergroup prejudice (Allport, 1954) and in effect create a welcoming, supportive and successful school environment.

Chapter Summary

Data analysis from the interviews conducted revealed three overarching themes for Research Question 1: (a) international students experience language barrier challenges, (b) learning styles and post-secondary goals lead to academic challenges, and (c) social-emotional challenges are due to culture shock. Data also revealed six themes for Research Question 2: (a) teacher support, (b) counselor support, (c) before- and after-school program, (d) wellness specialist and mental health support, (e) recruitment agency support, and (f) onboarding programs. All participants who are involved in the recruitment and selection of international students shared that they do not require a minimum language proficiency score, an IQ test, or a social-emotional test for admission. They all rely on a virtual interview process using either, Zoom, Facetime, Google Meets, Skype, WhatsApp or WeChat. It was also found that all sites included in this study has an onboarding program, usually completed before the school year starts, to alleviate the stress experienced by host families and international students as they transition into our U.S. high schools. This is important because culture

shock and a period of adjustment, which ranges from one semester to one year, was mentioned as the biggest social-emotional hurdle that high school international students face during their first year of study here in the United States.

It became evident that the language barrier affects not only high school international students' academic adjustments but also their social-emotional adjustments. In other words, the academic challenges and social-emotional challenges experienced by international students are intertwined and interrelated. Finally, all sites have a counselor or counselors who are assigned to all international students, but teacher support was key to the success of high school international students because they can tailor it to individual student's needs.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The problem this study sought to investigate was the lack of effective social-emotional and academic screening, and support services provided to high school international students (pre and post selection) so that they are successful in U.S. high school campuses. The research purpose was to identify the challenges faced by high school international students, both in their academic endeavors and social-emotional adjustments while in the United States. A phenomenological qualitative study, using the naturalist-constructionist's paradigm was conducted to answer these two research questions:

1. How are high school international students experiencing and adjusting to the academic and social-emotional difficulties of their first year of study in the United States?

2. What types of academic and social-emotional school supports are most helpful to high school international students as they adjust to U.S. high schools?

By sifting through the participants' responses, and organizing them based on the two research questions, the following themes emerged for the first research question: (a) international students experience language barrier challenges, (b) learning styles and post-secondary goals lead to academic challenges, and (c) social-emotional challenges are due to culture shock. For the second research question, the following support services came into light: (a) teacher support, (b) counselor support, (c) before- and after-school program, (d) wellness specialist and mental health support, (e) recruitment agency support, and (f) onboarding programs. This chapter discusses the conclusions drawn from these findings and presents the implications to policy, practice, theory, and future research.

Finally, I will share three recommendations for school practitioners, private and public organizations, and all stakeholders involve in educating high school international students, to create a more equitable, inclusive, supportive, and globally competitive high school campus.

In the following sections, the major findings of this study are separated according to each of the two research questions and will include discussion of the findings' implications for policy, practice, theory, and future research.

Conclusions from the First Research Question

All except one study participant mentioned that the language barrier is a major challenge for high school international students, especially during the first year of their study here in the United States. This is supported by multiple studies pointing out that language is a major barrier to international students' overall adjustment in host countries (Mori, 2000; Trice, 2004; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Galloway and Jenkins (2005) considered language as one of the greatest academic issues hindering smooth adjustment for international students. In other words, a lack of linguistic competence is associated with difficulty in adjusting to a different culture or society, interacting with faculty, and gaining academic development. These issues were also mentioned by multiple participants in this study, repeatedly. Asking questions in class, participating in group discussions, and expressing their feelings are challenges faced by international high school students. Because of limited English proficiency, international high school students may need extended time for studying, and they may be able to think critically but not participate in critical debates with classmates (Y. Turner, 2006). They may have difficulties understanding lecturers, writing essays, and conducting research (D. Lee, 1997). As in my study, H. Kim's (2011) research showed that learners with weak English language skills not only have a limited ability to convey their thoughts in English but also lack the ability to complete some tasks, such as classroom presentations.

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the findings of this study confirm that language difficulties become more pronounced as the academic demands increase. To make things worse, according to six of the nine participants in this study, there is very limited or no proactive communication between schools and the host parents/guardians of high school international students. This reflects the fact that many of the host parents and guardians cannot communicate in English very well, just like the international students. This finding exposes the danger of assuming

that high school international students must be adjusting well or are "just fine" if we do not hear anything from them or their host parent or guardians.

