STUDENTS FROM INDIA AT A MAJOR RESEARCH UNIVERSITY IN THE UNITED STATES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TRANSITION, ADJUSTMENT, AND TRANSFORMATION

A Dissertation

by

PRASHANTI CHENNAMSETTI

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2010

Major Subject: Educational Human Resource Development

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Approved by:

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May 2010

Major Subject: Educational Human Resource Development

ABSTRACT

Students from India at a Major Research University in the United States: A Phenomenological Study of Transition, Adjustment, and Transformation.

(May 2010)

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the phenomena of transition, adjustment, and transformation among adult graduate students from India, who made the transition to Nurture University in the southwestern part of the United States. According to *Open Doors* 2008, since 2001, a majority of the international students in U.S. higher education has been from India. Because of the significant cultural gap between India and the United States, Indian students encounter adjustment difficulties in the host country. To overcome such difficulties, students apply several coping strategies, which in turn lead to a transformational change among them.

The transitional adjustment literature on the experiences of the students from India has been very limited. This lack of attention to Indian students, despite the fact that their percentage has been increasing in the U.S. higher education, is an issue of concern and, therefore, calls for research.

To achieve this goal, a phenomenological data analysis process presented by Moustakas' modified version of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen's method was utilized. Data analysis generated the following themes: individual experiences, situational experiences, coping strategies/suggestions, and personal transformation. Under individual experiences, the participants described their experiences in the United States, and differences between their expectations and experiences in relation to Nurture University and general living. Under the situational experiences, study participants described the differences between being a student in the United States versus in India, and the differences between the academic systems of United States and that of India. Further, the application of imaginative variation in step 7 of the data analysis led to the identification of two sub-themes under the theme individual experiences: individual factors that helped in adjustment and individual factors that hindered adjustment in the United States. Sub-themes identified under situational experiences were situational factors that helped in adjustment and situational factors that hindered adjustment in the United States. This study has implications for the home country, host country, adult education, higher education, policy, theory and future research. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, qualitative procedures such as Epoche, thick descriptions of the phenomenon of transition and member checks, were employed.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents, Mrs. Bharati Chennamsetti and Mr. Sitaramaiah Chennamsetti, to Dr. James B. Kracht and to God.

Mamma, Nanagarande and Dr. Kracht, this page is not sufficient for me to express all that you have been doing for me. I, however, would like to convey to you that, today, I am what I am, and could reach this stage in my life only because of you. Without you, I wouldn't have been able to achieve anything. I dedicate this work to you for constantly bestowing me with your love, affection, empathy, care, support and guidance; for selflessly doing tasks, no matter how difficult, just for my happiness and never expecting anything in return. I will always be indebted to you. I can never match what you have done for me, but I know that nothing would match your happiness other than seeing me at this stage of completion.

I thank God for blessing me with such invaluable individuals in my life. I hope that everybody is blessed with such valuable assets in their lives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to convey my deepest appreciation to my committee chair, Dr. Mary V. Alfred. Thank you for your encouragement and support throughout the course of this research work. I am honored for having you as my chair.

Dr. Fredrick Nafukho, you provided me with the motivation and encouragement when I needed it the most. I will always remember you with gratitude for appreciating my work.

Dr. Fred Bonner, I knew nothing about phenomenology, but thank you for explaining the phenomenological data analysis process. Your passion and interest in phenomenology demonstrated to me that this methodology is doable.

Dr. Clark Moustakas, though I never met you, I would like to thank you for writing Phenomenological Research Methods. This book served as my Bhagwat Gita in accomplishing this study.

Thank you, Dr. Dominique Chlup for serving on my committee and for providing valuable feedback on my work.

Dr. Patricia Goodson, thank you for having stimulating discussions with me on writing, teaching me about systematic literature reviews, and for helping me develop my expertise in writing my first manuscript on learning contexts for publication.

Dr. Jack Vitek, thank you for investing your valuable time in reviewing my work and critiquing it constructively. I learned immensely from your feedback and will always value the volunteer time you spent on my manuscript.

Dr. Christine Stanley, thank you for agreeing to invest your valuable time in serving as my Graduate Teaching Academy mentor. You introduced me to the world of graduate teaching. I learned many facets of teaching under your tutelage, for which I will always be grateful.

Dr. Erlandson and Dr. Nash, I finally reached this stage! I will always remember you for your kindness and empathy. Thank you for being so caring and understanding.

My gratitude goes to Texas A&M University for honoring me with awards, in-state tuition and assistantships. This financial assistance was really needed and saved me from getting into a large debt, and from financial stress.

Jyotsana ma'am and Burman ma'am, throughout my high school and till date, I cherished your memories in my heart, but never got an opportunity to express them. Today, I choose this platform to express my feelings for you. Thank you for teaching us with such care and passion. I loved attending your classes.

I owe many thanks to my husband, Chandra, whom I could always count on. Thank you for your tremendous love and support. Your passion, energy, and enthusiasm made each day easy for me. Your confidence in me served as a booster for me. You are the wonderful thing that happened to me. Thank you ammammagarande, tateyagarende, Chinnamma, Nirmala akka, Jyothi akka, and jiju, for your support and affection. Thanks to my niece and nephews, Hanu, Ashu baby, and Jyotsna bangaram for your love and making me laugh with your sweet, baby talk. I love you all!

Finally, thanks to all those who indicated their willingness to participate in this study, as well as to the participants of this study. Though we were absolute strangers,

your willingness to assist me is so very much appreciated. This gesture of yours will always be remembered. Thank you for coming on time, for providing me with rich data and for being so committed. I wouldn't have been able to obtain such rich data without you all. Your valuable experiences, opinions and suggestions lay a path for my future research study. I wish you all the success and the very best for your careers. Hope you achieve everything that you wish and work for.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"The notion of transition generally indicates the progression from the familiar to the unknown and involves the adoption of new cultural, social, and cognitive challenges" (Prescott & Hellstén, 2005, p. 76).

In this quotation, Prescott and Hellstén (2005) articulate the concept of cross-cultural transition as a process that encompasses a change from an old to a new environment, culture, academic life and general living. It impacts the lives of the individuals encountering these changes. It also entails transformation among individuals' personality and their world view.

According to the *Open Doors* report, published by Institute of International Education (2008), a total of 582,984 international students traveled from their home countries to the United States in 2006-2007, in order to enroll in the U.S. higher educational institutions. Their numbers continued to increase, amounting for 623,805 in the year 2007-2008. Of these, India remained the leading country in sending its students to study in the United States (Open Doors, 2008). For instance, in 2001-2002, students

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This dissertation follows the style of *Adult Education Quarterly*.

from India (66,836) were the largest subgroup of international students, followed by China (63,211), South Korea (49,046), Japan (46,810), and Canada (26,514). Maintaining a similar pattern since 2001, estimates of 2007-2008 indicated that the majority of international students came from India (94,563), followed by China (81,127), South Korea (69,124), Japan (33,974), and Canada (29,051). Thus, the percentage of students from India (henceforth referred to interchangeably as "Indian students") has been increasing through 2008, indicating a consistent increase during the past seven years in the number of students from India enrolled in U.S. higher educational institutions (Bhandari & Koh, 2007; Chow & Marcus, 2008).

International students make the transition to the United States mainly to succeed academically and to enhance their employment opportunities (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999). Commenting on why international students make the transition to the United States, the U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, stated that "its transformative power, making certain that each and every individual can achieve whatever they can and become who they were really meant to be, is what makes for the richness of America" (Institute of International Education, 2008, p. 1). Although students make the transition from India to the United States in order to succeed academically, an unforeseen drawback is the difficulty in adapting to the new culture because of significant cultural gap (Yeh & Inose, 2003) between India and the United States. As Hellstén (2005) describes, "The transition period extends through the first year of

tertiary study and is widely acknowledged as being characterized by adjustment and other problems" (p. 76). Consistent with this statement, Kaur (2006) reported that, for students from India, factors such as course selection, English accent, working in unskilled jobs, instructor-student relationships, a less competitive academic environment, and registration, lead to difficulties in adjusting to the U.S. higher educational environment. Other factors, such as loneliness, financial issues, being solely responsible for household chores, being away from family and friends, and lack of social support, were also found to be catalysts in adjustment for students from India in the United States (Garimella, 2008).

The stress caused by such adjustment difficulties has been found to have potentially damaging effects on an international student's psychological and sociocultural well-being, resulting in low self-esteem, disappointment, resentment, anger, sadness, physical illness, and difficulty in interacting socially (Constantine, Okazaki & Utsey, 2004). In accordance with this finding, Shupe (2007) also found that because of the differences in cultures between the home country and the host country, international students face conflicts that directly manifest into decreased work satisfaction and whole life satisfaction. To help overcome such stress, Marsick (1998) stated, "Today, adults need to transform deeply held frames of reference to make sense of their experience in ways better suited to increasingly complex demands" (p. 119).

Accordingly, international students undergo a transformation in their viewpoints and perceptions regarding the academic and the social culture of the host country, and, consequently, develop a transformational change in their identity (Mezirow, 2000), which in turn enables them to better manage the academic, personal, and social culture of the host country. At the university level, efforts have also been made to provide a welcoming place for international students by streamlining the visa application and approval process (Bhandari & Koh, 2007; Chow & Marcus, 2008). While the results of these efforts proved to be very helpful, because of increase in the enrollment of Asian international students, which is expected to increase further in the near future (Bhandari & Koh, 2007; Chow & Marcus, 2008), a need has been expressed by Heggins and Jackson (2003) for university personnel to recognize factors that may impact the transition and the adjustment processes of Asian international students in U.S. institutions of higher education.

Statement of the Problem

Students enrolling in educational institutions in a foreign country encounter personal, social, organizational, academic and cultural difficulties in addition to the adjustment issues usually faced by the host nationals when they make the transition from high school to the university (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008). The influence of such unfamiliar experiences on individuals who make the transition from

their home country to the host country is termed “culture shock” (Zhou et al., 2008). For international students to adapt well and succeed academically, it is crucial that their adjustment be facilitated (Zhou et al., 2008). This can be achieved by gaining an understanding of international students’ transition and adjustment process (Sodowsky & Lai, 1997). Because international students come from different countries that differ widely in their culture, traditions, educational system, languages, and religions, it is vital to study the transition and adjustment process of students from each country individually. The experiences related to the transition of students from India, however, have either not been addressed in the transitional adjustment literature or have been combined with those of other international students, where the findings were generalized across students from various countries (Kaur, 2006). This lack of attention to the students from India in particular, despite the fact that their percentage in the U.S. higher education is increasing every year (Chow & Marcus, 2008), is an issue of concern and, therefore, calls for research focused on their transition, adjustment, and transformation processes. Additionally, for the higher education faculty to successfully facilitate learning, design, and to successfully deliver educational programs to international students, it could be beneficial for them to possess knowledge about different international student groups. Accordingly, studying the experiences of students from India who make the transition to the United States should make visible the factors that facilitate as well as hinder the learning and adjustment among this group.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and describe the phenomenon of transition from the view point of students from India who have made the transition to a university in the southwestern part of the United States (henceforth referred to as "Nurture University") to further their academic studies. This research into the phenomenon of student transitions to the United States adds to the literature on cross-cultural transitions, while informing future students from India of the individual and situational factors that facilitate and hinder the adjustment processes and the transformations that occur within them. This goal was achieved by discovering common themes in the experiences of the participants in their transitions to the United States. The overall goal of this phenomenological study was to capture the essence of the transition of students from India. More specifically, the following five questions were used as a guide to this study:

1. How do adult graduate students from India describe their transitional experiences from the country of origin to the higher education system in Nurture University?
2. What individual (the characteristics of an individual), and situational factors (the context and the characteristics of an institution) impact the transitional adjustment of students from India?
3. What suggestions or coping strategies can be applied to overcome the adjustment challenges?

4. What personal transformations do students from India undergo because of their transition to the United States?
5. What is the overall essence of the phenomenon of transition?

Why This Study?

Although many empirical studies on intercultural adjustments have been conducted on Asian international students (Constantine et al., 2004), research investigating the adjustment experiences of students from India in the U.S. higher education system did not increase to the same extent and remains very limited. The available studies on students from India highlight adjustment issues related to their transition (Garimella, 2008; Kaur, 2006). There is, however, little data on factors such as the role of positive thinking, support from the colleagues and staff, workload, and difficulty in communicating because of gap in the cultures on the adjustment of students from India. There also is very little information on how the personalities of students from India and their perceptions of the world are transformed as a result of their transition to the United States.

According to the Institute of International Education (2008) estimates, there is a rapid decline in the enrollment of international students from Kenya, Pakistan, Malaysia, Venezuela, Russia, Jamaica, and Singapore. For instance, enrollment of students from Malaysia declined from 7395 in 2001-2002 to zero in 2004-2008. Similarly, enrollment

of students from Kenya declined from 7097 in 2001-2002 to zero in 2005-2008 (Institute of International Education, 2008). Although the enrollment of students from India has been increasing with 66,836 in 2001-2002 to 94,563 in 2007-2008, a substantial decrease was estimated in 2004 from 80,466 to 76,503 in 2005.

Students from India are considered to play an important role in the U.S. higher education because of the cultural richness they bring to the academic institutions (Institute of International Education, 2008). They are also considered to significantly impact the local, state, and national economies of United States. In 2007-2008, students from India were found to contribute approximately $2.5 billion to the U.S. economy through their educational and living expenses (Institute of International Education, 2008). Therefore, any decline in the enrollment of students from India should be prevented. This could be achieved through developing an understanding of their adjustment experiences so as to support them in their personal and academic spheres.

Theoretical Frameworks

There were two factors that guided the selection of the theoretical approach to understanding the transitional experiences of students from India in the United States. Considering that this study focused on the impact of individual and situational factors on the adjustment of students from India in the United States, recognition of such literature on transitional adjustment that describes the role of these factors was crucial

in identifying the theoretical frameworks. Second, after their transition to the United States and after they experience life in the United States, international students undergo a transformation in their behavior, attitudes, personalities, and point of views about the world (Harris, 2003). The recognition of this aspect was also essential in selecting the theoretical framework. Two theoretical perspectives were appropriate in this study for understanding the experiences encountered by students from India in the United States. I drew, firstly, from the Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Stress and Coping Framework that specifically was derived from early psychological models that dealt with the life events and, secondly, from Mezirow's (2000) transformational learning theory that deals with how adult learners make sense of the experiences that they encounter in their lives. As the students from India make the transition from their home to the host country, they learn how to adapt and learn the behavior and culture of the new country and consequently experience transformations in their behaviors and perceptions. These theoretical approaches were relevant to this study because they explicitly attend to the individual and situational adjustments and transformational aspects of transition of students from India to the United States.

Significance

The purpose of this study was to capture the overall essence of the phenomenon of the transition of students from India. This involved, examining the impact of

individual and situational factors on the adjustment of the participants and the personal transformations that they underwent. This study therefore, aimed at adding to the body of knowledge on stress and coping mechanism and transformation among students from India by identifying the individual and situational factors that impact the adjustment of students from India specifically. This study also aimed at contributing to the literature by adding to the emerging body of work on transformational learning theory pertaining to the adaptive changes that occur among students from India leading to their adjustment.

The findings of this study aim to be significant to the policies regarding the successful integration of international students into the U.S. higher education system, by aiding counselors in devising programs for Indian students. Another contribution of this study will be through assisting International Student Services (ISS) in devising or improving orientation programs for incoming Indian students. More specifically, when international students come to a university in the United States, ISS conducts orientation programs to inform them about the academic expectations, educational system, American customs, student rules, and other related issues. The information from this study can be used by ISS to inform the incoming students regarding adjustment issues encountered by their peers already residing in United States and how they are coping up with those issues. This in turn could facilitate an understanding of various adjustment problems that are prevalent and of strategies to overcome them.

The practical significance of this study is that it provides adult educators with data on the schooling experiences of adult Indian students. As Alfred (2005) delineated,

> Taking a more transitional approach to the planning and delivery of educational programs can assist foreign-born students in affirming their ethnic identify as well as fulfilling their need to survive and cope within the new environment. In that sense, the school experience can become meaningful and relevant to the new comer who seeks to embrace both cultures. In order to become fully aware of the schooling experiences of immigrant adults, we must first understand how cultures, institutional structures, and personal agency intersect to inform that experience (p. 7).

Such data can be beneficial in planning the educational programs that would help these students adjust to the new environment they encounter in the U.S. higher educational system.

Definition of Terms

1. International Students: International students are defined as the students who in order to participate in international educational exchange programs, temporarily reside in a country other than their country of citizenship (Paige, 1990). Further, international students, unlike other ethnic minorities, refugees, or recent

immigrants, plan to return to their home countries eventually. Thus, they are the individuals in transition who intentionally choose to live in a foreign country in order to accomplish their educational objectives (Mori, 2000).

2. Indian Students: International students who are the citizens of India.
3. Adjustment: According to Searle and Ward (1990), adjustment can be defined in terms of psychological adjustment and sociocultural adjustment, (a) Psychological adjustment denotes the "feelings of well-being and satisfaction" (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 450); (b) Sociocultural adjustment denotes "the ability to fit in and to negotiate interactive aspects of the new culture" (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 450).
4. Transformation: Transformation is "the process of learning through critical self-reflection, which results in the reformulation of a meaning perspective to allow a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative understanding of one's experience" (Mezirow, 1990, p.xvi).
5. Individual Factors: These factors are the characteristics of an individual, such as personality, language ability, self-perceptions, attitude towards host (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001).
6. Situational Factors: These factors are the characteristics of a situation, such as social support, cultural distance, length of stay in the host country (Ward et al., 2001) and characteristics related to an institution such as course structure,

faculty, staff and colleague's support, and classroom structure.

7. Coping Strategies: Coping strategies, according to Lazarus and Folkman (1980) refer to the specific efforts, both behavioral and psychological, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events. Two general coping strategies have been distinguished: problem-solving strategies are efforts to do something active to alleviate stressful circumstances, whereas emotion-focused coping strategies involve efforts to regulate the emotional consequences of stressful or potentially stressful events (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985).

Organization of the Study

In Chapter I, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, rationale for the study, theoretical frameworks, significance and definition of the terms are presented. In Chapter II, the characteristics of Asian international students, theories of transitional adjustment, and research studies on the learning experiences and adjustment of Asian students are reported. Empirical studies related to the stress and coping theoretical framework that examine how individual and situational factors impact the transitional adjustment of international students are reported. Empirical studies related to transformation framework are also documented. These studies explore the transformations that occur among individuals who make the transition from their home country to their host country. The chapter also includes demographics of students from

India, research on their transitional adjustment and the coping strategies that are adopted to overcome the adjustment difficulties are reported. In Chapter III, the research design and methodology employed to carry out this study and the limitations of this study are described. In Chapter IV, the data analysis, results, and the essence of the phenomenon of transition are reported and in Chapter V, discussion of the findings and implications are presented.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Students attending universities in a culture, different from their own have to contend with novel social and educational organizations, behaviors and expectations, along with dealing with the problems of adjustment common to the students in the host country. The collective impact of such unfamiliar experiences on cultural travelers in general is termed as 'culture shock' (Zhou et al., 2008). For the international students to adapt well and succeed academically, it is crucial that the quality of their psychological, sociocultural and educational experiences be promoted (Zhou et al., 2008). This, according to Sodowsky and Lai (1997), can be achieved through conducting research related to international students' transition and adjustment processes. Accordingly, this study aimed at achieving an increased understanding of the transition and adjustment processes and also examined how these processes led to transformational learning among students from India in particular. This study explored the phenomenon of transition from the perspective of students from India who have made the transition to the United States to participate in higher education. The impact of individual and situational factors on the adjustment of Indian students in the United States was examined. Further, it explored the transformations in the personalities and point of view of Indian students because of their transition to the United States. The literature review

examined the Asian students in general and finally focused on students from India. Accordingly, the review focused on the following concepts: (a) characteristics of Asian international students (b) theories of transitional adjustment (c) research studies related to the learning experiences and adjustment of Asian students (d) theoretical frameworks and related empirical studies to explore transitional adjustment (e) demographics of students from India (f) research on transitional adjustment of students from India, and (g) description of coping strategies that help international students in general to overcome the adjustment difficulties.