In this study, interviews revealed that over 80% of high school international students in the United States plan to apply to U.S. postsecondary institutions after graduating from high school, especially the students coming from Asian countries. Although results of this study have limitations due to the fact that only nine sites were included, and they were all located in Southern California, it reflects the 2018 school year statistics coming from the SEVP website, presented in Table 1 of Chapter 2. Also mentioned in literature reviewed in Chapter 2 is that the number of United States schools enrolling international students grew from 2,300 in 2013 to 2,800 in 2016, showing a 26% growth in host schools (Farrugia, 2017). This phenomenon is real and increasing in suburban, upscale areas of Southern California (Park-Stowe, 2003). Table 6 reveals California as the host of almost 20% of the total international student population in the United States.

Table 6. Top Five States That Enroll International Students

State	Count[a]	Percentage of all international student enrollment
California	302,073	19.50
New York	174,202	11.20
Texas	102,380	6.60
Massachusetts	101,515	6.50
Florida	84,412	5.40

[a] Numbers represent international students here in the United States with F1 and M1 Visas
Data from ice.gov/sevis. https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/sevisByTheNumbers2018.pdf

This growing number of high school international students coming to California should be approached with caution and preparation. Sociocultural environments always differ depending on the part of the world in which one lives. Social environments that are individualistically oriented differ in their values and beliefs from cultures favoring collectivism (Bandura, 1997). So, it is not surprising that students coming from collectively oriented societies, such as the Eastern Asian countries, seem to encounter difficulties adapting into a socially individualistic society. This was shared by almost all of

the participants in this study. Research determined that international students' interaction with U.S. peers differed depending on students' home regions (Gareis, 2012; Trice, 2004), with students from Europe and Canada interacting with U.S. students more often than those from other world regions. This was supported by the findings in this study.

Eight of the nine participants in this study described the tendencies of high school international students to hang out with other international students, especially those who come from China. This finding supports the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, by C. Yeh and Inose (2003), who echoed that academic adjustment is even more challenging for Chinese international students in the United States because of the vast differences in social and cultural norms. This is probably why participants in this study mentioned that Asian students tend to stick together because the language barrier may prevent them from interacting or making friends with the local students (R. Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Samovar and Porter (1991) referred to this vast cultural gap as "maximum cultural distance." This also explains why participants in my study mentioned that the biggest social-emotional challenge for high school international students is culture shock. However, when asked if the social-emotional challenges are related to homesickness, four of the participants said that it is not really the main issue since the school schedule allows them to visit their home country often.

Although high school international students face social-emotional challenges due to cultural differences and language barriers, they tend not to reveal those to their hosts or teachers, according to my study participants. When under stress, they tend to isolate, and their academic performance begins to spiral down. This finding confirms that international students in the United States tend to under-utilize counseling services (Constantine et al., 2005; Nilsson, Berkel, Flores, & Lucas, 2004; R. Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Yakushko et al., 2008; N. Zhang & Dixon, 2003). Cultural values and beliefs held by most international students seem to be the main reason for not using counseling services, according to these studies.

Another social-emotional challenge found in this study is the living situation with host families. A good number of high school international students who are living with host families have a harder

time adjusting because they are not just trying to adjust to the American culture and their school environment, but they are also living within a host family dynamic that they are not accustomed to. This is consistent with multiple findings showing that the major adjustment problems of international students include living adjustments and food issues (McClure, 2007; Paige, 1990; Sato & Hodge, 2009) as well as getting familiar with their new way of life, including new surroundings, transportation, customs, and social norms. All of these become essential tasks for the international student's macro-environment adjustment (J. J. Lee, 2007).

Implications for Policy

English language is one of the most significant and prevalent challenges for international students (Heggins & Jackson, 2003; J.J. Lee, 2010; Sanner, Wilson, & Samson, 2002; Wilton & Constantine, 2003). With the remarkable expansion of international student enrollment in the United States, it becomes urgent to provide language support to high school international students so they can overcome linguistic adjustment challenges. School policies should acknowledge that language is a necessary requirement in daily lives, and proficiency in it is critical for interaction and communication inside and outside of the classroom walls. On top of this, most high school international students, especially those coming from Asian countries, come to the United States to obtain an American high school diploma and then continue to study at a U.S. postsecondary institution. So, it becomes paramount that these students receive language support since they may be required to take the International English Language Testing System test or the TOEFL as an admission requirement to a U.S. university.

Public high school international students holding an F1 visa are only allowed to study at that campus for one school year. They are required either to return to their homeland after one school year or to transfer to a private high school, where they can stay for more than a year with a valid visa. This regulation has resulted in a growing number of high school international students who transfer from public schools to private schools, especially those who entered the United States before their senior year and have the intention of obtaining an American high school diploma.

Because high school international students move from site to site to keep their legal status, they bring in a unique challenge to our high school counselors who need to evaluate their transcript of records and enroll them in appropriate classes. School policies should therefore articulate the need for high school counselors to become experts in evaluating transcripts of incoming international students who could either be coming from a foreign country initially or have been hopping from multiple school sites (public or private) to maintain legal status.

To avoid over-generalizations, it is worth mentioning again that nine participants, from nine different sites in Southern California, were involved in this study. At all nine sites, Chinese students comprised the majority of the international student population. This trend is similar to the national trend shown in data Table 1 in Chapter 2. My findings also mirror the findings of Yan and Berliner (2011), who found that newly arrived international students expressed more anxiety and frustration with regard to language barriers, academic challenges, and general culture shock. This suggests that a school's organizational policies for accepting, supporting, and retaining high school international students must provide mandates and emphasis on these three areas: the language barrier, academic challenges, general culture shock.

Implications for Practice

The need to provide language support to every high school international student is well documented in the relevant literature. It was also evident in the results of this study. The language barrier is the most significant problem for most international students (Mori, 2000) because of the effect language can have on the social and academic performance of students as well as on the cultural adjustment process (Chen, 1999; Y. Huang, 2009; Tung, 2011). The lack of English proficiency also lowers the international students' desire to seek out assistance and, subsequently, affects their self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and even mental health in some cases. If international students are unable to express themselves due to language difficulties, then, they will most likely not ask for help. This would be a similar pattern for their host parents/guardians who are also

experiencing language difficulties. English language support should be provided to every international high school student, and it must not be optional nor based upon student request.

Sometimes the academic challenges experienced by an international student is specific to a certain subject or class that requires more advanced language skills. It can also be specific to classes that require a lot of self-preparation and studying outside of the classroom, such as AP classes. All of these are supported by the work of Y. Zhang and Mi (2010), who found that, because of limited English proficiency, international students often need extended time for study. Being unfamiliar with English terms in certain subjects, they may find it hard to relate to certain topics in discussion, although they have such knowledge in another language. These findings suggest that activities, instructions, and assessments in high school classrooms should be sensitive to the needs and challenges of international students. Just because they are not asking questions, or interacting with their classmates or their teachers, or able to deliver a great presentation, does not mean that they are not interested or are not able to follow along. Maybe, they are just not capable of expressing themselves, or they don't have the confidence to stand and talk in front of the whole class. Taking these challenges into consideration, classroom teachers should be able to assign culturally sensitive projects and assignments, develop grading practices that are not only focused on a student's linguistic ability, and create a supportive classroom environment.

Given that international student numbers are increasing in U.S. high schools, especially Chinese students and those from coming from eastern Asian countries, and that they encounter a culture that is very different from their own, it is important that our classroom teachers, school psychologists, and school leaders be given cultural sensitivity training. This will not only equip any school practitioner to understand the cultural background and challenges of the high school international students but also help them come up with practices and solutions to effectively support them. For counselors, they must develop support services that are culturally sensitive and appropriate.

Implications for Theory

Rene Descartes believed humans to be largely rational creatures that needed language to interact. For him, learning a language meant finding similarities between your own and the target language. This suggests that providing social interaction between host country students and international students is a key element in language acquisition. In the acculturation model for second language acquisition, Schumann (1986) looked specifically at how immigrants learn a new language and pointed out eight factors that influence how quickly an immigrant student learns a new or second language. Although my study is not about immigrant students, the immigrant students in Schumann's study share the same language difficulties as the international students in my study. Three of the eight factors outlined by Schumann were also mentioned by the participants of this study: *cohesiveness*, *enclosure*, and *size factor*. The larger the group of similar language speakers, the more they interact with each other, and the less likely language learning is to occur (cohesiveness). If there are more opportunities for learners to interact with native speakers, such as through schools, jobs, clubs, etc., there will be a greater chance of language learning (enclosure). If the language learning group is too large, they will tend to group together, reducing the likelihood of language acquisition (size factor). This suggests that language supports for high school international students should consider the students' cultural background or country of origin, group size, intended length of stay, and willingness to adjust.