Characteristics of Asian International Students

Kitano and Daniels (1990) characterized international students in terms of their academic orientation, state of health, beliefs and values. Asian international students are considered to be more concerned about their academics (Kitano & Daniels, 1990). They seek and get enrolled into well-respected universities and have the lowest college dropout rate when compared to other racial-ethnic groups (DePalma, 1991).

Similar characteristics were found in a quantitative study conducted by Littlewood (2000). A sample size of 2,307 students from eight Asian countries, representing Mainland China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and Brunei and 349 students from three European countries representing Finland, Germany and Spain were used. The study revealed that Asian students prefer

group activities, team work, and a preference to create an amiable and harmonious atmosphere within the group. They preferred to solve problems in groups, organize their own learning, explore knowledge by themselves and find their own answers as opposed to being given facts from their tutors. They preferred independence and being active in learning. Findings also indicated that Asian international students were interested in knowing the practical purpose and applicability of the tasks given to them.

This finding was reaffirmed in a qualitative study on the perceptions of Asian students conducted by Li and Campbell (2008). A sample of 22 Asian students was used. Findings indicated Asian students to value the significance of group discussions within the classrooms. They were found to consider group activities as an opportunity to interact with students from other cultures and backgrounds, improve their English-language skills, enhance their cultural understanding, and to develop intercultural communication skills.

To examine the adjustment processes of Asian international students, several studies have been conducted. For instance, Asian international students who have made the transition from their home country to the host country were found to encounter culture shock, symptoms of which included homesickness, loneliness (Heggins & Jackson, 2003), irritability, excessive concern with health, depression, and lowered work performance (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). To avoid these symptoms they were found to maintain connections with their culture through reading books, speaking their

native language, participating in cultural festivals, socializing and studying with other Asian international students (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). In this process, however, they were found to isolate themselves from the nationals, which sometimes prevents them from getting involved in the university wide activities (Shupe, 2007).

Researchers have also indicated Asian international students to be high achievers in academics (e.g., Suzuki, 1980). The reasons for academic success among Asian international students are considered to be their values that emphasize hard work, resilience, discipline, and respect for authority (Lin & Yi, 1997). Because of their emphasis on harmony and respect for authority, many of them were found to prevent themselves from sharing their feelings or emotions, express their opinions or disagreements to anyone, especially to authority figures. Thus, instead of emphasizing personal rights and assertiveness, Asian international students were found to emphasize on the importance of patience, harmony, respect and deference, and remain quiet, reserved and non-assertive (Lin & Yi, 1997). These qualities may cause a hindrance for them to participate in classroom activities, which, according to Heggins and Jackson (2003) leads to a difficulty in navigating the academic curriculum for Asian international students. In order to understand such difficulties and other adjustment processes among individuals making the transition from home country to the host country, researchers (e.g., Berry, 2005) developed transitional theories.

Theories of Transitional Adjustment

To explain the stages involved in the adaptation process, various adaptation models have been proposed. Alfred (2005) theorized that an understanding of these models assist in devising intervention strategies that are consistent with culturally competent teaching. Thus, two models of adaptation, namely assimilation and acculturation are described in the following section.

Assimilation Theory

Alfred (1995) defined assimilation as the "total absorption into the dominant culture" (p. 89). This definition echoes with Berry's (2005) definition according to whom, assimilation is a process where the individuals from non-dominant group seek to be a part of the dominant group as opposed to maintaining their cultural identity. Alba and Nee (1997) define assimilation as the weakening, and at its endpoint of disappearance, of an ethnic/racial, cultural and social distinction.

Individuals, who assimilate, prefer to shed their cultural heritage and become absorbed into the host culture (Berry, 2005; Hall, Lopez, & Bansal, 2001). Hall et al. documented that those individuals whose culture of origin is similar to that of the host culture can assimilate more easily into the host culture. Assimilating into a new culture, however, may not be easy if the individuals are different from those of the host country. The differences could be in terms of cultural practices, and traditions (Williams & Berry,

1991). According to Hall et al., although an individual becomes a competent participant in the host culture, he or she will always be identified as a member of the minority culture. Thus, an assimilated individual might suffer from a sense of alienation and isolation until he or she has been accepted and perceives that acceptance within the new culture (Alfred, 1995). Consequences of assimilation are indicated in the form of loss of one's original cultural identity and rejection by both, one's culture of origin and the host culture (Hall et al, 2001).

Greenman and Xie (2008) investigated the relationship between assimilation and the well-being of immigrant children. They analyzed the data from the *National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health*, a school-based survey of adolescents in grades 7–12 and found that for Asian children, assimilation is positively related to the educational outcomes, high self-esteem, and low depression. However, it was also found that assimilation is positively associated with more delinquent and violent behavior and higher substance use. These findings are consistent with the previous research that indicated an association between higher assimilation and higher risks of delinquency and substance abuse (Zhou & Bankston, 1994). Hall et al. argue that difficulties associated with the assimilation model can be improved by using the acculturation model, which has been developed to understand the adjustment processes and behavioral patterns of individuals who travel from their home country to the host country.

Acculturation Theory

Alfred (1995) emphasizes a major difference between the acculturation and assimilation models, noting that "With the assimilation process, the individual gives up her minority cultural identity and assumes the cultural identity of the majority group. The acculturation model, on the other hand, assumes that the individual becomes competent in the majority culture, while retaining and identifying with his or her minority culture" (p. 94). Hall and his colleagues further document that acculturation varies to the extent that an individual retains her culture of origin, becomes part of the host culture, and becomes part of a third culture that results from a fusion of the culture of origin and the host culture. Acculturation assumes that effects of one's culture of origin persist and continue to impact individual's interactions with the host culture (Hall et al., 2001). The acculturation process is considered to be multidimensional, requiring adjustments on various fronts, such as physical, psychological, financial, spiritual, social, language, and family (Mui & Kang, 2006).

Berry (1997) considered assimilation to be one of the acculturation strategies. Taking into consideration the extent to which individuals in a new country give importance to maintaining their own culture and mingle with other cultural groups, Berry generated four acculturation strategies: integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization and suggested that the behavior patterns for acculturating individuals varies, which can be explained through the acculturation strategies. Integration can only

happen when individuals from both the cultures accept cultural diversity (Berry, 1997). In other words, for integration to take place, a positive and healthy atmosphere among the cultural groups is required (Berry, 1997). Integration involves the selective adoption of new behaviors from the larger society and retention of valued features of one's cultural heritage. Separation strategy is opposite of assimilation, wherein the individuals hold on to their own culture and avoid interacting with the other cultures. The fewest behavioral changes result from the separation strategy. Integration strategy is where individuals value their own culture and also interact with individuals of the host country. Assimilation strategy, on the other hand, involves individuals interacting with the culture of the country they migrated to, and giving up their own cultural identity. Lastly, marginalization strategy is often associated with major cultural heritage loss and the appearance of a number of dysfunctional and deviant behaviors, such as, delinquency and substance and familial abuse (Berry, 1997).

Berry (2005) theorized that acculturation strategies are significantly related with the adjustment process of international students. Integration has been found to lead to the most successful adjustment whereas, marginalization has been found to be the least successful adjustment strategy. Further, integration strategy was found to reduce stress to a great extent, whereas marginalization strategy was found to lead to maximum stress. Assimilation and separation strategies were found to lead to intermediate stress, with sometimes each one of them being more stressful than the other (Berry, 2005). For

psychological adaptation (one's psychological and physical well-being) as well as sociocultural adaptation (the extent to which the acculturating individual is able to successfully manage daily life in the new cultural context), individuals who adopted integration strategy appeared to be better adjusted. On the other hand, those who adopted the marginalized strategy were found to be least adjusted (Berry, 2005).

Research Studies on the Learning Experiences and Adjustment of Asian Students

Acculturation impacts the psychological, educational, and sociocultural well being of students (Berry, 2005). Therefore, it is imperative to understand the factors that cause acculturative stress, so as to design strategies to reduce the impact of stress causing factors. The following section will examine the empirical studies to identify two such causes, namely, language proficiency and social interaction that may lead to acculturative stress among Asian international students in a new country. Studies dealing with these two concepts are chosen as the literature on transitional adjustment indicates that majority of the challenges that international students encounter in their host countries mainly fall under these two categories (Heggins & Jackson, 2003; Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker & Al-Timimi, 2004).

Language Proficiency

One of the major obstacles Asian international students encounter in the United States educational setting, is the lack of English language proficiency (Heggins & Jackson, 2003). Because of the language problem, Heggins and Jackson noted that they may encounter challenges in taking down notes, answering questions, and writing essays. Heggins and Jackson further conducted a qualitative study on 38 Asian students to investigate the experiences of making transition through an American Midwestern Research University. Students from China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam were used for this study. Results indicated that it was imperative for Asian international students to develop confidence within their English communication skills to be able to successfully adjust to the curriculum within the collegiate experience.

These findings were reaffirmed in two studies conducted by Swagler and Ellis (2003). They used qualitative as well as quantitative methodologies to investigate the cross-cultural adjustment of Taiwanese students attending graduate school in the United States. The results of the qualitative study conducted with 24 Taiwanese students regarding their experiences in the United States revealed themes of language barriers and confidence about speaking English with Americans. The results of the quantitative study with a sample size of 67 students indicated a relation between their adjustment level and their fear of communicating in English. Participants identified English as their major problem in the United States. They believed that higher ability to converse in English led

to more positive experience in the United States. Further, it was found that the struggle to communicate in English proved to be a real obstacle in adapting to the American higher education system. Additionally, because communication is necessary for studying, day to day living, and making friends with the Americans, the lack of English language proficiency led to adjustment problems (Swagler & Ellis, 2003).

Similarly, Perruci and Hu (1995) conducted a quantitative study to examine the academic and social life experiences of international graduate students and the factors that influence their response to the host culture and their academic and social experiences. They used a population of 1200 international students from varied countries. They found that being proficient in English language is one of the most important aspects that contribute to a favorable academic and social experience. The researchers further found that graduate international students, who were confident about their written, spoken, and reading skills in English, had a broader range of positive academic and social experiences. The students proficient in English language were found to report more satisfaction with their academic programs, teaching or research assistantships, financial assistance, and social relations.

Another similar quantitative study was conducted by Poyrazli and his colleagues to examine the impact of English language on international student adjustment. They used a sample of 141 European, Asian, Middle Eastern, Latino/a, African students, and others who did not indicate their ethnicity. Their results indicated English proficiency to

contribute uniquely to the reduction in students' acculturative stress. Students who were more proficient in English experienced lower levels of acculturative stress. They further found that lack of English skills led to lower levels of adjustment (Poyrazli et al., 2004).

Summary

An examination of the findings of the above studies indicates that English proficiency plays a crucial role in the adjustment of international students. International students who were more efficient in speaking and writing English, were more satisfied and well adjusted in the United States. However, students who lacked the skills in English had more acculturative stress and lower levels of adjustment. For students from India, however, English language may not be a barrier, as their medium of instruction in the home country being primarily English. They may not encounter difficulties in taking notes or writing essays. There might, however, be other factors, such as the American accent which may hinder their ability to interact socially, which in turn could cause hindrances in adjusting to the United States educational setting. This calls for an examination of the influence of social interactions on the adjustment of international students.

Social Interactions

Several researchers have indicated the ability to interact socially to have a crucial impact on transitional adjustment (Li & Gasser, 2005; Shupe, 2007). Social interactions and forming social networks is important because among international students, it is closely related to adjustment variables (Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002). According to Poyrazli et al. (2004), students with higher levels of social support obtained through social interactions tend to experience lower levels of acculturative stress. On the other hand, lack of social support is related to their lower levels of adjustment. This section illustrates empirical studies indicating how social interactions lower acculturative stress and increase satisfaction with the learning experiences in the Universities of the United States.

Perruci and Hu (1995) conducted a quantitative study to examine the academic and social life experiences of international graduate students and the factors that influence their response to the host culture and their academic and social experiences. The researchers used a population of 1200 international students from varied countries and found that the international graduate students' satisfaction, with their academic program increased as they interacted more with the American students. On the other hand, less interaction with American students led to less satisfaction and more adjustment difficulties.

This finding was reaffirmed in three other quantitative studies that examined the relation between international students' interaction with host students and their adjustment to the host country (Abe, Talbot & Geelhoed, 1998; Li & Gasser, 2005; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002). Using 60 students from Europe, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East, Abe and colleagues found that ongoing interactions with the Americans and attending American social events, such as tailgate parties, movies, or homecoming events, enhanced international students' interpersonal skills that in turn led to a higher level of social adjustment. Rajapaksa and Dundes used 182 students ranging from 17 to 25 years and belonged to various countries, such as Hungary (17 %), India, Srilanka (17%), Soviet Union (6%), Central and South America (5%), West Africa (6%), East Africa (8%), Europe and Scandinavia (23%), West Indies (5%), and Australia (1%). They found that those students who were satisfied with their social network were more likely to be contented and less likely to feel lonely or homesick. Li and Gasser (2005) used a total of 117 Asian international students who came from 17 countries and regions in Asia. The results of this study suggested that when Asian students had contacts with Americans, their sociocultural adjustment process was more successful. The researchers noted that the increased amount of contact with the Americans enabled the Asian students to develop local networks, understand the local cultures, and acquire social skills necessary for the effective adjustment to the new culture (Abe, et al., 1998; Li & Gasser, 2005; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002).

Supporting the above findings, Toyokawa and Toyokawa (2002) reported the benefits of social interaction by conducting a quantitative study using 85 Japanese students. They investigated the relationship between the level of engagement in extracurricular activities of Japanese students studying in the United States and their academic involvement and psychological health. The results indicated that the international students become more confident when they interact with Americans in social settings through out-of-class activities. Further, the researchers theorized from the perspective of an educational model that the process of learning values, customs, and the social skills through interactions with people in the host country is an imperative aspect of international students' adjustment. Therefore, they concluded that gaining social competence through participating in extracurricular activities may help international students to enhance their levels of self-esteem.

Apart from increasing the confidence of international students, social interactions have been found to play a crucial role in academics as well (Misra, Crist & Burant, 2003; Trice, 2004; Ying, 2005). Misra et al. conducted a quantitative study to examine the relationships among academic stressors and perceived social support among 143 international students. They found that in order to avoid the feelings of social outcasts, it is very crucial for international students to have social interactions in order to avoid greater academic stress. This finding was supported in a quantitative study conducted by Trice. The purpose of Trice's study was to detail the social patterns of 497 graduate

international students. It was found that contact with American students positively influenced international students' academic experiences, while on the other hand, limited social contact with host nationals was related to the feelings of anxiety, depression, alienation, and had negative impact on the academic life of the international students. It was further found that international students who did not interact with Americans or expressed concerns about how to interact with Americans had difficulty negotiating within the American culture and thus felt more isolated and less adjusted. Reaffirming these findings, Ying (2005) examined acculturative stressors in Taiwanese international students over a two-year period, using quantitative methodology. The sample consisted of 216 international graduate students from Taiwan. It was found that cross-cultural friendships accrue the competence, adjustment and quality of overseas study among Taiwanese and other immigrant Chinese students.

Being able to interact socially was also shown to have a positive impact on the psychological well being of international students. For instance, Shupe (2007) conducted a quantitative study to investigate the nature of interpersonal conflicts and its influence on the individuals involved, by using 231 international students. The results suggested that close interpersonal relationships with host nationals lead to successful adaptation. Conversely, intercultural conflicts were found to be stressful for students, contributing to the overall stressfulness inherent in the intercultural adjustment process. The

international students' conflicts were directly related to decreased work satisfaction, degradation in psychological well-being and health conditions.

Summary

The above studies reveal that being able to interact socially helps international students to adjust psychologically and socioculturally in the U.S. higher education. Students who interact socially with individuals of the host country experience lower levels of acculturative stress, are more satisfied, and feel less lonely. These qualities in turn help them acquire skills that are essential for better adjustment in the host country. On the other hand, students who have difficulties in interacting with the individuals of the host country are found to have more adjustment problems and increased acculturative stress.

In the above studies, international students of different nationalities have been grouped together and the findings of the studies have been generalized. Therefore, the extent to which these findings are applicable specifically to the students from India is dubious. In the above findings, it is indicated that students who are proficient in English interact with American students more confidently. The medium of instruction for Indian students is in English; however, their linguistic style and phonetics are different from that used in the United States. Thus, it may be speculated that Indian students may not have difficulty in studying or writing English; however, these students may have

difficulty in communicating in English. There is a need to investigate this aspect of their experiences. Also, as mentioned earlier, international students are not a homogeneous group of students. Therefore, there is a need for a study that examines the unique characteristics and experiences of different international student groups. Accordingly I proposed to examine the experiences of students from India specifically.

Theoretical Frameworks to Study Transitional Adjustment

To capture the meaning that Indian students attribute to their experiences in the United States, it is important to understand the impact of individual and situational factors, and transformation on the transitional experiences of these students. Several frameworks have been proposed to analyze the transitional adjustment. Two such frameworks used in this study are Stress and Coping Framework and Transformational Learning Theory. Stress and Coping Framework was proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) to examine the influence of individual and situational factors on transitional adjustment, and the Transformational Learning Theory was proposed by Mezirow (2000) to understand the transformation among individuals.

Stress and Coping Framework

The Stress and Coping framework that originated from the psychological models, considers adjustment as an active process where individuals manage stress at two levels:

individual and situational (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The underlying assumption of the Stress and Coping Framework is that when individuals encounter a stressful event, they attach personal meaning to the event, which in turn influences the strategies that people adopt to cope with the event (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Using this framework, empirical studies have been conducted to study the effects of individual factors, such as personality factors, life changes, and attitudes toward the hosts, and situational factors, such as social support, and new environments on individuals' transitional adjustment (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). Initially, utilizing the Stress and Coping Framework, Searle and Ward (1990) defined psychological adjustment as "feelings of well-being and satisfaction" (p. 450). Ward and Rana-Deuba (2000) noted, "The Stress and Coping Framework is well-suited to accommodate the investigation of home and host culture influences on cross-cultural adjustment" (p. 292). Later, several studies attempted to examine the individual and situational factors involved in psychological adjustment of international students (e.g. Brown & Halloway, 2008; Gu, Schweisfurth & Day, 2008).