Implications for Future Research

International high school students come with different English-language abilities. Providing support to their varying levels of need is not only challenging but also makes it difficult to determine if the support services provided are appropriate and effective. It is therefore important for future studies to investigate in more depth the language challenges of international high school students based on the five language domains of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and comprehension. This will enable support service providers and teachers to develop and implement a more targeted support, based on the domains in which they are struggling the most.

Conclusions from the Second Research Question

Interview participants highlighted teacher support, counselor support, before- and after-school support, wellness specialist and mental health support, recruitment agency support, and onboarding support as the most effective school supports for high school international students in their campus. It must be noted that the sample participants of this study may not completely represent the extensive list of professionals who are involved in educating and supporting international high school students, hence, others might have different opinions. However, it must also be noted that my study participants come from public and private school sites and district levels, as well as archdiocesan levels, with over 57 years of combined experience. In other words, it is a very heterogeneous group with multiple years of experience as shown on data Table 2.

According to participants of this study, the most effective support for international high school students is going to their teacher. "Our teachers are doing a great job being accessible to all students. . . . They are more receptive, open, and approachable," according to participant A. This is reassuring since teaching differences in China (lecture-based) and the United States (interactive) exists (C. Yeh & Inose, 2003), and almost 50% of international high school students in the United States are Chinese or are coming from Asian countries. The ability of teachers to tailor individualized support is what makes them so important. Teachers also tend to notice the difficulties first, since they interact with the international students the most. On top of that, teachers are also able to build strong relationships with students, hence, students feel more comfortable sharing with them.

The support of school counselors was also mentioned as effective and necessary since, aside from the host families and teachers, counselors seem to be the adults on campus who hear about the problems that international students face. According to my findings, this is true especially if the international student counselor is also the person in charge of the international student program on campus. However, according to Mori's research (2000), the counseling services are underutilized by international students because of their lack of familiarity in navigating the system and/or their perception of what it means to seek help from the counselor. This was also a concern shared by

some of my study participants. Cultural stigma against seeking professional help, such as viewing the need for counseling services as weak or shameful, is a barrier that prevents individuals who share such points of view from seeking counseling (Chong & Liu, 2002).

My interviews also revealed the effectiveness and importance of before- and after-school support programs. Different types of support are provided during this time frame, such as academic tutoring, language support, college application workshops, and credit recovery due to scheduling conflicts. Before- and after-school programs offer support providers with additional time to help international students on a more personal and case-by-case basis. It also gives them the flexibility to offer support that cannot be provided within the normal school hours or offer support services that may not be applicable to the entire class. One of the private school sites in this study even used their religious education class period as additional time to provide support for international students, since most of them are non-Catholics or non-Christians.

Wellness specialists and mental health support is also utilized by sites in this study as a more specialized support strategy to effectively help international students. All sites in this study work with either private or public institutions from their city or their county; CareSolace and the CPLA are some examples. Services by wellness specialists and mental health experts are usually provided in more severe situations, beyond the school counselors' capability and training. The importance of this service, in most cases, is highlighted when an international student breaks down due to pressure and is unable to adjust to the new environment.

Recruitment agency support was also cited as one of the most effective support services for high school international students. Although not all sites receive support from the recruitment agency they are partnering with, those who do, find it very useful. Support provided can range from a homestay coordinator, social event coordinator, to a teacher aide (in the classroom) who speaks the language that most international students speak. These individuals are paid by the recruitment agencies and not by the school site, and they provide academic support, act as school and homestay liaison, and even organize social events to help international students adjust better to their new

community and school site. This additional support becomes extremely important, especially in the social-emotional adjustments of international students. The field trips and meals together serve as outlets for international students to unwind, learn about the American culture, and build meaningful connections with local students and their community.