Individual Factors and Their Role in Transitional Adjustment

The two individual factors considered to have a major impact among Asian international students in the United States are, the lack of English language proficiency (Brown & Halloway, 2008; Heggins & Jackson, 2003; Swagler & Ellis, 2003) and ability to interact socially (Li & Gasser, 2005; Shupe, 2007; Trice, 2004). Heggins and

Jackson conducted a qualitative study to investigate the experiences of Asian students making the transition to an American Midwestern Research University. Using interview method, they studied 38 Asian students hailing from China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. Results indicated that it was imperative for Asian international students to develop confidence in their English communication skills to successfully adjust to the college curriculum. These findings were reaffirmed in two other studies conducted by Swagler and Ellis. They used an interview method as well as questionnaire method to investigate the adjustment of Taiwanese students who made the transition to the United States for their graduate studies. The results of the first study of 24 Taiwanese students indicated that they encountered difficulties with English language and lacked confidence in conversing with the Americans. The results of the second study, with a sample size of 67 students, indicated a relationship between their adjustment level and their fear of communicating in English. Participants identified English as their major problem in the United States. They believed that greater ability to converse in English would lead to a more positive experience. Because communication is necessary for studying, living pragmatics, and making friends with Americans, the lack of speaking skills in English led to adjustment problems (Swagler & Ellis, 2003).

Reconfirming these findings, Brown and Holloway (2008), in order to understand the psychological adjustment processes of international students, conducted an ethnographic study of 150 postgraduate international students at a university in the

south of England. Two-thirds of the sample was from South East Asia, while the rest were from Europe, Africa and the Middle East. The vocabulary that the participants repeatedly used regarding their capability to converse in English language were "nervous, scared, embarrassed, ashamed, not confident, frightened, panic, confused and shy" (Brown & Halloway, 2008, p. 239), indicating that students encounter obstacles because of difficulties with their English language.

Another individual factor found to have an impact on international students is taking the initiative to interact socially. Trice (2004) conducted a quantitative study to detail the psychological well being of 497 international graduate students from India, China, Japan, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Korea, Pakistan, Europe, Middle East, Canada, Australia, and Africa. Results indicated that limited social contact with host nationals negatively impacts psychological well-being, leading to feelings of anxiety, depression, and alienation. Lack of social contact with the host nationals negatively impacted the academic life of the international students (Trice, 2004). Reaffirming these findings, a quantitative study was conducted by Li and Gazzer (2005) to explore the impact of international students networking capabilities with the local individuals on their adjustment. Using a survey method, they studied a total of 117 Asian international students. The results indicated that networking with Americans led to a positive impact on the adjustment. The authors note that increased contact with the Americans enabled the Asian students in developing a network of American friends, who acquainted them

with the American culture, which in turn helped in successful adjustment to the U.S. culture. Furthermore, mingling with Americans enhanced Asian students' self-efficacy (Li & Gasser, 2005). Emphasizing the importance of social interactions, Shupe (2007) conducted a quantitative study to explore the social disputes and its influence on individuals, using 231 international student participants. The results suggested that successful networking with the individuals from the host country lead to an effective adjustment. Conversely, intercultural conflicts were found to develop stress among students, leading to an unsuccessful adjustment through degradation in psychological well-being and health conditions.

In summary, English proficiency has been found to be directly related to the adjustment of international students. International students who were more efficient in conversing and writing in English were more satisfied and well adjusted in the United States. Students who lacked the skills in English, however, experienced lower levels of adjustment and stress in the host country. Similarly, social interaction has been found to play a crucial role in the adjustment of international students. Students, who interact socially with individuals of the host country, experience lower levels of acculturative stress, feel less alienated, have more satisfaction with their overall experience and are better equipped and adjusted in the host country.

Along with these individual factors, situational factors, such as the environment and culture of the host country have also been found to impact the adjustment of the international students (e.g. Gu et al., 2008)

Situational Factors and Their Role in Transitional Adjustment

Situational factors found to impact the transitional adjustment are social support, academic environment, new culture and new environment (Brown & Halloway, 2008; Gu et al., 2008; Poyrazli et al., 2004). Poyrazli and colleagues conducted a quantitative study to examine the stress causing factors among international students residing in the United States, using a sample of 141 European, Asian, Middle Eastern, Latino/a, African students, along with others who did not indicate their ethnicity. The results indicate the benefits of having social support in reducing the stress among the students. Similarly, lack of social support increased difficulties in adjustment (Poyrazli et al., 2004). Ramsay, Jones and Barker (2007) conducted a quantitative study using 195 Australian students and 85 students from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia and found that various types of social support, such as emotional, companionship, informational, and practical, increase the physical and psychological adjustment of international students. Exploring other situational factors, Gu et al. (2008) conducted longitudinal, mixed methods research to explore the experiences of 1,288 undergraduate international students at four universities in the United Kingdom. They found that the participants felt

rejected and alienated because of situational factors, such as societal values, new academic environment, and the new culture. One of their participants commented:

> Back home I had a career and a future. I was in control of my own life, but I've lost track of that now. Because, I had authority [as a hotel manager]. Here I'm virtually powerless. ... Sometimes I miss "home". Sometimes I miss my parents. Sometimes I miss my mum. Sometimes I just miss being a manager in the hotel. I miss my workplace. (Gu et al., 2008, p. 15)

Situational factors related to academics were also found to impact students' adjustment. Coming across new teaching styles hindered the participants' adjustment, while feedback from professors was found to assist in adjustment (Gu et al., 2008). Investigating how international students felt in a new situation and culture, Brown and Holloway (2008) conducted a qualitative study, utilizing a sample size of 150, from South East Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Many students confessed a sense of disorientation and confusion in the host country. The findings suggest that these students "did not know how to behave in everyday situations, how to interpret others' behavior" (p. 239). For instance, some students said, "I don't know what to do! with reference to a myriad of phenomena: how to queue, how to address tutors, how to engage in small talk, how close to stand to people, how to read emotion" (p. 239). Furthermore, anxiety was found to exist commonly among these students, which was reflected in the interviews through the usage of words like "scared, frightened, unsure,

nervous, anxious, stressed and uncertain" (p. 239). They described that most students were "afraid of being caught up in misunderstandings that could arise due to their own lack of awareness of what is culturally acceptable" (Brown & Halloway, 2008, p. 239).

In summary, it may be concluded that situational factors play a major role in the adjustment. Social, emotional, informational, practical support and feedback from the faculty, all assist in successful adjustment in the host country. On the other hand, situational factors such as lack of support system, new teaching styles, difficulty in interpreting foreigner's behaviors, lack of understanding of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors all contribute to difficulty in adjusting to the new country and environment.

Undertaking steps to handle the impact of various individual and situational factors on adjustment in a new country leads to developmental transitions (Daloz, 1999; Rossiter, 1999) among international students. Therefore, an understanding of transformational learning theory is considered vital in understanding the personal transformations among the international students who make the transition to a foreign country for higher education.

Transformational Learning Theory

According to Mezirow (2000), adult development is a process of perspective transformation. Perspective transformation refers to "the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions within which new experience is assimilated and transformed by one's past

experience" (Mezirow, 1981, p. 6). Many researchers believe adult students to be in developmental transitions, utilizing educational experiences to facilitate opportunity for transformation in their perspectives (Daloz, 1999; Rossiter, 1999). From these insights, we could state that international students upon their transition to the United States might undergo developmental changes as they encounter newer experiences that result in transformation in their perspectives. Therefore, transformational adult learning theory is considered vital in informing this study. Mezirow (1996) noted that in transformative learning "learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (p.162).

Taylor (2008) posits that there are three alternative conceptions of transformative learning: psychoanalytic, psychodevelopmental, and social emancipatory. He described the psychoanalytic view of transformative learning as a lifelong process, where an individual reflects on one's own psychic structures, such as, ego, shadow, persona, and collective unconscious to understand oneself. This promotes new talents, a sense of empowerment, confidence, and self-responsibility. A psychodevelopmental view of transformative learning involves continuous growth. It includes epistemological change (how we make meaning). This view places importance on the role of relationships, contexts and holistic ways of knowing (Daloz, 1986). The third perspective, a social-emancipatory view is grounded mainly in the work of Paulo Freire and focuses on

developing an "ontological vocation" (Freire, 1984, p. 12). Ontological vocation is a theory, where people are constantly reflecting and acting on the transformation of the world around them in order to make it a more equitable place to live (Taylor, 2008). Transformation theory is considered to have some vital implications for working with adult learners. Clark (1993) noted that the process of transformation "produces more far-reaching changes in the learners than does learning in general and …these changes have a significant impact on the learner's subsequent experiences. In short, transformational learning shapes people; they are different afterward, in ways both they and others can recognize" (p. 47). Other researchers have utilized the concepts of transformational learning in studying international students' transitions.

Harris (2003), in order to understand international students' learning journeys in the United States and their strategies to manage their cross-cultural transitions, conducted a narrative inquiry study, utilizing 10 undergraduate and graduate international students. He investigated their abilities to accomplish change and personal growth at a U.S. university. Results indicated that being a cross-cultural learner was a challenge and "required a certain amount of risk, courage, determination and persistence to succeed in doing so" (Harris, 2003, p.106). Findings indicated that culture shock caused extreme anxiety among the students. Harris viewed cross-cultural transition as "part of personal transformation from one culture to another. It was an experience in

change, in self-understanding, and in developing new capacities for understanding different world views" (Harris, 2003, p. 130).

Exploring how cross-cultural transitions lead to transformations among travelers, Gu et al. (2008), utilizing 1,288 undergraduate international students in their longitudinal, mixed-methods study observed participants in their first year and examined transformations in them after two years. They found that most of their participants transformed into organized, committed, confident individuals. They began to find the usefulness of class discussions. They understood the host culture better and became appreciative of their own cultural values. They transformed into individuals who understood and accepted people from other cultures and values, as one of the participants commented, "It's an interesting experience and you can see how different the countries in the world are and how different people behave and for them that is the natural way and that is how you should behave. ... It's a very valuable learning experience ..." (p. 16). The participants were also found to have transformed into independent, open-minded individuals with better interpersonal and communication abilities (Gu et al., 2008). One of the significant points observed in the above mentioned studies is that, none of them specifically examined the experiences of students from India and their transitional adjustment, indicating a gap in the literature on the students from India.

Demographics of Students from India

Students from India come from a country comprised of 28 states and seven union territories, with immense diversity in terms of ethnicity, religion and language. Hinduism is the main religion practiced by the majority of the population, followed by Muslims and smaller minorities such as Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and Zoroastrians. This multilingual, multi-religious, and multicultural society is home to 29 languages recognized as mother-tongues with over 1000 dialects.

India is home to the world's oldest civilization known as the Indus Valley civilization (2500-1700 BCE) that flourished across present-day India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan (Altekar, 1965; Garten, 2006). Nalanda University, the earliest known university system in India established by Buddhist monks in the northern state of Bihar, was dated 427 – 1197 BCE (Altekar, 1965; Garten, 2006). Indian civilization has many instances of higher learning in the fields of astronomy, mathematics and the ancient branch of medicine called Ayurveda (Clark, 1930). For instance, in astronomy, the scholar Aryabhatta discovered that the earth rotates on its own axis. Aryabhatta also established the value of zero in the numerical system (Clark, 1930).

In the modern era, immigrants from India arrived in the Americas as early as the middle of the nineteenth century. The earliest Indian permanent settlers were seen in California where they were landowners. The offshoot of this settlement witnessed the first Indian students in the U.S. higher education system at the beginning of the twentieth

century (Nimbark, 1980). During 1947-1965, about 6,000 urban, professional, and academic Asian Indians immigrated to the United States, becoming part of high-level employable fields across many U.S. cities. After 1965, over 100,000 such professionals arrived in the United States, a majority of them arriving initially on student or exchange visitor visas, pursuing graduate degrees in a variety of disciplines (Nimbark, 1980).

The most popular fields of study for international students at the U.S. universities continue to be business, management, and engineering, with specific fields such as computer science, information technology and medical sciences based on the skill sets needed in their home country (Nimbark, 1980). The majority of students from India enroll in graduate school as opposed to undergraduate school, for various reasons. Financially, affording a two-year study period in the United States University is easier, as opposed to a four year undergraduate education. It may be easier to obtain a student visa as a graduate student than as an undergraduate student. Parents could be more comfortable sending much older children to a new country than they are with younger ones (Nimbark, 1980). The enrollment of graduate and small number of undergraduate students from India in the United States has increased from 42,337 in 1999-2000 to 94,563 in 2007-2008, with India being the leading country in sending its students to the United States (Institute of International Education, 2008).

Research on Transitional Adjustment of Students from India

The research studies mentioned in the previous section detailed issues of international students from the Asian continent as a whole. Various electronic searches were performed to find literature pertaining to students from India specifically. Consequently, a vacuum was found in the literature that focuses specifically on students from India. Further, using descriptors in the literature search, such as *adjustment, personality, situational, institutional, transformation, students from India*, minimized the scholarly publications to a large extent. During the literature review process, the following two research studies, pertaining to students from India were obtained.

Kaur (2006) conducted a qualitative study to understand the academic adjustment experiences of six Asian Indian international students who were pursuing their graduate studies in the United States. Her study indicated that some factors helped, while others hindered the adjustment of these students. The factors that helped in adjustment were listening, observing and communicating with American peers, fewer students in the class, talking to senior students, having an Indian community, and use of the computer laboratory and the library.

A factor found to hinder the adjustment was, in-class participation; all participants agreed that they had to get used to the more practical approach to education in the United States. Five participants thought that it was very hard to talk to the U.S. instructors when they had questions and concerns because instructors were not

immediately available to them for discussion, like they were in India. Additionally, adjusting to the American accent and a new method of presentation of the learning material was difficult. In the United States, instructors expect students to be succinct and more to the point and this was found to be difficult for the participants. Interfering with their academic advancement were the factors of living alone; meeting deadlines; registration, course selection and prerequisites; a less competitive environment, and working unskilled jobs along with studying. The suggestions that Kaur's participants gave for successful adjustment were to be financially prepared, to become familiar with requirements for immunization and for obtaining a Social Security Number, and learning to search for on-campus jobs.

The second study on students from India was conducted by Garimella (2008). She conducted a qualitative study on the experiences of 15 Indian immigrants in the United States. In summary, she found that support from spouse and friends help in adjustment. Loneliness, boredom, lack of financial security, inexperience in doing household chores, missing family in India, and not being fluent in English were found to hinder the adjustment of the participants. After making the transition and having lived in the United States for few years, some participants were found to report themselves changing into more independent and confident individuals. One participant also reported a change in her dressing style. The participants in Garimella's study provided a few tips for successful adjustment, which included being open-minded, proactively learning U.S.

culture, being able to drive, practicing English, being able to manage the finances and being less dependent.

In summary, both the above mentioned studies provided helpful information in designing this study. The present study, however, utilized the phenomenological research methodology that deeply examined the phenomenon of transition, adjustment, and transformation. It's a more holistic study that explored the transition into a new country, culture, community, and the university campus, apart from describing the experiences of students' academic life in the United States. Additionally, by providing the individual and the composite structural descriptions, this study provided the reasoning for why the students from India felt the way they did.

Students from India and international students in general, upon their transition to their host country are required to adapt to the life of their host country for successful adjustment. In the process, they might encounter certain adjustment difficulties, for which they apply certain coping strategies (e.g., Heggins & Jackson, 2003; Ye, 2006). An understanding of the coping strategies that may enable the international students to adjust well in a new environment and consequently succeed in academic and general life in the host country could be valuable.

Coping Strategies

Heggins and Jackson (2003) theorized that international students encounter difficulties in acculturating when they make the transition to the American universities. Similarly, Abe, and colleagues found that "students from Asian countries particularly struggle with adjustment to U.S. college life" (Abe et al., 1998, p. 545). To overcome such obstacles, international students adopt various coping strategies. International students' interactions with American students are considered to be some of the variables that serve as the coping strategies. Ye (2006), using 135 Chinese international students in the United States, conducted a quantitative study to evaluate the role played by new relationships established in the host country, long-distance long-standing relationships in the home country, and online ethnic social groups in cross-cultural transition. It was found that interacting via online groups provides access to more distant, unknown resources that help sojourners adjust to their daily lives in a new culture. Additionally, it was noted that the students feel less pressured expressing their concerns to other members of the online groups and therefore are more comfortable and are eased into the adjustment process.

Additionally, social relationships are considered to enhance the academic adjustment and personal adjustment of international students to the life in American universities. Therefore, it is suggested that such programs be designed that foster the establishment of social relationships among small groups of students consisting of

international students from a similar cultural background and the Americans (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998). Counseling interventions that aim at helping students to build social relations with Americans and increase their social support system are thought to play an important role in the adjustment process (Poyrazli et al., 2004).

To overcome the barriers and difficulties in interacting socially, researchers (Perruci & Hu, 1995; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002) proposed some methods. It is suggested that the international students should be exposed to American culture through reading newspapers and attending cultural and sporting events. Such involvement enhances the satisfaction with social and community relations, which in turn helps in coping with the adjustment process in a new culture (Perrucci & Hu, 1995). Toyokawa & Toyokawa (2002) indicated that facilitating the engagement of Asian international students in out-of-class activities by providing them with information on both the academic aspects of their program and opportunities for off-campus is very crucial. The authors noted that involving international students in extracurricular activities could be one of the ways to enhance various opportunities to socialize with members of the host country. Similarly, Poyrazli et al. (2004) suggested that designing on-campus activities or cultural workshops may help the international students to interact with the host nationals, increase their English proficiency, and thus help them adjust better. More specifically, they suggested that offering a workshop that encompasses social skills training and intercultural communication skills and provides tips on living in the United

States might help the international students to learn new social skills that assist them in interacting with Americans more easily, thus reducing acculturative stress.

Finally, the length of stay in the United States is considered to lead to a successful adjustment. According to Abe and his colleagues, students with previous experience in the United States are considered to be better equipped in handling the institutional and societal demands of U.S. campus life. They are considered to develop stronger bonds with the university that they are attending. The longer the stay of international students in the United States, the better is their understanding of navigating through the U.S. educational system, stronger are their language skills, and more comfortable are they with cultural norms of the host country (Abe et al., 1998).

Conclusion

India is the largest student-sending region, accounting for 15.5 % of the total U.S. international student enrollment (Institute of International Studies, 2008). These figures, however, have not brought about a concurrent growth in studies on students from India. Much research focuses on international students as a combined entity, which presents a void in the scholarly literature on students from India in particular. The studies that focus on the transitional experiences of students from India to the United States are extremely limited and, being qualitative in nature, cannot be generalized across the Indian student population. The goal of qualitative studies is to interpret each

event uniquely, as opposed to generalizing the findings (Merriam, 1989). Until we understand the processes involved in transition, adjustment and transformation of Indian students, such a multicultural population, universities will continue to encounter problems, including students with psychological and academic problems, and occurrence of misunderstandings because of cultural differences, which may in turn lead to a decline in the enrollment of students from India.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study undertook a qualitative research design. According to Merriam and Simpson (1995), a qualitative research paradigm is exploratory in nature, the underlying assumption of which is to be "interested in meaning--how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world" (Creswell, 1994, p. 145). Accordingly, a qualitative approach is ideal to frame this study in that it allowed for the exploration and description of the phenomenon of transition from the perspective of students from India who have made the transition to the United States for higher education. The qualitative approach allowed for the exploration of the influence of individual and situational factors on the adjustment of these students and the consequent transformations they underwent. The use of qualitative methodology further permitted the voice of the participants regarding their feelings, experiences, and reflections to emerge. Because this study focused on capturing the essence of the phenomenon of transition of students from India to the United States, I drew on the phenomenological research design.

Phenomenological Research Design

Phenomenology was used in philosophy in 1765 (Kockelmans, 1967) and was first developed by Husserl (Kvale, 1996). Husserl claimed phenomenology as a method to gain an understanding of human experience (Moustakas, 1994). Hegel defined phenomenology as "knowledge as it appears to consciousness, the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one's immediate awareness and experience. The process leads to an unfolding of phenomenal consciousness through science and philosophy "toward the absolute knowledge of the Absolute" (Kockelmans, 1967, p. 24; Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). According to Creswell (2005), phenomenology involves examining in detail the experiences of people being studied in order to create patterns in the information provided. It involves suspending researcher's own experiences of the phenomenon so as to understand the experiences of the participants from an unbiased perspective (Moustakas, 1994). This was achieved by applying the process of Epoche, wherein the researcher prevents his or her biases and assumptions from impacting the way he or she examines the phenomenon under study.

Phenomenology emphasizes on how "we put together the phenomena we experience in such a way as to make sense of the world and, in so doing, develop a worldview" (Patton, 2002, p. 106). Phenomenology aims to understand the essence of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2005). The goal is to describe the lived experiences of the individuals under study (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). Explaining the concept of

phenomenon, Giorgi (1984) stated "the term phenomenon means that whatever is given in experience is to be understood simply as it presents itself. No other attribute is to be assigned to the given except the meanings that derive from what is presented in the concrete experience" (p. 14). This study aimed to explore the phenomenon of transition from the perspective of those experiencing the phenomenon. I focused on understanding the lived experiences of students from India who have made the transition to Nurture University. The questions that assisted me to explore the phenomenon and describe the lived experiences of the participants were the following: (a) How do adult graduate students from India (interchangeably referred to as "Indian students") describe their transitional experiences from the country of origin to the higher education system in a university located in the southwestern part of the United States (Nurture University)? (b) How do the individual (the characteristics of an individual), and the situational factors (the context and the characteristics of an institution) impact the transitional adjustment of the participants? (c) What transformations do these participants undergo because of their transition to the United States? and (d) What is the overall essence of the phenomenon of transition for the students from India who participated in this study?

Site and Participant Selection

This study was conducted at Nurture University. This University with 10 professional colleges, awards over 150 undergraduate degrees, 240 graduate degrees and

one professional degree. The University conducts collaborative research and faculty/student exchanges with more than 130 institutions in 42 countries. It has active research programs in all seven continents. At the time of this study, the University stood among those U.S. universities that enrolled more than 4,500 international students from 120 countries, with the majority being from India. The colleges wherein the majority of the students from India were found to enroll included the College of Engineering, Medicine, and Business Management. Among the least represented colleges were the College of Liberal Arts and College of Education.

To select the participants for this study, email addresses of Masters and Doctoral students from India were taken from Nurture University directory by typing in the common Indian last names. The selection of the participants may also be achieved by approaching the office of International Student Services at the University and requesting for a listserv of students belonging to a specific country. A total of 25 students were identified through their last names and were sent an email requesting them to participate in this study (Appendix A). Of the 25, 18 students responded to the email. Of the 18, seven students were selected via purposeful sampling and participant selection criteria. Patton (1990) defines purposive sampling as a process of selection of information-rich participants from whom the researcher gathers a wealth of information regarding the issues central to the topic area of the research. According to Merriam (1998) "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover,

understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998, p.61). To begin purposive sampling, it was essential to determine the participant selection criteria (Merriam, 1998). Accordingly, the following criteria were applied for selecting participants for this study:

1. Participants must have been students from India who were born and raised in India.
2. Participants must have studied in any school other than international schools in India.
3. Participants must have completed their undergraduate degree in India.
4. Participants must not have lived or visited United States for more than two months before coming to the United States to obtain their Masters or Ph.D.
5. Participants must be Masters or Ph.D. students who are enrolled in an institution in the United States.
6. Participants must have lived as a Masters or a Ph.D. student in the United States for more than a year.

To maintain the anonymity of the participants, they were asked to choose a pseudo-name by which they were identified and were given a signed consent form (Appendix C), stating that their identity would be kept anonymous and that the tape recordings, the notes, and the transcripts of the interviews will all be kept in a locker and would be erased after five years of the study.

Description of the Interview Protocol

Moustakas (1994) claimed, "Typically in the phenomenological investigation, the long interview is the method through which data is collected on the topic and question. [This]...involves an informal, interactive process and utilizes open-ended comments and questions" (p. 114). The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the phenomenon of transition from the view point of students from India who have made the transition to Nurture University in the southwestern part of the United States to further their academic studies. This required me to explore each participant's thoughts, feelings, and perspectives to gather an in-depth knowledge regarding their experience of the phenomenon of transition. According to Patton (1990), such exploration is possible only through an interview method. Accordingly, an interview method was chosen to gather data on the descriptive experiences of transition, adjustment, and transformation processes of Indian students. Before designing an interview protocol (Appendix D), a literature review was conducted in the field of transitional adjustment of international students, stress and coping framework and transformational theory. Accordingly, the following six aspects were chosen to base the interview questions on: (a) demographic data (b) the process of transition (c) individual factors impacting the process of transition (d) situational factors impacting the process of transition (e) coping strategies-suggestions for the incoming international students and the host university, and (f) personal transformations resulting from the transition.

The demographic data sought to include the participants' pseudonym, age range, gender, discipline, the degree currently enrolled in the United States, and length of stay in the United States. The aspect on transition included participants' expectations about general and academic life in the United States and their preparations for such life in the United States. Questions on individual factors focused on the factors, such as personality traits, perceptions, behaviors that facilitated and hindered adjustment. Situational factors emphasized questions, such as the U.S. academic system, social support, support from the faculty, staff and colleagues, and course structure that facilitated and/or hindered adjustment. The aspect on coping strategies or suggestions for the incoming international students and the host university included the coping strategies that the participants adopted to overcome the challenges in the host country and their suggestions based on their experiences of transition for successful adjustment. The final aspect, personal transformations, examined how the participants underwent transformations in their perspectives and identity as a result of their transitional experiences.

Data Collection

After obtaining an approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), data was collected using an interview protocol as detailed in Appendix D. The average time of the interview was about two to three hours. The data collection phase involved two stages, (a) participant contact, and (b) the actual interview process. Adapting the method

used by Alfred (1995) to contact participants, I contacted the participants via email, introducing myself and the study, requesting them to participate (Appendix A). Two weeks later, the participants were emailed a request for a meeting in person. The purpose of this meeting was to further explain the details of this study, to get a commitment regarding their willingness to participate, to schedule a date for the interview, and to give an opportunity to the participants to ask questions or express any concerns. The one-on-one meeting was followed with a thank you email for agreeing to participate, apprising them of the interview date (Appendix B). To that email, two copies of the consent form (Appendix C) and an interview protocol (Appendix D) were attached, requesting them to sign the copies of the consent form, one for themselves and one for my records. The day before the scheduled interview, each participant was contacted via email or by phone, reminding of the day, time, and the location of the interview, which was determined based on the participant's convenience. Prior to the interview, I again explained the purpose of this study, informed the participants of their right to discontinue the interview at any stage, and explained to them the confidentiality procedures that would be followed in this study. Participants were asked for permission to tape record and transcribe the interviews. After carefully reading the transcripts and writing the descriptive narratives, participants were again contacted to conduct member checks that involved asking for clarifications and any additional information they wanted to add, delete or correct.

Researcher's Positionality

My views on international student adjustment in the U.S. universities have been shaped by my personal experiences. I made the transition from India to the United States in 2002 and joined my current university in 2003. Since then I underwent various adjustment phases, applied various coping strategies and personal transformation. My experiences, in my opinion, deepened my consciousness and empathy towards many of the challenges encountered by students from India and assisted me in working with the participants in this study. To this study, I brought in my personal experiences and knowledge of the adjustment processes, the impact of challenges involved in adjustment processes, the coping strategies and their benefits, and finally how all these processes transformed my worldview, perceptions, and behavior.

Because of the environment I was brought up in, my schooling, social and communication skills, and my perceptions, I might have brought in some biases to this study. Creswell (2005) noted that the researcher's biases can be mitigated by increasing the trustworthiness of the study. Accordingly, I bracketed my biases by applying the process of Epoche, wherein the researcher sets aside his or her biases and suppositions and instead explores the phenomenon under study as it is presented by the participants. I also achieved the trustworthiness of this study through member checks and by using a comprehensive analytical process.

Data Analysis

To analyze the phenomenological data, I utilized a step by step process presented by the Moustakas' (1994) modified version of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen's method. The phenomenological data analysis process included the following 10 steps:

1. Epoche
2. Obtaining an understanding of the data
3. Horizonalization
4. Identifying the Invariant Constituents
5. Identifying Themes
6. Individual Textural Descriptions
7. Individual Structural Descriptions
8. Composite Textural Description
9. Composite Structural Description
10. Textural-Structural Synthesis-Essence of the Phenomenon of Transition.

Each of these steps is delineated in detail below. In Chapter IV, I elaborated on the usage of each of these steps in the analysis of the data and presentation of the findings.

Step 1: Epoche

Epoche is a Greek word, which refers to "staying away from" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). Husserl (1931) defined Epoche as "freedom from suppositions" (p. 85). Examining a phenomenon without researchers' bias and preconceived notions, refers to Epoche. This, according to Moustakas, is achieved by "setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, and to look and see them again, as if for the first time" (p. 85). During the process of Epoche, "the world is placed out of action, while remaining bracketed. However, the world in the bracket has been cleared of ordinary thought and is present before us as a phenomenon to be gazed upon, to be known naively and freshly through a "purified" consciousness" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). In applying Epoche, Moustakas commented, "I must focus on some specific situation, person, or issue, find a quiet place in which I can review my current thoughts and feelings regarding this person, situation, or issue. Each time in my review I set aside biases and prejudgments and return with a readiness to look again into my life to enter with hope and intention of seeing this person, or situation, or issue with new and receptive eyes" (p. 89). Accordingly, I tried to concentrate on the data provided by the research participants by placing the data within the brackets, and refraining myself from everything else that is outside the brackets, including my own thoughts, feelings, assumptions, biases, and experiences about the phenomenon of transition. Explaining the outcome of application of Epoche, Moustakas

(1994) stated that Epoche results in researcher achieving a newer understanding of the phenomenon that he or she encounters. Accordingly, though I myself experienced the phenomenon of transition, upon the completion of this study, I underwent newer experiences and developed a newer understanding and perspectives about the phenomenon of transition.

Step 2: Obtaining an Understanding of the Data

All seven interviews conducted with the participants were recorded and transcribed. To ensure accuracy of the transcribed interviews, I listened to the tape recordings of the interviews multiple times. I also read the transcribed interviews several times to enable myself to engross into each participant's feelings, experiences, and perceptions regarding the phenomenon of transition. This process helped me in obtaining an understanding of the data. It also assisted me in the horizonalization of the significant statements and descriptions of experiences.

Step 3: Horizonalization

Horizonalization is referred to as a process of identifying verbatim parts of the transcribed interviews that explain the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). In this process, the researcher considers every statement of the participants' experience as equally valuable (Moustakas, 1994). After obtaining an understanding of the entire data, I

analyzed each interview, giving equal importance to each statement, to identify significant, verbatim parts that the participants stated to describe the phenomenon of transition. These statements are referred to as the horizonalized statements (Moustakas, 1994). From the horizonalized statements, the invariant constituents were identified.

Step 4: Identifying Invariant Constituents

To identify the invariant constituents, each of these horizonalized statements were examined based on the procedures provided by Moustakas' modified version of Van-Kaam's method (1994): (a) Is the statement essential in understanding the phenomenon of transition? and (b) Can it be abstracted and labeled? The statements that met these criteria formed the invariant constituents. The statements that did not meet these criteria, were repetitive, overlapping or vague, were deleted, as explained in Chapter IV. The invariant constituents, thus identified aided in the formulation of the themes.

Step 5: Identifying Themes

The significant invariant constituents were placed under each heading. These headings formed the fundamental themes of the phenomenon of transition.

Step 6: Individual Textural Descriptions

This step involved developing descriptive narratives of each participant based on the horizonalized statements, invariant constituents, and the themes identified in the previous steps of phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994).

Step 7: Individual Structural Descriptions- The "What" and "Cause" of an Experience

In this step, "Imaginative Variation" was applied (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). The goal of imaginative variation is "to arrive at structural descriptions of an experience, the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced. In other words the "how" that speaks to conditions that illuminate the "what" of experience." (Moustakas 1994, p. 98). Imaginative Variation answers the question, "How did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is?"(Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). It "is to seek possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 97-98)."

Step 8: Composite Textural Description

In this step, inductive reasoning and analysis were used to combine the individual textural descriptions of all the participants formulated in step 6 in order to present a portrayal of the descriptive narratives of all the participants as a group.

Step 9: Composite Structural Description

In this step, I utilized Imaginative Variation, the process utilized in step 7. The individual structural descriptions were combined to formulate a composite structural description to describe what the participants, as a group, experienced as a result of their transition to the United States and how and why did they experience what they experienced.

Step 10: Textural-Structural Synthesis-Essence of the Phenomenon of Transition

This is the final step of phenomenological data analysis. The essence is defined as the "core meaning mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced" (Patton, 2002, p.106). The essence, according to Moustakas (1994), is achieved through combining the textural and structural descriptions of the study participants. In this step, I logically and intuitively combined the textural and structural descriptions to depict the essence of the phenomenon of transition from the perspective of the study participants, which is the purpose of this study.

Ensuring the Trustworthiness of the Data

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), the researcher conducts trustworthiness to persuade his or her audience and self that the findings of the study can be trusted and relied upon. Creswell (2003) suggested that at least two procedures be employed to ensure trustworthiness of a study. In this study, I applied multiple procedures to achieve trustworthiness: (a) bracketed my biases, (b) provided rich, thick descriptions, and (c) conducted member checks. The bracketing of my bias was achieved through the process of epoche, described in step 1 and in Chapter IV. Steps 6 through 10 of the phenomenological data analysis process resulted in rich, thick descriptions of the phenomenon of transition from the perspectives of the study participants. Member checks were conducted by contacting the participants the second time to share with them the individual and structural descriptions to ensure the accuracy of the themes generated and the descriptions described. This process, according to Robson (2002), is referred to as member checking.

Limitations

The purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of transition from the point of view of students from India who have made the transition to Nurture University, located in the southwestern part of the United States to further their academic studies. This study had certain limitations that fell mainly under three areas: (1) limitation of

sample size, (2) limitation in methodology, and (3) limitations in data analysis procedures.

Limitation in Sample Size

The application of purposive sampling and participant selection criteria led to the selection of 7 participants for this study. Though this sample is considered to be sufficient for a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), it is a very small sample size, which provided an understanding of the phenomenon of transition from the perspective of these 7 participants alone.

Limitation in Methodology

This being a qualitative study, its findings cannot be generalized, as the goal of qualitative studies is to interpret each event uniquely, as opposed to generalizing the findings (Merriam, 1989). Therefore, the findings of this study though transferable, cannot be generalized across all students from India. The findings are unique to the study participants, however, others may see evidence of their experiences in the lives of those studied.

Limitations in Data Analysis

In this study, phenomenological research design was employed to analyse the data. Because phenomenology requires immediate analysis of the data as it is collected, requires conducting long interviews, and also includes complex data analytic procedures involving epoche, reflection to reach logical and systematic conclusions on the descriptions of experiences, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and analysis to achieve synthesis of meaning and essence, it was pivotal that two researchers worked together on collecting and analyzing data, who could discuss and reflect on the data and the generated themes to ensure test-retest reliability. However, because of the time and other confinements this was not executable.

Moustakas (1994) noted that the essence of any experience is never completely captured. Similarly, Husserl (1931) noted that "every physical property draws us on into infinities of experience; and that every multiplicity of experience, however lengthily drawn out, still leaves the way open to closer and novel thing-determinations; and so on, in infinitum" (Husserl, 1931, pp. 54-55). Thus, though the purpose of this study was to capture the essence of the phenomenon of transition, there is a possibility of not capturing the complete essence of the phenomenon of transition.

Conclusion

This qualitative study used a phenomenological approach to explore the process of transition, adjustment, and transformation among a small group of students from India, who either graduated or are pursuing their graduate education in Nurture University. Moustakas' ten-step analytical approach was used for the analysis of the data in this study. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, qualitative procedures such as Epoche, rich, thick descriptions of the experience of the phenomenon, and member checks were used. These techniques were applied throughout the study.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore and depict the phenomenon of transition from the perspective of 7 students from India, who have made the transition to Nurture University, located in the southwestern part of the United States for higher educational studies. In this chapter, the analytical process highlighting the findings is clearly presented. This chapter concludes with capturing the essence of the phenomenon of transition of students from India to the United States, which is the goal of this study.

Description of the Participants

To select the participants for this study, the following participant selection criteria were established, as mentioned in Chapter III: (a) must be students from India who were born and raised in India (b) must have studied in any school other than international schools in India (c) must have completed their undergraduate degree in India (d) not have lived or visited United States for more than 2 months, before coming to the U.S. (e) must be a Masters or a Ph.D. Student, and (f) must have lived as a Masters or a Ph.D. student in the U.S. for more than a year. A total of nine individuals were recognized as prospective participants. Two individuals though have studied in regular schools, had one or both of their parents working in international schools, which

gave the individuals the exposure to international schools. Finally, a total of seven participants were included in this study.

Four of seven participants were male and three were female. Their ages ranged from 24 to 45. The participants' period of stay in the United States as a Master's or a Ph.D. student ranged from two years to eleven years. Table 1 details the names of the participants, their gender, educational level, discipline, and years of stay in the United States.

Table 1

Demographics of the Participants

Participant	Gender	Educational Level	Discipline	Period of Stay in the United States
Krishna	M	M.S.	Engineering	2 years
Shreya	F	Ph.D.	Chemistry	2 ½ years
Shruti	F	Ph.D.	Economics	2 ½ years
Pragya	F	Ph.D.	Biophysics	3 years
Rishi	M	Ph.D.	Physics	5 years
Vishnu	M	Ph.D.	Engineering	7 years
Arjun	M	Ph.D.	Business	11 years

The participants were listed based on their stay in the United States. The participant with the least number of years was listed first, while the participant with the

maximum years of time in the United States was listed last. Similar order to participant listing was followed throughout the study.