Finally, all participants in this study mentioned how important and beneficial their onboarding program is. Their onboarding programs provide proactive support to international students. The timing, length, and topics covered during these onboarding presentations or workshops vary from site to site but have evolved based on student needs that have been observed over time. At site B, the onboarding presentation is usually conducted before the school year starts and is usually on a Saturday, with international students and host families invited. Site C recommends all international students arrive two to three weeks before the school year starts. During their onboarding presentation, international students are presented with different classroom and on-campus situations and are asked to explain what they would do if they were in that situation. Site H indicated that their onboarding orientation is usually two to three full days, followed by weekly meetings after school, for the first few weeks of the school year. International students are also paired up with local students and sometimes with an experienced international student who has been in the school system for more than one school year. Site D compiled and shared video tutorials to help host families and international students navigate day-to-day stuff, like shopping, making restaurant reservations, making doctor appointments, and much more.

Implications for Policy

Providing appropriate and effective support services to all international students, coming from different parts of the world, with unique cultural backgrounds, personal stories and varying academic records requires extensive review, research, and data analysis of existing practices. School policies should guarantee that effective support strategies are driven by data and reflect local students and the school climate overall. In other words, international students should not be viewed as an isolated group detached from the rest of the student body on campus. For Hwang (2014), evaluation of the

campus climate with regard to diversity, with specific questions that assess attitudes and perceptions about the organizations efforts to increase the presence of international students on campus by providing them effective support services, should be done either annually or biannually.

Implications for Practice

Participant C made this comment,

I would like for us to do more social activities with the international students, and I would like to see more participation from them. However, I am not sure how to marry those two together. I grapple with the fact that a lot of them are just not open to mixing with others.

This comment clearly reveals that simply providing more opportunities or more support services to international students does not mean that it will result in a more successful international student program. It does not even guarantee that they will take advantage of the opportunities or utilize the support services provided, such as the counseling services. Establishing and delivering support services for international students, therefore, requires input and buy-in from teachers, counselors, school leaders, and support service providers. The quantity of support services provided will never substitute for quality, and quantity alone will not translate to better effectiveness.

Understanding what your international student population needs and why, developing support programs for them to address those needs, and then making sure that every stakeholder believes in the program and is resolved to see it fully implemented, are key ingredients to a successful support program.

Implications for Theory

Evidence in the literature suggests that creating opportunities for positive interaction between international and domestic community members can help reduce intergroup conflict and prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). The support services that schools provide to international students, therefore, not only help the international students to adjust to their new environment and become successful but also help our local students and local community members experience a more positive interaction with international students, which will effectively reduce intergroup prejudice. This supports

Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory. The reduction of intergroup prejudice does not only lower the chances of conflict but also creates a welcoming environment and a more cohesive campus.

Implications for Future Research

Without knowledge of multiculturalism, it is difficult for educators to shape or adapt an international curriculum, making it increasingly difficult to understand students from different parts of the world (Keith, 2005). To mitigate the adjustment challenges experienced by international students and provide effective support services that will result into a more cohesive school campus, future researchers should investigate the level of cultural awareness high school teachers, counselors, leaders, and support providers have. Knowledge gained from future studies can help practitioners develop and offer training workshops to create more globally responsive and culturally sensitive classrooms and school environment.

<div align="center">

Recommendations

</div>

In this section I will share three recommendations for school leaders and practitioners, private and public organizations, and all stakeholders involve in educating international high school students, to create a more equitable, inclusive, supportive, and globally competitive high school campus. The recommendations are related to the major findings about language barrier challenges, academic and social-emotional challenges, and effective school supports.

Addressing Language Barrier Challenges

School support must be timely, direct, and systematic. The language barrier is an evident challenge for international students that necessitates immediate action from school sites, archdiocesan offices, or school districts who are accepting them. It is also a challenge that international students and their host parents/guardians may not be upfront and honest about problems, either due to their inability to express themselves or due to their cultural practices regarding asking for help. DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Karhanek (2010) believe that schools should provide interventions that are timely, direct, and systematic. School leaders and practitioners should, therefore, not design language supports for international high school students as a remediation, nor

should they offer them as optional and at random. Language supports need to be embedded into the high school sites international student programs. Offering language supports based upon request, or when the need arises, or offering it as optional will not be effective. In addition, it has to be targeted based on the domains of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and comprehension.

Proficiency in the language of the host country is thought to facilitate social interaction with host nationals, leading to opportunities to obtain cultural knowledge and cultivate support networks that, in turn, increase sociocultural adjustment (Church, 1982; Oberg, 1960) International student coordinators or directors should, therefore, work with the school leaders and the recruitment agencies to provide organized activities or social functions (during or after school hours) to allow international students to interact with local students.

According to Cummins (2008), it takes about two years for BICS, or conversational language, to develop, and CALP could take an additional five to seven years. Given the short amount of time that these international students are in our campuses, social events will facilitate the learning of BICS and CALP, and at the same time allow international students to experience and understand American social norms, cultural practices, and traditions, which will help them adjust better and become more successful.

Addressing Academic and Social-Emotional Challenges

Counselors need to be trained to evaluate international transcripts and enroll them into appropriate classes. The number of high school international students in the United States will continue to rise. Table seven shows data from the SEVP website, accounting for 84,840 students enrolled in our K-12 schools during the 2018 school year.

Table 7. International Students in K-12 U.S. Schools (2018 School Year)

Total number of K-12 international students	84,840
Primary school enrollment	18%
Secondary school enrollment (9-12)	92%

Data from ice.gov/sevis. https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/ pdf/sevisByTheNumbers2018.pdf

Private and public schools have different reasons for accepting these groups of students. As mentioned earlier, some public schools engage in international exchange programs to provide cross-cultural learning for their local students, while some small or rural public school districts, faced with declining local student numbers, have begun international programs as a way to boost enrollment (Toppe, 2014). Private schools also accept international students to improve their enrollment numbers.

Because international students come to our schools with unique academic records and experiences, we need to train our high school counselors effectively. Evaluating students' transcripts correctly, enrolling them in the appropriate classes, making sure that they are on track to graduate, and fully understanding their intentions for attending our high schools, require training and lots of research. It also requires collaboration between public and private institutions since international students are now starting to move across these institutions frequently. Although public or private high school institutions may not have control over what the Department of Homeland Security dictates about the length of stay international students can legally have in their school sites, these institutions can start coming together collectively to come up with a similar or comparable academic screening, placement and enrollment process. The sites in this study do not have a uniform screening and admission process. These varying screening, admission, and enrollment practices might be difficult to standardize, since different school districts and archdiocesan offices have different board policies, but school sites should still attempt to come together and come up with practices that are comparable and not conflicting.

According to the results of this study, while most Asian high school international students are here to position themselves to get a better chance of being accepted in a U.S. university, most of the European international students are here for the cultural experience. This would suggest that Asian high school students will be inclined towards college preparatory or AP classes. However, caution in enrolling them into these classes should be exercised by counselors since these are also the group of students who experience a higher degree of language difficulty.

Academic challenges can be remedied by providing before-school, after-school, or in-classroom support and intervention practices/programs. Whatever the approach or strategies are, an honest conversation and understanding between the parents, international student, and the school counselor and school leader must take place to avoid future misunderstanding and conflict related to course enrollment, class schedule, and support services provided to the student.

Effective School Supports

Classrooms should be culturally sensitive and teach students holistically. As Wadsworth et al. (2008) have noted, international students often come into the classroom with learning frameworks, including classroom expectations and behaviors, different from that of the host culture. These differences can be a source of discomfort and even impact the way students are perceived by their teachers and classmates (Hwang, 2014). Culturally sensitivity can be encouraged by offering training workshops to teachers, administrators, support staff, and school leaders in the areas of language acquisition, cultural differences, unique academic systems and practices, and social-emotional adjustments. Knowing what to topics to teach and how to effectively deliver these workshops can only be done if survey and input is gathered from all stakeholders and experiences learned from the field are incorporated. Attempts to educate and support international students should also be focused not only on academics but also on educating the child as a whole and with a multicultural perspective and global understanding.

We must also provide better pre and post arrival support services. Studies have determined that international students would like to be better informed before and after their arrival to the United States (Davis-Wiley, Benner, & Rider, 2007). It is therefore paramount that we prepare international students high school for the challenges they may face before their arrival in the United States and design support services that will equip them to adjust smoothly and successfully once they arrive. Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) have suggested that before arrival, a sojourner student could be matched with another international student, preferably from the same originating country, who has been in the United States for over a year. The more experienced international student can provide the

new student with information on living arrangements, transportation, campus life, where to buy groceries and clothing, and other related issues. The social interaction between international and domestic students will provide much-needed emotional and psychological support for the new student as well as increase the domestic student's knowledge of other cultures.

It might also be beneficial to advise them to learn how to live independently before leaving their home country, by suggesting that they learn how to cook, wash their laundry, and clean their room. Upon arrival, support services for homesickness, navigating school systems, academic requirements and expectations, homestay dynamics, and cultural adjustment must be provided. These support services can be presented and offered along with the existing onboarding programs that school sites have, or they can be offered before and/or after school. The feeling of being welcomed and supported in our school campuses can tremendously improve the adjustment process, success and retention rates of international students.