Phenomenological Data Analysis

A phenomenological data analysis method was followed in this study. Moustakas (1994) provided a modified version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen's method to analyze phenomenological data. Utilizing this version, the following ten step process was applied to analyze the data in this study:

1. Epoche
2. Obtaining an Understanding of the Data
3. Horizonalization
4. Identifying the Invariant Constituents
5. Identifying Themes
6. Individual Textural Descriptions
7. Individual Structural Descriptions
8. Composite Textural Description
9. Composite Structural Description
10. Textural-Structural Synthesis-Essence of the Phenomenon of Transition.

Each of these steps and the findings are explicated in detail below:

Step 1: Epoche

According to Moustakas (1994), this step answers two questions, (a) How do researcher's personal experiences of the phenomenon under study do not bias the data collection and the analysis process? (b) What new concepts and understandings does the researcher learn about the phenomenon under study? To answer these questions, I set aside my own biases, preconceived notions, and assumptions about the experience of the transition and prevented them from influencing the way I examined the data. This was achieved in two steps: (a) not providing supporting answers and displaying expressions, (b) did not confine from asking only specific questions, and (c) recorded the responses as they were presented. These steps are detailed below:

(a) Not Providing Supporting Answers and Displaying Expressions

I prevented myself from providing supporting answers to the participants' responses, in order to forestall them from agreeing to my answers. Similarly, based on my experiences of the phenomenon, I did not display my expressions of surprise, astonishment, nodding, or smiling to the participants' responses. This step was taken to prevent influencing the participants from changing their responses or from giving politically correct answers.

(b) Not Confining Myself to Asking Only Specific Questions

I did not let the participants' response to a specific question prevent me from posing other related questions. For instance, literature indicated that being proficient in English language facilitates socializing (e.g. Poyrazli et al, 2004). If a participant expressed that she did not have any problem in understanding and conversing in American English, I did not prevent myself from posing other questions related to socializing, assuming that the ability to converse conveniently in English would help in socializing as well. This bracketing of assumption helped me to learn that though the ability to converse in American English aids in socializing, it does not guarantee that the individual will be good at or comfortable with socializing and that there are other variables as well, that, impact the ability to socialize.

Similarly, questions related to classroom environment were posed and their responses were transcribed verbatim. I learned that the participants had mixed classroom experiences in the United States. For instance, Krishna felt welcomed because he did not have to take the permission of his professor to enter his classroom, as he used to, in India. This finding was new to me as I didn't have to take the permission of professors to enter a classroom in the university I studied in India. Thus, though I felt welcomed in the U.S. classrooms, my reasons for feeling so were different from Krishna's.

(c) Recording the Responses as Presented

I recorded the participants' responses as they were presented. For instance, Shreya felt that the students were disrespectful towards their professors by eating or sleeping in the classroom. I also experienced similar instances in the classrooms. My first experience, when I looked agape was, when a student in the midst of a lecture casually opened her bag, took out a banana and started eating in full view of the class. My reaction, however, was somewhat different. I had several questions, such as "Can students do such things in a U.S. classroom"? "Is eating or sleeping acceptable in a classroom"? "Does it depend on the professor or is it the system"? "How does the professor feel about this"? "Does he or she feel disrespectful"? Though my reaction was different to the same situation, I did not discuss with the participant about their responses, instead the responses were recorded as they were presented.

These Epoche processes were applied throughout the data collection, analysis, and reporting processes. After the data were collected, I tried to obtain an understanding of the entire data.

Step 2: Obtaining an Understanding of the Data

I transcribed each interview as it was being completed. The initial interview took three and half hours to finish. The later interviews ranged from 2 to 3 hours, with the average of two and half hours. I listened to the recorded interviews at least twice to

ensure accuracy of the transcribed data. The transcribed interviews were read multiple times to obtain a deeper understanding of the experiences of each of the participant. Throughout this step, the process of Epoche was applied to prevent my own personal experiences of the phenomenon of transition influence the way I read the data. This step assisted me in horizonalization by identifying the parts of the interviews that each participant used to describe their experiences of transition.

Step 3: Horizonalization

Horizonalization is referred to as a process of identifying parts of the transcribed interviews that explain the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). In this step, I carefully read through each transcription and identified the expressions that each participant provided to describe the phenomenon of transition. These expressions constituted the horizonalized statements (Moustakas, 1994). Across this study, a total of 477 horizonalized statements were generated. For instance, for Vishnu, 66 horizonalized statements were generated, some of which are described below to represent horizonalization of Vishnu's experience of the phenomenon of transition. The following examples of horizonalized statements depict Vishnu's individual and situational experiences, experienced through his transition to the United States, the coping strategy that he adopted to adjust and how he underwent personal transformation as a result of his transition to the United States. Though the themes were identified in step 5, the titles of

the themes are presented below for a better understanding of the examples and to explain how the themes were generated in step 5:

(1) Example of an Individual Experience

> I have no problems; wherever I go, I make friends. I am a very, very social person. You get to know so much of each other's culture. Like recently I went to my friends Cinco de Mayo party, the 5th May, Mexican Independence day. His wife is Mexican; he is American. We had a party at his place and went there and celebrated. His friends and brothers had come down, so I got to meet them, and we played very, I wanna say, Texan games called 'horse shoes', 'washers' and stuff, so it was interesting. So, rather than sitting at home and watching a movie, I think this is a much better thing to do. You get bored watching movies. (INT 6 – p.7)

(2) Example of a Situational Experience

> My advisor has been great as far as mentoring is concerned. I like his style because he is an advisor and that's all he does, advise. He does not really interfere with our thought process. He lets us loose, lets us do what we want; we go to him; like he says, 'This is what we need to investigate; we come up with a set of tests, we come up with a matrix, and we go and

> show it to him and he argues, and then we argue. He's got a very nice concept; he says 'I am your advisor, and you are my student. We should always keep arguing and at the point where you start winning more arguments than I do, it's time for you to graduate; so, that's a very cool concept and I love that idea. I am very frank with him. He is a nice person to be around, and he has really helped me a lot in terms of my research as well as generally; he's been a very good mentor and a role model that I would like to be like. He sends us out to conferences and he says 'Go talk to the professors; find out what they are doing, what their students are doing and try and see if you can collaborate with them, and that's a challenge. So, things like this really help in the long run. I would have to give a lot of credit to my advisor in terms of giving us the opportunity to do all this. (INT 6 – pp. 8-9)

(3) Example of a Coping Strategy

> You need to be a lot more frank over here. I wouldn't say just Indians, but Asians in general have this tremendous respect that comes into the way of expressing what you feel and you kind feel that if they tell it to you, then that's what you have to do. You never argue or make a point. That really needs to stop and it took me a few years to get over that and today if I

> cannot do something, I just can not do it. Initially, whatever my advisor threw on me, I used to do it, no matter what, whether I could or could not. Most of them I accomplished, some of them I just could not and he was like, 'just say no to me!' My advisor was pretty frank with me, he said, 'I know that you guys have the tendency to take too much on to yourself, don't do it, just say you can't do it and that's fine, but if you say you can do it, I expect a solution or an answer'. So, I don't take anything more than I can handle. I got to a point where I understand what can be detrimental to my progress (smiles). So, I say no to things pretty straightforward (INT 6 – p. 4)

(4) Example of Personal Transformation

> After all these years, I have eventually become a very patient person. I never panic at a problem; in fact I am very laid back when there is a problem. So somebody says something went wrong, I am like, 'ok'. I have become very open to views. I mean when you do research, there are so many possibilities, and you need to address each and every one of them; so in the same way, as a person, I am open to everyone's views, and then eventually, I make a decision; but I really think about it before I judge somebody. You know, I never take first opinions as the final opinion, and I

> constantly iterate within my head to see, was this scenario right? Could I have done anything better? I think all these things that I have learned in research, I apply in real life in terms of analyzing the situation and dealing with a problem. So it's always much more calm and composed way and thinking it through completely. (INT 6 – pp. 20-21)

From such horizonalized statements, the invariant constituents were identified in step 4. As with the identification of horizonalized statements, the identification of invariant constituents also required logic and judgment on part of the researcher (Creswell, 1998).

Step 4: Identifying Invariant Constituents

Invariant constituents refer to non-repetitive statements that participants provide to describe the experience (Moustakas, 1994). In step 4, I analyzed the horizonalized statements of all the 7 participants formulated in step 3 so as to identify the significant and relevant expressions that underline the unique qualities of the transitional experience. The invariant constituents allowed me to gather an explicit picture of the experiences, feelings, perceptions and thoughts that each participant attached to the phenomenon of transition (Moustakas, 1994). For instance, taking the example of Vishnu's horizonalized statements mentioned in step 3, the invariant constituents identified for Vishnu are mentioned below. Though the themes were identified in step 5,

the titles of the themes are presented early here for a better understanding of the examples and to explain as to how the themes were generated in the next step:

(1) Example of Individual Experience

Socializing, as opposed to staying at home and watching a movie helps.

(2) Example of a Situational Experience

My advisor helped me tremendously in my research as well as in general.

(3) Example of a Coping Strategy

I learned that it is very essential to express your feelings in the United States. I say ‘no’ to things that I can't do.

(4) Example of Personal Transformation

I transformed into a patient, calm, and composed individual.

The invariant constituents listed above depict the specific, significant statements of Vishnu’s individual and situational experiences in the United States, the coping strategy that he adopted to adjust well and the transformation within himself as a result

of his transition to the United States. These invariant constituents were used in identifying the themes in the next step.

Step 5: Identifying Themes

In step 5, I used the information generated in step 4 and imaginative variation, wherein, "many possibilities are examined and explicated reflectively" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99) to identify invariant constituents, that is, the non-repetitive statements that describe the experience and can be combined together. Accordingly, four major themes were generated that comprised of their respective invariant constituents: (a) individual experiences (b) situational experiences (c) coping strategies-suggestions, and (d) personal transformation.

These themes were utilized in generating rich, thick individual textural descriptions of the participants' experience of the phenomenon of transition.

Step 6: Individual Textural Descriptions

Using the information from step 5 and the transcribed interviews, I constructed individual textural descriptions of the transitional experiences for each of the study participant. This step resulted in rich, thick descriptions, mainly in participants' words, of the individual and situational experiences of the participants in this study. The descriptions also described the coping strategies-suggestions for the incoming students

to help them in their smooth transition. Finally, the personal transformations that occurred within the participants because of their transition from India to the United States are described in detail. For the purpose of the analysis, the participants are listed based on their length of stay in the United States. The participant who lived in the United States the least number of years is described first and the participant who lived the most in the United States is described last.

Krishna

Krishna is 25 years old and has been living in the United States for the past two years. After completing his bachelors in engineering, Krishna took up a job in a multinational company in India. After working for three years in an industry, he decided to come to the United States for higher studies and enrolled himself into a Masters program in engineering at Nurture University. Krishna described his transition to the United States as “riches-to-rags story”. Explaining further, he said, “While in India I had a financially stable and quite well-off life with a strong social circle and activities, at this university, I had no financial stability, no friends and very few activities to start off with” (INT 1 – p.1).

Surprisingly, Krishna's experiences in the United States were not different from what he had expected. He knew exactly what to expect as his siblings and mother were staying in the United States, whose experiences prepared Krishna for life in the United

States. The only difference he found was that the Americans in his university town were more conservative than his image of Americans from New York or Massachusetts. Though Krishna knew what to expect, he described his first few days in the United States as "hell" (INT 1 – p.1). Explaining, he stated:

> The daytime was split between loads of academic formalities, facing fierce competition for funding and course enrollment, meeting professors and prospective employers, sorting out living situation (lease, grocery, account, purchases), and staying in touch with family and friends back in India. In whatever little that was left of nighttime, it was very common to think of the reasons for coming here; occasional crying and self-consoling and wondering if all of it was worth the efforts.(INT 1- p.1)

Making the transition to the United States from India, to some extent, negatively affected the psychological well being of Krishna. He described, "Homesickness and feeling of being far off from your loved ones often strikes you. Sometimes it may lead you to wonder about the times when you were in India. On occasions it led to crying" (INT 1 – p.3). Krishna felt stressed from the academic load that he had to carry along with his job. He stated:

> Often you have to rush from your job to classes and vice versa. Then many times you have to stay up whole night to finish assignments or

> prepare for exams. There are deadlines to catch in part-time job too. Multiple assignments being handed over or approaching exams would trigger stress. (INT 1 – p.3)

This transition, however, did not appear to significantly impact the sociocultural well being of Krishna. He found the American culture to be different, but never found it difficult to fit into. Although, United States was new to him, he never had any fear of rejection, nor had any difficulty in expressing himself.

To help students in India make a successful transition to Nurture University, Krishna made the following suggestions: (INT 1 – pp. 5-6)

1. "Be aware that no matter what, you would go through a stress cycle. Be prepared and don't panic. Make loads of friends and don't restrict to people from the same country".
2. "Get your sibling or a senior student already in the United States to help you get acquainted with American way of things. The importance of this is often understated. They can help in showing how to go about doing grocery, administrative formalities, sign lease, etc".
3. "Try to reach as much in advance as possible. You need loads of time to get settled here to find job, talk to professors, make friends; people coming from industry should be prepared to switch to 'academic mode' which includes sleepless nights, tight finances and loads of classes".

4. “Do a bit of background reading; people coming straight from academics should be prepared to be a bit more professional here”.

For the new students who have made the transition to the United States, Krishna suggested that they:

> Get involved in student activities. Join groups such as ISMA which provides mentors as well as socializing opportunities; get involved in exchange programs to interact with different cultures; take few outside department courses that you may have interest in such as dancing, linguistics, entrepreneurship; not all of them require a big time commitment; and attending orientations organized by International Student Services are a must for a new student. (INT 1 – p.6)

6. Finally, he said:

> Always have belief in that you will get over the situation. If you are not strong enough, then ask for help from your friends or relatives. Do NOT start questioning your decision to come to the United States because that is the wrong question to solve. Ask what makes you enjoy in the United States. And once you answer that, you would know exactly what you need to do. (INT 1 – p.6)

Krishna believes that this transition has transformed him into a tough person. It made him realize the importance of his friends and parents in his life and the virtues of

social networking. Further, he learned that there are smarter people than him in this world. He learned that he is a much stronger person than he actually thought. Additionally, he realized that he was living in a very comfortable shell in India which could not have been broken while in India. Further describing the difference between the old him and the new him, he said:

> The old me knew he was strong but had not got a chance to test it. The old me had been living a comfortable life and felt that he was about to stagnate in his job if he did not move on. The old me was not so appreciative of role of parents in life. The new me is not of all that. The new me is a bit more confident, humble and appreciative. I have learned to accept my mistakes (this does not have anything to do with the transition to the United States).The new me is more open to people from different parts of world now. The more exposure to diverse people has made me warmer towards them. I may not have any inhibitions, if any existed before in talking to somebody from a different part of the world. I feel that I have got an international profile in my character now. I am more aware about various cultures that may exist and have become even more appreciative of the differences in their cultures with respect to mine. (INT 1 – p.5)

Upon being asked how he feels about the present him after having transitioned to the United States, Krishna said, “I feel I can improve further. I can be a bit more open, a bit more understanding and much healthier” (INT 1 – p.5).

Summary. Krishna decided to give up his job in an industry in India to come to the United States for higher studies. Accordingly, he applied for Masters in engineering program at Nurture University. He received assistance from his mother and sister, who have been living in the United States help him prepare for the life in the United States. Despite this assistance, Krishna initially encountered certain problems, such as difficulty in managing academic workload and lack of sufficient funding. It was at this time that he began to miss his well paid job in India. He also missed his home, family, and friends. Eventually, Krishna overcame his loneliness and other problems by making friends, keeping himself occupied by participating in student organizations and the university events, and thinking positively. Experiencing these different phases in the United States, transformed Krishna into a tough, appreciative, open-minded and a confident individual, who still visualizes a scope for further transformation within him.

Shreya

Shreya is a 25 year old student who came to the United States as a Master’s student and recently joined doctoral program in the Chemistry department. She has been

living in the United States for the past two and half years. Shreya described her first few days in the United States as “good”, as she already had an apartment to move into and a roommate who was recommended by Shreya's cousin. In India, Shreya always lived with her parents; as a result she never had the experience of living alone. Therefore, in order to make the transition easy for Shreya, her parents and sister came to live with her in the United States for a few days. The opening days of transition for Shreya were smooth as she had emotional support in the form of her parents and sister. This helped her to overcome the initial jitters, such as a messy apartment left by the previous boarders. After her family members left, living on her own became difficult for Shreya, starting with being lost on the roads, looking for labs, to do lab rotations, and teaching while attending classes. Additional responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, and doing other household chores were difficult for Shreya.

Academically, Shreya observed a marked difference between the classroom environment of India and that of the United States. The most significant difference she observed was that professors treat students as equal in the United States and entrust them with work with a high degree of confidence and trust. The informal atmosphere in the classrooms also helped Shreya in communicating comfortably in the classes. She found the semester system to be more beneficial when compared to the annual system in India. She was also pleased that the points obtained in assignments and class presentations in Nurture University, added to her final grade. Shreya, however, was astonished to see the

casual atmosphere in the classes with students sleeping, eating, drinking and not taking notes, which she perceived as disrespect towards the professor. For Shreya, the change of classmates in every class in Nurture University hindered an opportunity to make lasting friendships, an aspect that she missed tremendously.

The new environment, and the new surroundings, initially stressed Shreya. Commenting on this aspect, she explained:

> I am used to having my mother wake me up in the morning, I am used to having everything ready in the morning, I do not have to wake up early in the morning and prepare something for myself. Also, here you have to face everything alone. You also don't have time to cook some days. I had to just make some random thing and eat and then you have to cook for a day and eat it for two days, which you never do in India, and by the end of the second day, you hate eating that food. It stresses you. (INT 2 – p.6)

With time, however, Shreya learned multitasking and managing her time. Though her stress level reduced to a great extent, she still gets stressed when she is "frustrated" (INT 2 – p.6) with her lab work, and when she doesn't get the results. During these times, she misses the physical presence of her parents and sister and their emotional support. Explaining, she stated:

> When I get frustrated with the lab work, when I don't get the results, yes, you want someone with you who can talk to you immediately. Since I am more close to my mother than my sister, you lack that person's presence in life. Sometime you do not tell the bad things happening to you because they are so far off and you don't want them to suffer; but if you are with them, they immediately know about what's happening in my life. Again, though my fiancé is here, he is a Ph.D. student also, so you think twice before talking to him because he has his own stress level. (INT 2 – p.6)

Shreya would also feel unhappy and angry when she would see a difference in her professor's treatment towards her and her colleague. Explaining, she stated:

> When you see a difference in the treatment from anybody, you really, really get very angry, and you feel very frustrated because you can not speak up. Because you know that if you speak out, then people will not like it and the relationship with them would get affected. You can not go to your seniors, because for them it's a trivial matter and you think as to what they would think about me if I go every time and complain every time this happens. (INT 2 – pp. 6-7)

Despite these problems, Shreya's efficiency at work enabled her to gain the confidence of her professors and also enhanced her self-confidence. Cherishing this experience, she stated:

> Initially when I came in the lab, my professor told me that he will see my work and depending on that, he will either hire me as a graduate student or not and then he gave me a months time for that. So, I was given a project which I had no idea about. I started from scratch and I think he saw me for three days and on the fourth day, he said that he wants to hire me as a graduate student. I felt like an achiever. (INT 2 – p.7)

Shreya adopted certain coping strategies to help her adjust well in her University town and at Nurture University. Combining the coping strategies that she adopted with her experiences, Shreya suggested the following points in order to help new students from India adjust well in the United States (INT 2 – pp. 9-10).

1. "Keep in contact and good contact with as many professors and administrative people over here in the university. And if problems arise, tell them immediately. Do not wait or think that it would not be done, ask them because people can bend the rules over here, if they want to".
2. "Do not keep too many expectations, just come over here with the mind that you are alone, you have to stand on your feet and take care of yourself; there is not

going to be anybody to take care of you. If you expect too much, and then if it doesn't happen, then it's going to break you down".

3. "You have to keep an open mind, let things go, you cannot have everything according to the way you want, as you have it in India".
4. "Do not judge anyone based on their actions, just do not judge anyone".
5. "Come with a mind that you are going to do what you want; you have come here for a set motive; keep your motive in mind and keep doing that, and never break the trust that the people, especially your parents have put in you".
6. "Just stay true to yourself, and make friends, Americans and Indians".
7. "Friends help you a lot in adjusting. If someone helps you, make sure that you return the favor or at least stay in touch with them. Just do not make use of a person and go. That starts affecting other people too".
8. "House some people in your apartment, because they really need it, and the people who stay there should take care of people living in the house. Just don't be a problem for the person".
9. "They have to know that they have to face problems, and for a period of time they will take time to adjustment".
10. "Regarding groceries, you have to take the bus, you have to walk and carry a heavy load; that's the initial part of adjustment. Most of the people are used to living an easy life in India. They have vehicles, everything, public transportation

system, which is not over here, so you have to adjust".

Encountering adjustment problems and applying these coping strategies to overcome them, brought several transformations within Shreya's personality and her perspectives. Initially, when Shreya observed her professor treating her differently than her peer, she saw herself transforming from a sensitive person to a strong individual. Previously, whenever Shreya was in a problem, she would not express it, however, through her experiences in the United States, she realized that she needs to express her feelings. She transformed into an individual who learned the strategies to deal with such situations, making sure that her relationships are not affected in the process. Providing an example, she stated:

> If by chance you forget one single thing in there, while doing the experiment, not a big mistake, there would be emails which would be sent out to everybody even though they are not concerned with the research, with your name in the email, not in a bad way but with a stricter tone, which you don't like. And then when the same situation happens with my colleague, if she forgets to do a major thing, the professor would just remind that person, the email would be sent out but the student's name would not be there, treating it very lightly. It did not happen once, it happened couple of times. And that's when it hurts you. When the emails used to come back and forth, one day that incident happened, I snapped. I

> wrote back an email, in a good way, but in a strong way, saying that I don't like the whole situation. I learned that if you do not speak your mind, people will just start walking all over you. Then they know your limits and they understand that ok, this person is feeling bad and they would stop it. (INT 2 – p.4)

Shreya also transformed into an individual who would not let things affect her. She used to be very stressed out and a tensed person in her college life in India because she took her studies very seriously. Missing ten minutes of a lecture would stress Shreya. After coming to the United States, however, she learned that the solution is to remain calm and manage her time as opposed to getting stressed. Consequently Shreya transformed into a composed individual, who could multitask.

Shreya also realized a transformation in her perspectives towards people in general. She used to be a very conservative person. Later, however, she began to have more liberal thoughts. For instance, in India, whenever she saw an unmarried couple moving closely, she would consider them as people with no moral values, however, after coming to the United States, she learned that she should not judge people at first instance itself. Consequently, she stopped judging people based on their actions. Shreya never talked much in India. She used to take time to make friends and never took initiative to talk. In the United States, however, she observed her American colleagues taking the initiative to talk to her. She realized that it's ok to initiate talking to people and ask

questions, without worrying about what people might think of her questions. Eventually, Shreya's perspective regarding talking to people was transformed. Further, Shreya transformed into a confident and an independent person. She became a social person and a much stronger individual, who is capable of handling situations under various circumstances, ranging from easy to difficult. Finally, when Shreya was asked about how she feels about making the transition to the United States, she stated that she feels contented with the transformations that occurred within her as a result for her transition to the United States.

Summary. After completing her bachelor's degree in India, Shreya decided to come to the United States for her Master's degree. Shreya had immense amount of family support. Her cousin, who had been living in Nurture University town, arranged for a roommate for Shreya in advance. Shreya had her parents and sister live with her in the United States for few days. This support helped Shreya immensely in the initial days. After her parents left, however, life became little difficult for Shreya. She encountered difficulties in managing the academic tasks and the household chores. She missed the actual presence of her mother. Further, she encountered some difficulties in understanding the new academic system, which in turn stressed her.

Shreya's efficiency at her work, however, helped her overcome some academic challenges. She also adopted various coping strategies in order to overcome the

challenges in a new country, such as keeping in touch with the faculty and staff, not having too many expectations, being open-minded, not judging people, being goal-oriented, helpful to others, and prepared for unforeseen challenges. This process of making the transition to the United States, experiencing various individual and situational situations, and applying strategies to overcome the challenges encountered in the host country, transformed Shreya into a confident and composed person. She also transformed into a more social and an accommodative person, who could manage various situations. Finally, when asked about how Shreya feels about the transformations that occurred within her, she stated that she feels glad for making the transition to the United States, as this experience helped her in transforming into a more capable person.

Shruti

Shruti's main motive to come to the United States was to have a "broader perspective of life" (INT 3 – p.1). She applied to three universities in the United States and finally got admission into a Ph.D. program at Nurture University. She felt "on top of the world" (INT 3 – p.1) when she learned about her admission. After traveling for twenty two hours, when Shruti finally reached Nurture University town, she was tired and jet lagged. Upon recovering from the jet lag, she went to explore the university campus, which she liked a lot. Explaining, she stated, "I liked the campus a lot, mainly to see how friendly the people were" (INT 3 – p.1). Shruti had watched some Hollywood

movies in India, from which she formulated a picture about life in the United States. With a smile she said, “I thought of snow and red, sloping roofs. Even though I know about the state and its weather, yet, I had these images of snow covered roofs and cars getting stuck in the snow” (INT 3 – p.1). Media made her believe that Americans were very “forward and aggressive”. After coming to the United States, however, she had realized that all that is depicted in the media is not true, that neither the entire America would have snow, nor all Americans are aggressive. She said, “They are actually pretty shy and nice and it's been very nice interacting with Americans” (INT 3 – p.1).

Academically, Shruti expected professors in the United States to be open to new ideas in research, and she was glad to find her expectations being met in that regard. She, however, found some major differences between the Indian and the U.S. education system. Explaining the differences, she stated:

> In India, students are very nervous during exams, whereas in the United States it's more friendly. In the United States, you need to learn how to work by yourself, because the university professor just comes to the class, gives his lecture and then one has to learn how to put things together and learn, which, I think is a very good way. With this type of instructional procedures, you learn a lot of skills, like, how to get information, put notes together, find out about the exams and then what to study, what not to study, and so on. However, to be honest, I thought there would be

> more interaction between the professor and the students with a lot more class discussions and such, but it's not much. I think, in India, we ask more questions in class, here it's not much. (INT 3 – pp.5-6)

Further describing the difference, she stated:

> Here, the home work is a lot more important. In India you probably did your last homework when you were 15 or at the most when you are 18, in high school. After that, I don't think anybody is given home work at the University level. I don't think home work is ever that important in India. It is never a part of your grade. But, here, homework carries a huge percentage of your grade. So you have to take it very seriously. (INT 3 – pp. 5-6)

For Shruti, one of the major difficulties in the United States was doing all the household chores along with studying. Explaining, she said:

> In India, you are not working when you are studying. So, when you are studying, you are concentrating a lot on your studies and your parents are very supportive throughout those 3 years. So it's basically just studying and you are not expected to do much else. I think it's very nice. Here I think it's very difficult, like when you are just 18, and you have to adjust to cooking, cleaning and living on your own, navigating through classes and deciding what you want to take. It's difficult. (INT 3 – pp.5 - 6)

These hurdles stressed Shruti psychologically in the initial days. Also, being far away from home made her homesick at times. She said, “The only thing that I miss about India is my family. That's it and may be food. My mother as person, I miss a lot” (INT 3 – p.5). Initially, Shruti felt a little stressed academically as well. She had difficulty in interacting with American professors. She explained, “Initially, when I had to interact with an American professor, may be I got little stressed because I did not know what they would expect and what they want, what they would ask and whether my answers would be satisfactory” (INT 3 – p.4). The transition also affected the sociocultural well being of Shruti to some extent. She thought that it would be a lot easier to make friends with other students from India on the campus, but somehow that didn't happen, mainly because there are not many Indian students in her field. Sometimes, Shruti finds it difficult to express herself. Explaining, she stated:

> Everything that you say is kind of taken literally. Sometimes, I am just joking and then some people think that I am saying seriously, like somebody asked me, “Would you still do 'Sati' for your husband”? I said yes, jokingly and they took it seriously. (INT 3 – p.11)

In order to adjust to the new country, Shruti adopted some coping mechanisms. From such experiences, she expressed that it is essential for the new students to learn certain aspects, to have a smoother transition. Making suggestions, she said: (INT 3 – p.14)

1. “Having good writing skills helps a lot; able to write and communicate helps a lot”.

2. “You have to be very confident in what you are as a person right in India itself. Trying to be somebody else might work for some time, but in the long run, I think it doesn't”.

3. “The rules that you follow with professors and relationships in India, I mean, though you can not see the rules clearly here, if you are not sure, just stick to the most polite and most easy ways of doing things”.

4. “Academic honesty is very important. You have to learn how to abide by it”.

5. “Learn most stuff in and around the house by yourself, because you have to do all those things on your own here”.

6. “Learn how to adjust with others. You need to know this as you will be living with a roommate. Back in India, parents take care of a lot of things, which would not be the case here. So, you would have to adjust to many new things after coming here”.

The combination of making the transition to a foreign country, encountering some adjustment difficulties, and then applying coping mechanisms to overcome those difficulties have transformed Shruti into a more confident and positive person. Delineating the differences between the 'old her' and the 'new her', she stated:

> I am more positive now. I became simpler in some ways. I think, now I am more like what I used to be when I was 10 or 12, because now I am hopeful about things. Before coming here, I wasn't very confident. I always worried about what people would think of me and how I would do certain things. But now, I am more confident about those things. I always used to think of the worst outcome. But, now, although I think of the worst outcome, yet, I say to myself, 'it's ok, I can live with things'. Academically, I have become more confident. I have developed more self-confidence. (INT 3 – p.12)

Shruti's perspectives about the west have also transformed. Explaining as to how they changed, she stated:

> I used to think that western ideas meant that people would be more progressive, that all Americans would be liberal, in the sense, I thought that women's rights was something that west had known for a long time. I thought that in India they were very new, but that I don't think is true. And some of the people I meet here are very traditional, in a very Indian way; very conservative in the role of, like being the mother and looking after the house. (INT 3 – p.12)

Summary. Shruti's main purpose to come to the United States was two fold: for higher studies and to learn and broaden her perspectives about life in general and about the world. Her first few days in the United States were spent in being tired and jet lagged. After she recovered from the jet lag, she went to the university campus to explore the surroundings. She liked the campus and was pleasantly surprised to see people greeting, even strangers, an aspect that is absent in India. Eventually, Shruti began to observe the differences in the lifestyle and the academic system of India and that of the United States, some of which needed her to make drastic adjustments. For instance, she found that in India, students were more nervous during exams than in the United States; and in the United States, the focus is more on self-directed learning, an aspect that she found beneficial. She expected more interaction between the professors and the students in the United States, however, she found the interaction to be more in India.

Similar to Shreya, Shruti too was not used to doing all the household chores, such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry. Learning to do these chores along with working on her classroom assignments, meeting deadlines, and teaching, became a challenge for Shruti. Additionally, she thought that in the United States, she would be able to make Indian friends easily, which she later realized was not easy, as there were not many Indian students in her department and also everybody kept very busy. Further, she encountered difficulty in expressing herself, as everything that she said was taken

literally and seriously. She also felt homesick and missed her mother the most. Academically, Shruti initially felt little stressed. She had difficulty in interacting with American professors because she did not know what their expectations were or what was acceptable, what they would ask and whether her answers would be satisfactory.

To deal with these challenges, Shruti applied coping mechanisms such as, developing her writing skills, being very respectful towards her professors, learning household work, and being confident in herself. All the above mentioned experiences transformed Shruti into a confident and independent individual. She developed more positive attitude towards life. Her views about Americans and the West in general, also transformed. She learned that American women are also very traditional and motherly, who take care of their children and the house. When asked about how she feels about the transformations that occurred within her, she stated, that she feels happy and contented with the way she has transformed.

Pragya

Pragya is a 26 year old, doctoral student in Biophysics. She has been staying in the United States for the past three years. Pragya never visited a foreign country before coming to the United States. She developed the desire to come to the United States when she was doing her undergraduate studies. As a child, Pragya was fascinated with the idea of going to a foreign country. Finally, after completing her undergraduate degree in

India, she decided to come to the United States for her Ph.D. Pragya applied to several universities in the United States and got accepted into many of them, including Nurture University. Nurture University was very well reputed in her field of study and consequently, she decided to join it. After making the transition, Pragya found her experience to be totally different from her expectations of life in the US. She found Nurture University town to be completely opposite from the cities that she had associated the US with, like New York and LA. Also, she did not expect Nurture University to be located in such a small town. Before boarding the plane in India, though Pragya didn't like the feeling of leaving family and the familiar surroundings, she was excited. However, after coming to the United States, she felt miserable. She described:

> If there was a word that could multiply miserable times by thousands, that's how I felt. I did not like it here at first. I had not expected to live in a small, dirty apartment. The person I was going to live with had many friends who tried to make me comfortable but I was just miserable. I didn't want to meet anybody. I just wanted to go back home. (INT 4 – p.4)

Pragya hoped that it will get better for her over the years. After three years of her stay in the United States, although she feels better, yet, she had uncomfortable moments. Expressing her feelings, she stated, “I do like the US and I am very thankful for this opportunity, but at the same time, it's not home. I see myself in India, especially

in Mumbai. I want to go there as soon as I can" (INT 4 – p. 5). The process of making the transition from India to the United States impacted the psychological well being of Pragya negatively. She continues to feel stressed and nervous on many days. She stated, "The stress level here is very high, whether it is work, exams, professors, meetings, presentations, assignments, health, personal life, etc. My life has been much more stressful than it has ever been in India" (INT 4 – p. 18). Pragya, even today, feels a sense of non-belonging despite the ability to communicate in English, having friends, and having been grown up in a city, where she had an opportunity to mingle with people of different ethnicities, cultures and from all walks of life. She feels lost. Coming to the United States has also negatively impacted Pragya's sociocultural well being. Expressing herself, she said:

> I feel lonely, not being able to express my true feelings to somebody. I can't constantly tell people that I am homesick. They get tired of me and at the same time I can't push my homesickness away. So, having to suppress my feelings and not being able to talk about certain things, certainly makes me feel lonely. (INT 4 – p. 19)

Further, Pragya describing her frustration of not being able to share or express herself, said, "One doesn't know whom to trust initially. Can I trust an American? Can I trust an Indian? Can I talk about this? It is still difficult; I don't trust anybody here the way I trust people back home" (INT 4 – p. 21). Additionally, Pragya is vegetarian and

has problems finding vegetarian options at restaurants here. She said, “It's so difficult to find anything vegetarian. I remember going to Greens restaurant. I asked, 'Do you have anything vegetarian'? They asked me if chicken was OK” (INT 4 – p. 20).

Further, Pragya carries the fear of her work being rejected either by her professors, her committee, or lab mates. She explained:

> Sometimes I am unhappy here. I question why should I put myself through this? But yes, it's great education, it brings you name, fame, sets your career in an amazing path, hopefully. I hope that this Ph.D. is worth all that I am missing out on (INT 4 – pp. 21- 22)

From her experiences and application of various coping strategies, Pragya learned that one of the foremost steps in adjusting to the life in the United States is to be organized in finding an apartment. She said, “It is essential to start thinking in advance about the kind of person one wants to share an apartment with” (INT 4 – p. 24). Pragya believes that the incoming students should imagine themselves five years from now. They should have a goal in mind, which could be educational, professional, personal, economical, or social and try to reach it. Financially, it is important to be aware of how the expenses are going to be in the United States and accordingly be prepared to manage the finances, “One should be very smart and careful about bills, the money you make; one can't be extravagant” (INT 4 – p. 24). Furthermore, for Pragya, psychological preparation is crucial. She described:

> You have to be prepared to be homesick and lonely. Be prepared to disrupt your life from India completely; it's just not the same; you are not going to have festivals; you may not be able to go to temple. You have to build internal strength and be your own support system. (INT 4 – p. 25)

Pragya emphasized on networking while in India. Explaining, she stated, "If you already have Nurture University group that you have met in your city, and they are coming to US to join Nurture University, then you already have someone whom you know and you should network with them" (INT 4 – p. 26). Pragya wanted to convey to the incoming students that "Life here is not as rosy as you see on TV. It's shockingly different" (INT 4 – p. 25). Therefore, she emphasizes reading, keeping in touch with current affairs of United States, talking to people, and asking as many people as possible for their opinions. She suggested to, "Go over the Internet; people write blogs and blogs of their emotions; look for things like that" (INT 4 – p. 26).

Pragya noted the importance of being open-minded to people and cultures, instead of having narrow thinking. As she described:

> Indians, especially, I think are very shut to other cultures. Everybody is wonderful. Don't shut yourself from other cultures. America has people of all different cultures. It is "the" place to be. Part of it is that yes, you came here for education, but part of it is the exposure you can get. Don't

> miss an opportunity like that. You can learn so much more. (INT 4 – p. 28)

It can be overwhelming in many ways to come here, said Pragya. Explaining how it could impact the new students, Pragya gave some words of caution:

> It can be great in terms of good research, publications, and such, but at the same time, stressful. A lot of kids back home are very protected. Here, they need to be independent. I would tell them to go out there and meet different people, but be grounded. Never forget your goal, which is to study and be responsible. (INT 4 – p. 28)

Transition to the United States and after having lived here for three years, Pragya finds herself transformed into an independent and more mature individual. She explained:

> My parents would protect me a lot, as a result of which I was much more dependent on them for decisions. Here I am on my own; I pay my own bills; I understand the value of money; it's made me much more independent and grown up; my responsibilities have increased. Also, being in a different country, I have become more careful about every step I take; I consider everything before jumping into something; I don't want to make any mistakes. (INT 4 – p. 22)

Pragya's perspectives about the world also transformed after being exposed to life in the United States. She stated, “You think of America as a more liberal country. It really is not. There are many conservative people who are somewhat intolerant towards other cultures. Things are not always what you see on the surface” (INT 4 – p. 24).

Though, Pragya transformed into a person who can do many things on her own and learned to live independently, as opposed to the protected life that her parents provided her, there are certain aspects that she regrets about. She stated, “Although I do not regret aiming for a high level of education, I regret not seeing my friends and family on a daily basis” (INT 4 – p. 25). Thus, Pragya also realized that she transformed into a more stressed and a worrisome person, the aspect that she doesn't like in her personality.