International students should be seen as school assets. Not only have international students enhanced campus diversity by bringing different perspectives to classroom discussions, but they have provided opportunities for American students and educators to become more multiculturally sensitive (J. J. Lee & Rice, 2007). Sojourner students offer international dimension and perspective to the student body. This diverse experience can have a positive impact on domestic students' personal development, vocational preparation, intellectual development, and diversity competence (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2013).

It is not just the international students who are benefiting from gaining an American education, but our American students are also benefiting from gaining cultural awareness and global perspectives from the presence of international students. International students also generate significant financial benefits for hosting institutions. This explains why countries are competing to attract more international students to ease financial pressure on the host country (Andrade & Evans, 2009; J. Zhang & Goodson, 2011; Zheng, 2014). As an example, The Association of International Educators estimated that international students and their family members contributed approximately

26.8 billion dollars to the American economy in the 2013-2014 academic year. They also supported

340,008 jobs in the United States (Institute of International Education, 2014). California alone profited

by almost 407 million dollars from foreign students and their families during the 2013-2014 academic

year (National Association for Foreign Student Affairs, 2014).

Dealing with international students and creating support services for them should therefore be

approached with an asset mindset, not a deficit mindset. International students not only contribute

valuable financial gains to the institutions they are enrolled in but also bring diverse heritage and

perspectives that serve to increase U.S. students' cultural awareness and appreciation (Harrison,

2002; R. Smith & Khawaja, 2011). The impact of international students' presence in our campus is

significant, according to participant A, "they'll always remember this experience. . . . It changes

people's minds." For participant F, "I think the bottom line is, it's good for schools."

Summary of the Dissertation

Globalization is changing the landscape of our educational institutions. The population of

international students in U.S. high schools continues to grow, especially in California. Because of this,

I embarked on this research to investigate the need for effective social-emotional and academic

screening and support services provided to international students (pre and post selection) so that

they are successful on U.S. high school campuses. Findings revealed that each site has varying

selection and admission practices. The only similarities are that they conduct the interview and

selection process using virtual meeting platforms, and they do not require a minimum English

proficiency test result or any social-emotional/psychological profile test for admission. I also found

that language barrier challenges, academic challenges, and social-emotional challenges are

intertwined and interrelated. These findings highlight the need for a collaborative effort, among all

school practitioners, to design and deliver support services that are not separate but cohesive and

address the student's need holistically.

As educators in a dynamic global society, with multicultural students in our campuses, we have

the moral imperative to create a just, equitable, and inclusive school environment that will produce

globally responsible citizens. Therefore, providing appropriate and effective support services to guarantee that all international students in our campuses are successful, will serve proof of our resolve to create globally competitive and culturally sensitive school campuses.

APPENDIX A

LETTER TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

(Date)

(Site address)

Dear (Recipient):

My name is Joseph Archival, a doctoral candidate (EDD) at CSU-Fullerton and an Assistant Principal at Nogales High School in the Rowland USD. As part of my doctoral dissertation, I am conducting a research study **to understand the sources of difficulties in our international students' adjustments to the U.S. high schools and the school supports that are most helpful to their social-emotional and academic adjustments.**

Your participation will greatly help improve the experiences and increase the success rate of high school international students in your site or school district and our State in general. Participation is voluntary and your identity will remain confidential. The data will be kept secure and password protected. Participation in the study will only take approximately 40 minutes of phone or virtual interview.

Please see the attached letter from my dissertation chair (Dr. Daniel Choi). I promise to share the results to help you improve your international student program. Your assistance would be tremendously appreciated. For any additional questions or clarifications please don't hesitate to contact me at joarchival@csu.fullerton.edu or at (714) 272-2838.

Respectfully,

Joseph Archival
EdD Candidate
CSU-Fullerton

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM DISSERTATION CHAIR

September 9, 2020

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing in support for Joseph Archival and his study, entitled: "**Sources of difficulties in international students' adjustments to the U.S. high schools and the school supports that are most helpful to their social-emotional and academic adjustments**." He is a doctoral student of mine and I am serving as his dissertation chair. This study will provide a great service to the field, especially to schools in providing insights into better supporting international students and the academic and social struggles they face at the high school level. His doctoral dissertation is focused on learning about the academic and social-emotional development international students go through in our local high schools. His intention is to share the results of the research to high schools who have international student programs or are planning to implement an international student program, so that these students are supported and successful in our high school campuses.