Summary. Pragya developed the desire to come to the United States when she was an undergraduate student. Pragya, in her mind, had a picture of the United States by watching TV and conversing with her cousins, who live in the United States. Accordingly, she expected Nurture University town to be vast, like New York or LA. After coming to Nurture university town, however, Pragya realized that there was a noteworthy contrast between the picture she carried and her experiences. Additionally, she felt homesick and lonely. She also had difficulty finding clothes and shoes of her size. Academically, Pragya's stress level was also too high.

Though, Pragya, in terms of receiving higher education, was very thankful for the opportunity, she felt miserable and did not feel that she belonged here. Pragya thought that she would start feeling better with application of certain coping strategies, such as keeping herself occupied, exercising, being open-minded and socializing. She, however, continues to feel the same. After having lived in the United States for three years, Pragya feels that she transformed into an independent and a mature individual. Upon being asked as to how she feels about the transformations that occurred within her, she stated that she is partly glad, however, independence led to more responsibilities. These responsibilities transformed her into a more stressful, worrisome, less carefree and more cautious person. Her perceptions about the media also transformed. She learned that all that is depicted in the media is necessarily not true. Her perceptions about TV transformed. She learned that all that is shown on TV is necessarily not true.

Rishi

Rishi is a doctoral student in the department of Physics at Nurture University. He has been living in the United States for the past five years. After finishing his Master's in Engineering in India, Rishi joined an industry. He, however, realized that the industry was not the right place for him as there was not much freedom for him. Consequently, he resigned from his job and decided to do Ph.D. in the United States. After taking the GRE and TOEFL, he got admitted to an electrical engineering department in the University of

Chicago, where he studied for a couple of years before joining Nurture University. When Rishi was working in India, he came to the United States for a couple of weeks on a business trip. Therefore, he was confident that he would be able to somehow manage his life in the United States. Rishi's transition started on a good note on his first day in the United States, when at the airport he fortunately ran into a student from the same university. The fellow student hosted him for about a week. His first few days were mostly spent in scouting for an apartment.

Gradually, Rishi began to observe the differences between the United States and the Indian academic system. In terms of his high expectations towards finding quality lab and computer facilities in his previous university in Chicago, he was a bit disappointed, as he had more access to such facilities in India. He, however, liked the flexibility in choosing his own courses in the department. He found the general atmosphere in the classes to be the same as in India. The difference he found in the classrooms at Nurture University was the change of classmates in every class. Though the examination patterns were similar to those in India, the concept of homework assignments being given a lot of weight was something new to him. Rishi found the integration of technology in the United States classrooms to be very beneficial.

Another difference that Rishi noted in the academic systems of both the countries was that, in the United States, students are considered as professionals, whereas in India, students are not. He stated:

> Even though you are a student, for example, you are given teaching responsibilities in U.S. I did not have that kind of outlook towards being a student in the United States. That was the biggest discovery for me. For the first few semesters, I did not have that. But, if don't have that, you are like doomed. I mean being answerable to the ones who gave you the job, even if it's just grading work, you have to do it professionally. If you maintain office hours, you have to maintain those office hours; you come at that time and leave at that time. These were things that I was not aware, but I was made to (smiles) (INT 5 – pp.5-6)

He likes many aspects of the United States academic system, however, he misses being a student in India. Explaining, he stated:

> Being a student in India is a lot of fun. I used to have lot of friends; we worked in lab; all of us gather in labs. What you miss here is going out. See, it definitely has to do with culture. There we used to go out to have chai's and samosas. There was this personal bonding. We also used to discuss a lot about our research problems, so if not in the lab, we used to discuss research problems at chai dukans, it definitely had to happen in the chai dukans. That's not happening here. That definitely I am missing

> here. The culture, the atmosphere, the ambiance that I am used to, is not here. (INT 5 – p.9)

He also encounters difficulty in addressing professors by their names in the United States. He noted, “I still address professors by appending 'sir'. I still am in the same frame. Even if they ask me to address them with first name, I still can't. I mean, we have some kind of reverence towards professors, I still carry that” (INT 5 – p.10). Rishi, however, attributed his initial obstacles to adjusting to the life in the United States to be mostly because of reasons within him, as opposed to being in the new country. Explaining, he stated:

> These are obstacles not because of the system, but they are within self. We break our own rules, we don't follow a methodology. It's definitely to do with disorganization within myself. It's only the obstacles created by myself. If you plan ahead, meet deadlines, think ahead, your career will be very smooth in United States. It's lack of discipline or disorganization on our part than anything else. It's definitely internal than external. I am still carrying those habits lingering. I am changing little bit now. (INT 5 – p.6)

In terms of language communication, Rishi is always conscious of his ability to communicate properly with the natives. Explaining, he said:

> When I am speaking with someone who is non-Indian, I have questions like, 'Will they understand me'? 'Do they understand me'? 'Am I communicating properly'? or 'Am I pronouncing the words properly'? So, this is always in the back of my mind. So, sometimes I try to over correct it, when they give a blank face; it happens. But it was not much of a problem. (INT 5 – p.7)

Rishi would also feel lonely many times because of not socializing and having friends, which in turn made him more isolated. As he stated, "This is like a spiraling kind of structure, wherein once you start being isolated, you become further isolated" (INT 5 – p.14). Additionally, he encountered difficulty in understanding and fitting into the American society, in terms of language, culture and the environment. Rishi, however, always thanked United States for providing him with the opportunity to study in their university. Explaining, he stated:

> Whenever I go and talk to Americans, I know I am an outsider. I never considered my self to be a part of this society, be in terms of language or culture or anything. Usually I talk with a sense of gratitude. I ask myself this question - suppose the same situation was reversed; lets say, this is India, you are an Indian and they are Americans, it's like role reversal, will you be so acceptable? Will you be so welcoming to other cultures? Will you be so forthcoming to help others? If you see everything in that

light, then what you see is definitely a service to you. So, in that sense I don't have any questions. (INT 5 – p.13)

Along with applying the role-reversal scenario, Rishi adopted some more coping strategies to adjust in the United States, and accordingly provided suggestions for successful adjustment in the United States: (INT 5 – pp.19-21)

1. "I understood that if you are in a society, you have to understand it. For that you need help from Americans." You need to open up more with Americans; ask them some general questions about their background, or their education, but avoiding personal questions. Once you start approaching, may be others will also start approaching from their side. That way communication develops."
2. "Rediff.com has a section for prospective students coming from India to the United States. Particularly most of the students in cities have their seniors in the United States. Reading and talking to students already in the United States helps."
3. "India Association has nice FAQ list, things to do, what to expect. Reading this information helps."
4. "Personally, I would say that grad education is serious, it's not an extension of an undergrad education, so focus is essential."
5. "Students can pursue lot more things here. Most of the Indian students are very academic oriented. Outside of studies, they don't know anything. But they can

change all those perspectives here. For example, they can join a hiking club, they can learn salsa, they can develop all round personality, and not just confine themselves to their department and apartment. They can use those resources that are available here."

6. "Probably for the new students who are not used to this hostel life, it might be little difficult in adapting here. For example, they might never have cooked, but here cooking is like the norm and sharing responsibilities. One needs to learn how to share an apartment, and how to share life with others. That is something that may not be taught. You have to be really flexible to adjusting to the set up here. I mean you can't really be firm and say, 'No, I like to do this, I won't do that'. You got be really flexible when sharing an apartment."
7. "Looking for funding is essential."
8. "You have to yield, that's the only way you can survive."

Further, Rishi stated that being independent and developing independent thinking is very important, as it helps in developing self-confidence in conducting research and solving problems. Along with being independent, Rishi emphasized the importance of networking for career development. He noted that networking helps in getting ideas for research projects and may also open up opportunities for collaborative work. Explaining, he stated:

> Let's say, to write proposals, to write grants, you have to be visible, you have to be seen outside your domain. For example, I see most students write email to first authors of the paper. That way, they know that, 'Yes this person is also working'. But, because I never communicated, nobody knows what I am doing and I am not visible. (INT 5 – p.21)

These experiences of making the transition to a new country, encountering new culture, environment and academic system, associated challenges, and learning to cope with these challenges, transformed Rishi to a great extent. For the first few months, Rishi used to be in a "cocoon", not talking to anybody much. However, later he realized that he needs to transform this aspect in him. Rishi became friendlier. He began to mingle more with friends and became more active in community activities. He became more organized. Describing an incident, Rishi stated:

> What I learned is that if you have to live in this country, you have to be organized. Even in India, I used to never plan anything. I tried to follow the same approach here. It didn't work here. For example, I went to Chicago to my cousin's house. I did not call her, or I did not inform her. I did not even book the tickets in advance. I did not even take proper winter clothing. That's a very cold place. I just went, probably with shorts and T shirt. I did not have cash in my hands. So, it was completely unorganized trip. So, even though I am willing to take that kind of adventures, it's really

> not advisable. I went into the bus; it was freezing cold; I did not have proper clothing; I did not know where her house was; and I did know her phone number. So, I landed in the place. Now I want to go the place, how come? Then I saw one Indian old lady. I asked her, 'I need to get to this place, can you take me to the Indian grocery store'? Then I went to the grocery store. I asked there, 'if they knew my cousin'? They said 'no', they don't know. So, she looked up his movie renting file (because he rents movies), she pulled up his databases; she pulled out the number and called my cousin. Then she came to pick me up and then I went. So, this was a very adventurous trip, but that's not the way one should work. What if she was not there in the house? What if she had gone to another place? Also, it becomes lot more cheaper. For example, if you plan ahead, like booking airlines or booking hotels. Definitely these are all the changes I made. Now, if I go, I plan ahead and I book, I inform, schedule, organize. In India, I never did this. If I had to go to a place, back home, just book a bus station, board a bus and go, that's all. I knew the system there, but here I don't know, so I need to rely on being more organized. (INT 5 – pp.17-18)

Further, Rishi became goal-oriented and developed an enthusiasm to learn many life-skills on his own. As he noted:

> I was more becoming like 'do it yourself' guy. I was doing small repairs on my own. I want to carry the same things forward when I go back to India. I began writing lists and scheduling. Here, if I want to be informed, I can be informed because of the resources available. In that sense, I am becoming more informative. Here, I feel that everything is possible. I feel that I will be able to do it, no matter what. I am molding myself into a 'do it yourself' person now. (INT 5 – p.18)

From being an introvert, Rishi transformed himself into an extrovert. He became more sociable, and found that it paid rich dividends both in his personal and academic spheres. He still strives to better himself by learning more and stated, "I am actually unsatisfied with my work output. I always think that I could do a lot better, had I been more organized, more focused" (INT 5 – p.19).

Summary. Rishi, after completing his Masters in Engineering joined an industry in India. He, however, realized that the industry was not the right place for him as there was not much flexibility and freedom. Consequently, he resigned from his job and decided to do Ph.D. in the United States. When he came to the United States, he was initially jet lagged and sleepy and was very reluctant to go out and mingle with people. Once he recovered from jet lag and started going to school, he began to observe differences in the academic system of United States and India. For instance, in United

States, students have the flexibility of choosing courses, however in India the courses are set in advance for the students.

Because of being in a new environment and culture, of the host country, Rishi encountered certain adjustment difficulties, mainly because of the reasons within himself than being in a new country. In order to adjust successfully, Rishi adopted certain coping strategies, some of them being socializing, making friends and planning in advance. He also applied the role-reversal scenario, where he would place himself in other's situation and think like them. This strategy helped him to understand others well and in turn not consider his problem as a problem. After having transitioned to the United States, Rishi observed major transformations within him. He became more organized, more focused, independent, self-directed, informative, and social. He, however, still feels the need to develop and learn more.

Vishnu

After completing undergraduate education in Engineering in India, Vishnu aimed at coming to the United States for his higher studies. He applied to various universities in the United States and finally secured admission into a Ph.D. program at Nurture University. He was happy for securing admission and was excited to join the university. With a smile he said, “I was very eager to come here, and my dad was very eager to kick me out, saying 'go out and experience the real world'. It was fantastic” (INT 6 – p.1). He

began preparing himself for the life in the United States. He took training from his mother in cooking for a month. He would be with her in the kitchen and observe her as to what and how she was preparing dishes. He began attending Nurture group meetings held in his city, Chennai. These group meetings helped him immensely. Vishnu explained:

> I had already met people; spoke to people right in India; we had gotten to know each other; we came here as a group; I already knew my roommate, fixed over there; and we had an apartment. I came to know of the India Association at Nurture University, who helped us. (INT 6 – p.1)

Finally, Vishnu came to the United States. He was thrilled, but because of the jet lag, he felt sleepy to the extent that he slept for two days straight. The third day, Vishnu put the training that he got from his mother into practice and tried cooking a dish, but "it was a disaster, in spite of all the training" (INT 6 – p.1). Today, however, he has improved in his cooking skills. So "it's not a big deal nowadays" (INT 6 – p.1) Eager to adapt to the host country, Vishnu began exploring the place and was curious to know the rules on which the American society is based. He immediately learned the walking and the driving rules. Vishnu began to realize the difference between being a student in India versus in the United States. Describing the difference, he stated:

> In the United States, you are not just a student; you need to do everything by yourself in terms of cooking, laundry and so on. In India,

> you can just sit and study and your mom brings you tea or coffee. Here, if you want coffee, go make your coffee. So, things are very different here. In terms of responsibility you have a lot more; you need to plan your studies accordingly; you need to take care of all these other activities; so, I think it is a growing experience in all aspects apart from just education. (INT 6 – p.9)

Vishnu also found the difference in the classroom environments of India and the United States, in terms of flexibility. He finds the academic system in the United States to be less strict and therefore more effective. Explaining, he said, "Here, you come in when you want. You don't come when you don't have to come in and you can leave half way during the class if you wanted to do" (INT 6 – p.10). In India, however:

> You either attend the class or leave the class and lot of them actually punish you incase you don't attend the class. You need to work on extra two problems; things like that. You need to do something to make up for that lost time. You don't have anything like that over here. It's all up to you. You know, if you want to study, you do it. Also, here you have class at a specific time and the rest of the time you are free to do what you want, study, or work on assignments. (INT 6 – p.10)

However, like Shreya and Rishi, on missing the aspect of making friends in the United States classrooms, Vishnu stated:

> In India you go to the class in the morning and then you have classes all day. Because you are spending majority of the time with your classmates, you get to make close friends there. Here you meet a person during the class, but you are listening to the class, so you don't interact too much and then once the class is over, you go; you are on your ways. So, I think the bonds that form in the classes back home are way stronger than the bonds that you form here. You would have to make that extra effort here. The system forces it on you over back home which is kind of good. (INT 6 – pp.10-11)

Academically, the transition was a "shock" for Vishnu. As he described:

> It's just the academic part, where you may always have hiccups. I just didn't know what research was because I came here soon after my bachelors. So, I would have to say, probably for the first year the most frustrating part of my stay in United States was my academic life. (INT 6 – p.2)

Socially, however, Vishnu had no difficulty fitting into the American society, though he took some time to warm up to the entire concept of socializing in the United States. He said, "It was more of a fun time being with friends, rather than a serious educational trip, until I got into that serious research groove" (INT 6 – p.3). With conscious effort, he got used to the colloquial terms, accents and words and began using

them in his conversation with Americans. As the years went by, he got more and more confident about himself and learned how to handle things over in the United States. Socioculturally, he said, “I feel very comfortable, I feel at home” (INT 6 – p.1). Vishnu, however, felt lonely, during summer holidays and weekends. He wished that he didn't have weekends so that he could “Keep working and not worry about how to spend the weekends”(INT 6 – p.18). Psychologically, other than feeling somewhat homesick, there was nothing that made Vishnu feel stressed in the United States.

Based on his experiences and the coping strategies that he adopted to adjust well, Vishnu made some suggestions for the students who plan to come to the United States or are new to the United States: (INT 6 – pp. 4-26)

1. “Probably the first thing is to realize what research is over here and it takes some time for that to happen.”
2. “Probably next big thing is, especially when you are committing to such big thing like Ph.D., pick your field of passion and go along that pathway. A whole lot of people jump into a topic the minute they get an assistantship. That shouldn't be done. They don't realize what they are getting themselves into. ”
3. “When I ask new students as to what courses they are going to take, they say 'whatever works'. I say it's a bad attitude. It's not whatever works, but whatever you can do, that's all that matters.”
4. “If you already have a bachelor’s, this is not the time to start from scratch. Build

on the skills that you already have."

5. "Most people don't realize the next step right after they land over here. Having a goal in mind is very essential."
6. "Have an open mind to the culture; when you have an open mind, you are not in a shock culturally, socially, or academically."
7. "You have to blend in into the culture to learn what is polite here, what is not polite here, what should be done, how should you ask for certain things, should you even ask for certain things."
8. "I feel that you are 23, you are grown up and are responsible. Start living your life. So, I think it's fair to have at least that level of confidence. Don't expect anyone to pamper you at this point."
9. "Don't make your judgments based on your first impression. Don't get offended; people over here are pretty blunt. Don't take that as they snubbed you. That's a natural culture. People are just outright open minded. They speak their mind over here."
10. "Develop a social life. Just be free. Talk to everyone and don't be in a closed shell. If you are social, obviously it can help you in networking; getting yourself accustomed to a new part of the world. It's good to have a healthy social life, without getting into issues or problems. Staying aloof, not talking to people, not socializing is not helpful."

11. “It's how well you deal with people is what improves your social relationships.”
12. “It's a very small community, so you don't want to make enemies.”
13. “I am thankful that this country has accepted me and you show your gratitude. You came here to study. Do what you have to do and continue with your life.”
14. “Realize that you are in a foreign land and you need to be grateful and show it verbally or otherwise.”
15. “I think, people, especially international students to a certain extent need to have in their mind is, they are internationals; this is not your country. Yes if you cannot get into NASA, there is nothing wrong, because they ask for citizenship and you are not a citizen.”
16. “Sometimes people would say, 'I am not feeling good', and I would say 'think of any other international who were in India, and think about what they would be going through'. I mean, socially, we may also not be perfect, you know, in terms of treating an outsider in our community. So you need to think of it in that aspect and say, 'ok, this is not something really bad that happened to me, this is something that people sometimes undergo', not a big deal.”
17. “The Indian Association has a web site which has a lot of information regarding commonly used terms and what they mean. So, if people just take time to read, it will be very useful. Reading online helps, there are travel channels that show a lot of information about this. Books help.”

18. “The best way for you to grow up is to leave the house. You have experienced being pampered and living a happy life. Now go out to the real world and do the same things, but without all that support, and that's how you get to grow emotionally, and mentally, in terms of understanding things and solving issues.”
19. Making a suggestion for the institution, Vishnu said, “Students do not know exactly what courses to pick and what to choose. I think people need to have like a crash course on what to do after coming here.”
20. Finally, Vishnu feels that one has to learn it the hard way, because that way people never forget. He said, “It does not matter how many times the people tell you, people have to figure it out themselves. Just don't get bogged down by it, just pick up yourself and move forward.”