To this end, Joseph is asking permission to interview a staff member (TOSA, Program Administrator, or site Principal) to learn some general information and background on your International Students program. Joseph's dissertation research has gone through the CSUF review process, known as (IRB) and has been approved to move forward with his research. He is now prepared to collect data, formally.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the phone number or email below.

Daniel Choi, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of Educational Leadership
California State University, Fullerton
P.O. Box 6868 Fullerton, CA 92834-6868
Web: http://ed.fullerton.edu/

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Opening questions:

1.   Please share your name, job title, and the school district or school site you work for.

2.   Please share the profile of your school (size, demographics, programs) and where it's

located.

Introductory questions:

1.   When did the international student program in your district or school site begin?

2.   How many international students do you have each year, on average?

3.   How many, per year, would you say are successful and are well adjusted?

How many graduate from high school?

How many proceed to higher education here in the United States?

How many struggle and fail?

How many do not finish the program and end up returning to their   home

country?

4.   What are the minimum requirements for students to be accepted in your international

student program?

5.   Do you require international students to take and get a minimum score on an English

Language test? Why or Why not?

- What languages do they speak?

6.   Do you require them to take a psychological or social-emotional profile test? Why or

why not? Do you require them to take an IQ test? Why or why not?

Key Questions:

1.   How are they adjusting here in the United States?

(questions regarding social and emotional support and challenges)

a.   Are they with their biological family or adopted family?

☐ Do they have relatives here in the United States.? Where do they live?

b.   When at school, who do they usually hangout with?

c.   To your knowledge, what do they do for fun?

(questions regarding coping skills)

d.   What do they usually do when feeling down or under stress?

e.   What resources (social-emotional or "day to day" living) are available for them on site?

f.   Do they express feeling homesickness?

What do they report doing when they feel homesick?

g.   Who do they normally go to when they need social and emotional support? And from your knowledge, why do they choose these individuals for support?

h.   Who do they call or go to when they need to share personal problems or when they need emotional support?

2.   What do they report as the most difficult part/s of their adjustment here in the United States as an international student?

(questions regarding academic challenges and support)

a.   Do they report or share liking there school here in the United States? What is it that they like or dislike?

b.   How different is there school (from their country of origin) to their school here in the United States?

c.   How is their interaction and relationship with students in your district or school site?

d.   Who do they usually hangout with, when on campus? Why do you think so?

e.   Are they involved in extracurricular activities, sports, or clubs in your campus? What about outside of campus (if you have knowledge).

f.   Do they find classes here in the United States to be challenging or easy? Why?

g.   From what they have shared, how are their classes here in the United States different from their classes in their country of origin?

h.   How are their teachers here in the United States different from their teachers in their country of origin? How are they treating them – the same or differently?

i.   What do they normally do when they encounter academic challenges here in the United States?

j.   What do they report as the most effective strategy for them when they encounter academic difficulties? Why do they say it works?

k.   What is the most challenging part of their academic adjustment here in the United States and why?

3.   What types of academic support do they find most helpful in their adjustment here in the U.S. high schools?

(questions regarding school support)

a.   Do they find needing more academic support or social-emotional support?

b.   How often do they talk to their school counselor or school support psychologist?

c.   How often do their parents or guardians intervene or contact you or the school for support (academic, social-emotional, "day to day" living concerns)?

d.   What academic support is available for them on site?

e.   What type of social-emotional support has been most helpful for them to succeed in school (counselors, teachers, administrators, students, others)?

☐   f.   Do you have orientation programs or support clubs to help them get acquainted to our US school system? What are they and what activities/events do they offer?

Ending Questions:

1.   Do they feel adjusted or are they struggling as international students? Please explain.

2. What do you think, schools or school districts should do to improve their international students' program?

3. What do you see or notice, as a missing component in your international student program, to make it better?

4. What is your International student program's organizational structure look like?

5. Do you think the international student program here in the United States (in general) is doing well or does it need restructuring? Is it an organizational restructuring that is needed, or how the program is implemented?

6. Is there anything that you would like to add, that would help me, as a school leader, understand and help international students better?

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