After seven years of stay in the United States, Vishnu sees a transformed person in him. He used to be a short tempered and an impulsive person, who would take decisions quickly, without thinking. Now, however, the steps he takes are much more planned and executed. Before making any decision, he contemplates, and thinks of all the scenarios. He developed a cool and a composed work ethic, without panicking at problems.

Further describing the difference between the old him and the new him, he stated that he never took life seriously, nor he was financially responsible or understood the realities of life. All these aspects, however, changed drastically. He transformed into a

more serious and responsible person. Vishnu also became more organized and learned how to solve problems. Explaining this transformation, he said:

> It's something that you develop. You know the longer you stay here, the more you experience problem solving skills and handling day to day issues. You are like, 'ok, I know how to take care of it', rather, than asking ten people for a solution. (INT 6 – p.18)

Vishnu learned that in the United States, it is very important to be candid and expressive. Commenting on the importance of being frank, he explained:

> I wouldn't say just Indians, but Asians in general have this tremendous respect that comes into the way of expressing what you feel and you kind of feel that if the professors tell it to you, then that's what you have to do. You never argue or make a point. That really needs to stop and it took me a few years to get over that and today if I cannot do something, I just can not do it. Initially, whatever my advisor threw on me, I used to do it, no matter what, whether I could or could not. Most of them I accomplished, some of them I just could not and he was like, 'just say no to me!' My advisor was pretty frank with me. He said, 'I know that you guys have the tendency to take too much on yourself, don't do it, just say you can't do it and that's fine, but if you say you can do it, I expect a solution or an answer'. Now, I got to a point where I

> understand what can be detrimental to my progress. So, I say no to things pretty straightforward. (INT 6 – p.4)

Additionally, Vishnu's perspectives about America transformed to a great extent. Reflecting on the differences in his perspectives, he stated:

> You always see that life over here is party and fun and anything goes is the attitude that some people have, but that's not the case. Things are very organized and family values are very strong. That was one thing that I always thought that family values may not be as strong as they are in India, but no, it's just as strong, as it is back home. (INT 6 – p.22)

Vishnu's perspectives about the world also changed after coming to the United States. Vishnu realized that:

> No matter where you are in the world, people do the same stuff. They have family values, there is a strong fear of God that everybody has and everybody works hard toward what they want. There is always this passion towards working. I think it's just that people change, geography changes, but we all are humans and we do same things. (INT 6 – p.22)

Reflecting on how he feels about the transformations that occurred within himself, Vishnu stated, with contentment:

> I feel awesome. I love myself. I am happy with the way I have turned out to be. I am happy with my judgment and my attitude towards certain

> things. I think this is pretty much what I was hoping to be; this is everything I want. I feel very confident now about my decisions, my actions; I have come to a point where I am comfortable. (INT 6 – pp.22 - 23)

Vishnu feels fortunate for all the transformations that occurred in him, after 7 years of stay in the United States.

Summary. Vishnu decided to come to the United States for his Ph.D. after completing his undergraduate degree in Engineering in India. He was very excited to come to the United States. When he ultimately came, he was thrilled. Because of the jet lag, however, he slept continuously for two days. After Vishnu recovered from the jet lag, he immediately undertook two tasks: tried to put the training in cooking that he received from his mother to practice; and immediately learned the rules that people follow in the United States. Eventually, Vishnu began to realize the difference between being a student in India versus in the United States. He learned that in the United States, a student needs to take the responsibility of his finances, living, and the household chores, such as cooking, cleaning, washing dishes and laundry, an aspect that was new to him. He finds the academic system in the United States to be more effective, mainly because of the flexibility in class schedules.

Vishnu, being a very social person and being the one who takes the initiative to learn and adapt, adjusted conveniently into the American system. He, however, encountered academic challenges as he came to the United States soon after his undergraduate degree and did not know anything about how research is conducted. Along with this challenge, he sometimes felt homesick and lonely during holidays and weekends when all his friends would go on vacation, or when he didn't have any work to accomplish. In order to overcome these challenges, Vishnu adopted certain coping strategies, such as gaining an understanding of research, picking a field of his passion, choosing a topic that he could handle, and by maintaining good relationships. Similar to Rishi, Vishnu also believed in role-reversal scenario in order to understand others. Like Shreya, Vishnu also suggested not making judgments on people based on their first impressions. He also made a suggestion to the university regarding having a crash course on what to do after coming to the United States in terms of choosing courses.

Undergoing the phases of transition, adjustment, and applying coping strategies have led Vishnu to various transformations from within. He transformed into a patient and responsible person who began to take life seriously. He developed problem solving skills, and a composed work ethic, as opposed to panicking. He trained himself to say 'no' to things which he could not handle. His perceptions regarding the family values of Americans' not being as strong as Indians' changed. He learned that people from any part of the world are the same. They have family values; are God fearing; and have strong

work ethic. Vishnu feels very proud of the way he has transformed and feels very contented with the way he has evolved.

Arjun

Before coming to the United States, Arjun was working in India as a Regional Manager in a multinational company and was highly paid. He was living with his parents; he had his friends and was much contended in India. Arjun's wife, Priyanka, came to the United States in 1996 to pursue her Ph.D. in Physics, which she had always dreamt of doing. Initially, they thought that Priyanka would finish her Ph.D. and come back to India to join Arjun. After two years, however, they realized that it was hard for them to stay apart. It was harder for Priyanka because for her, it was altogether a new environment. She had very few friends, was living in an apartment with another student and had some issues there while staying. She was also facing some difficulties in her lab and was going through a rough phase with her advisor. She lacked the support system. Being away from her husband, parents and friends was difficult for her. Priyanka needed emotional support. Besides, Priyanka had already invested a tremendous amount of time, effort and money, in order to secure her doctorate. Finally, Arjun and Priyanka decided that it would be better for Arjun to come to the United States, rather than Priyanka quitting her Ph.D. and returning to India to join Arjun.

Consequently, Arjun quit his job and came to the United States, but had no clue as to what he was going to do upon his arrival. He experienced his first culture shock when he lost his car keys. Describing his experience, he stated:

> When I came to the United States, my wife already had an apartment with the University Apartments. After coming here, we bought a car. One day, the car got locked and I could not unlock it. Fortunately, I had a spare key in my apartment. So I came to the University Apartment office and told them that I got locked out and needed somebody to open my apartment. They have a list of the residents. The apartment was on my wife's name and I was registered as a co-resident. The manager, without even looking at the list, kept telling me, 'I am sorry, only if your wife comes and asks, we can you give you the key'. The guy, who brought me here, was ironically a police man, who was trying to help me. But, the manager didn't seem to be convinced. He was very rude. He said, ‘See I don't know if you had a fight with your wife, you have been kicked out of the house”, all like this, he was saying you know!; you might have been divorced, or you may have had some problem with your wife, so we don't know. How can we give you the key? That was really frustrating for me. In India, if you are husband and wife, if I say I am the husband, they just believe you. This guy was grilling me for 30 minutes for no reason. Then somebody

> told me that I should have asked him to look at the list to see if you are co resident and if you are a co-resident, he should have allowed you. Even legally, he can allow. I had to sit outside somewhere till my wife returned in the evening, because I couldn't get into my house, or into the car. That's how I started off my experience in the United States. (INT 7 – pp.3- 4)

Arjun had lost a sense of purpose, the first few days in the United States. He thought that he would work full time and study part time, but later on realized that because of the visa rules, he will have to become a full time student and work part time. Arjun took the GRE and got admission into the school; however, because he was on F2 visa, he could not work. Work is very dear to Arjun, mainly because he did not prefer staying at home, without working. Not working and not receiving a pay check every month was a big challenge for Arjun, as he has been used to receiving a pay check every month for the past ten years. Because of this, he felt a sense of helplessness and uselessness. Describing his daily routine, he said:

> I used to sit and watch TV. My wife used to go to work and I used to sit and eat and in the evening she comes again, so I felt very bad. For me, having a job is related to my self-esteem. I think it's my duty to go out and earn and take care of my family. (INT 7 – p.4)

He was then told that in order to work along with studying, he would have to convert his visa status from F2 to F1, which could be done at the Mexican consulate.

After getting his F1 visa, he started working in the library for 40 hours, which involved stacking books. Arjun commented:

> It's ok, but the kind of job I was doing back home, which is totally interactive, people traveling, and the excitement that goes with something you love and then, here I am, you know 40 hours a week, stacking books which is so monotonous, nothing creative. You are just taking out books that people pulled out and placing them back to wherever it belongs. You do it 8 hours a day, imagine, and you get a lunch break for 15-30 minutes and then 5 min break every 4 hours or something like that and $5 pay. (INT 7 – p.3)

Arjun continued with this job in summer and later took up another job in public policy research institute. Describing the job, he said:

> They call people and do marketing. You call 50 people, 49 people will call you names and put the phone down, and one guy will be nice to you and don't want what you are offering, but at least they will be polite. So, I did that for a few months. That was $7. Honestly, I don't know how long I would have survived doing this job, but I just wanted to do something, to earn money rather than just sitting at home. (INT 7 – p.3)

Later, he received research and teaching assistantship in his department. He initially joined a Master's program in business, but he was not confident that he had the

knowledge, skills, and ability to call himself an expert in business. Therefore, instead of graduating, he joined the Ph.D. program in his department.

In India, Arjun never felt the need to prepare for life in the United States. After coming to the United States, however, he felt the need to prepare. He learned that one has to be very sensitive about what one says, "Because you may speak something, and you may be misunderstood, people get defensive" (INT 7 – p.7). Arjun did not have much of a problem with English. American accent, however, was difficult for Arjun and even now, Arjun struggles with pronouncing some of the words. He also found some of the phrases used in the United States to be difficult. Describing, he stated:

> A lot of jokes, you don't have a clue that people use here. Even if you tell a joke, you won't be able to tell it the way they told the joke. I mean you would fall flat and at this point for you to even attempt it is not good. That was a challenge for me, using those phrases, or the accent. (INT 7 – p.12)

Arjun described his relationship with faculty as mixed. He had some very good experiences as well as some not so good ones. A couple of professors were very supportive of Arjun. He gives most of the credit to one professor who helped him finish his Ph.D. He said:

> I think no body has contributed to me academically than Dr. Bush. He had huge impact; he did lot of things; helping me finish and giving me

> the guidance and showing the maturity and guiding me through what I really wanted to do and helped me win dissertation awards. (INT 7 – p.13)

Arjun also had positive personal experiences with Dr. Bush. He described:

> Dr. Bush's daughter was born six months before my daughter was born. He used to talk to me about his experiences. I was very fearful of that, how am I going to handle this whole thing? You know child is a huge thing, especially after you have been married for 10 years and then you are having a kid. You are used to this freedom of running around and doing your own stuff, so he was a very positive role model in telling how as a dad I can help out. (INT 7 – p.13)

Arjun also had some negative experiences with some professors, because of whom his Ph.D. got delayed. He described:

> Even my proposal, they could not get it in 8 months. I had 80 page proposal. They never had time for me; they canceled meetings left right and center. I wasted 4 months in summer because Dr. Y does not like to look at anything during summer. Then with another faculty, I lost a year. Though she was a great boss, she was really not into guiding me as chair. I lost 2 years because of faculty and for me 2 years is huge in terms of money. My prime age is gone. If I were in India continuing to

> work in my company, today I would be a Managing Director there. I was working as a Regional Manager. I just needed one promotion to become a General Manager, and the next promotion would be a Managing Director. Here, in return, what do I get? I get a Ph.D. Now I don't even know the value of it, it's great, Dr. Arjun, fine, but what is its financial value? (INT 7 – pp.13-14)

While describing the difference between being a student in the United States verses in India, he said, "The good thing about here is that you have freedom to choose a lot of courses, like I was not restricted to my own department, I could take classes in communication and get a certificate from that department. But in India, it was very structured" (INT 7 – pp.15-16). Arjun started studying more in the United States because he was given the opportunity to be creative, such as writing his own papers, as opposed to writing answers to a set of questions. He likes the freedom that is given to the students in the United States. He stated, "I like that freedom of giving my own perspective, critiquing a paper, I love that; book reviews. I like that kind of creative, analytical skills, and some sort of self-directedness" (INT 7 – p.16). The other difference that he likes about the United States education is that of funding opportunities. He said, "I could work and fund my own education, I don't have that opportunity in India. (INT 7 – p.16)

Though Arjun likes many aspects of the United States education, he said that in United States:

> Your life is in the hands of your advisor and I think that was not there in India. You could change your advisor if you wanted to without problems. You could just move and I don't think they could destroy your life. Here they could. They could delay you; they could destroy you; they could control you; at least that was my perception. (INT 7 – p.16)

Further, he stated that he had lost a lot of his time because of that. Especially, as international students, he stated:

> We are very insecure about our assistantships, visa status. So if you change your chair, and lots of time the person with whom you work is your chair also, so if you change him, he will probably take you off of your assistantship. So you know those kinds of worries. So, insecurity in the education system is the huge thing in United States. (INT 7 – pp.16-17)

Further stating about the insecurities that international students might have in the United States education system, Arjun described:

> There is a fear that you will not complete your degree. What if you come here all the way, you leave your job in India, you go back without a degree, who will give you a job? If you go back and say, 'ok 5 years I was doing Ph.D., and then I didn't finish, I came back', who will give

> you a job? It's over you know. So, you have no other way than to finish. There's a huge fear that you may not be able to complete. That's why it's not an easy task changing your committee. With my first chair, I had already spent 5 years with him and then for 8 months I was with other committee and then it didn't work and after 8 months I had another committee. So, each time you change, you are changing your research topic, your focus, your methodologies, and all this while, remember you are taking only research credits and you are paying for these research credits. That for me is money not earned. A years income I have lost, several lakhs of rupees if you look at it. So, those kind of insecurities keep coming, like what am I doing in life, I am more than 35 years, I don't have savings after at this stage of my life. (INT 7 – p.18)

Transition to the United States impacted Arjun's psychological well being to some extent. Every time he stood up to talk in front of the audience, he used to feel nervous, and constantly think as to how he was talking, his expressions, whether he was making the presentation right, whether people were perceiving it the way that he had intended it to be perceived. Arjun said that he would have never felt nervous while speaking in India. When he makes presentations, however, he receives evaluations such as "This was the best presentation ever that I have taken" (INT 7 – p.25), which increases his self-confidence. But, despite of this, Arjun feels that he has not gained the

confidence that he wanted to. He feels that he would be relatively more confident in India. Emotionally, nothing really affected Arjun, except when there is some problem at home. Explaining how sometimes he is emotionally torn, Arjun stated:

> Like recently my brother-in-law broke his leg, my mom fractured her hand, so time like this, you want to be there. I am the eldest son. I feel I have the responsibilities towards my family and my sister who is younger to me is handling all the burden, I mean to take my father to hospital, they have had surgeries, check ups and my sister has two kids; she has to take care of her kids and her husband and then support my parents, like running around, doing stuff, which I am supposed to do. Not just doing the work, but even for emotional support my family needs me, so there are times when you are emotionally torn. (INT 7 – p.23)

Initially, Arjun encountered difficulty in fitting into the American culture. He said:

> When people ask you, 'how is your health, or how is your family'? Sometimes our tendency is to be little bit more detailed, because you think that they are expecting details. But that's not the case here. It's just courtesy when they ask you, and you are just supposed to say, 'fine' and

> then move on. Very rarely they expect you to stand and explain, so those kinds of things. (INT 7 – p.24)

Arjun also had difficulty understanding the concept of signing for everybody in the office on occasions like Christmas or Birthdays. He stated:

> You have to say something in your card and my boss expects us to write the whole card. I say, 'I don't know that person, I see that person once in a month, I don't work with them, but people write like 'you are a great guy', so I feel that show it in action, like doing something beneficial for the person. I didn't like the empty words, like 'you are so nice' without any reason as to why they feel it that way, and giving cards. Everybody knows that they are forced to write, so when I get a card on my birthday, I know that all these 20 people were forced to write all these things on the cards. Nothing is concrete. It surely has been hard for me to fit into that. (INT 7 – p.25)

At the same time, however, he considers that there are always pros and cons to a system. He said, “Here, it's very hard for them to give you anything critical. You will never hear them say, 'oh this was lousy', and most folks will rather not give you an evaluation, rather than write something bad about you. So that's nice” (INT 7 – p.25).

Arjun's transition to the United States has sometimes negatively and sometimes neutrally impacted his sociocultural well being. He said that he has learned and become

more aware socially through the exposure to different cultures in the world and having friends from different countries. However, in terms of leaving his job in India, coming to the United States and the time he invested in doing Ph.d., he still doesn't know if he would regret his decision of coming to the United States. Contemplating, Arjun described:

> When people ask me 'are you happy, do you think you have achieved something?', I feel 'not yet'. The day my wife can say, 'it's ok if I don't work, I will probably work after 2 years, my husband is enough to make me enough money', see even today, she cannot quit the job and come because I don't have the courage. She asks me 'can we manage with your salary'? I don't know, I don't think so. I tell her 'quit and come', but the problem is she feels insecure and she got a reason to be insecure, because do I have a bank balance? 'No'. I have a Ph.D. degree, but I don't know its utility. (INT 7 – pp. 26-27)

Arjun always carries a fear of rejection. Explaining, he said that if he were going for a job interview, he fears that he may be rejected because of the fact that he may not be able to speak the way Americans speak. He also carries the fear of rejection every time he stands in front of a class. Explaining the difference in giving presentations, Arjun said,

> My boss starts off the class with some kind of a joke, but I can never do that here. So it sounds very formal when I start off, because I stick to the formality. I don't want to experiment with the non-formal way. If it doesn't work, it is even worst than being formal. (INT 7 – p.27)

To overcome his challenges, Arjun adopted coping strategies, based on which he made some suggestions for successful adjustment: (INT 7 – pp.20-25)

1. "I think sometimes Indians are obsessed with work at the cost of family. So, we need to have a balance."
2. "The other thing is to talk slowly and in a very calm way. Be very soft spoken."
3. "Be careful when making generalizations. You will have to say, 'may be'. People tend to stereotype here too, but the way they put it, they will add a few things before that, like a disclaimer, they kind of forewarn you and then say. But we will just shoot straight. Just with our tone, our idea may be great, but just the tone with which we say it, people will not accept it."
4. "If you are focused, you can come out with good outcomes. You have an opportunity to be recognized and excel if you want to."

The journey from home country to the host country, led to several transformations within Arjun. Differentiating the difference between the old him and the new him, Arjun stated:

> I used to be very impatient, but I learned to be patient here. I also learned

> that there are a lot of perceptions out there and they are all different; they are not right or wrong, but they are different and I really believe that. Another thing I learned is about stereotypes. When you are in India, you have some stereotypes, but here when you start meeting and interacting, for example people from different countries, then you start saying ' you know, I need to discard a lot of these stereotypes that I carry'. I have broadened my thinking or the way I see things and my mindset. In terms of the world view, I have broadened. (INT 7 – p. 28)

Obtaining a good score in GRE and later earning good grades, and a job, increased Arjun's self-confidence. Arjun said, "United States gave me a new perspective about myself, like, 'oh you know, ok I could do this'; if your back is pushed to the wall, you will be doing things that you never thought you could. That gives the confidence" (INT 7 – p.6).

Educationally, Arjun gained a completely new perspective about himself. Expressing, he said,

> Ok I can do, I can study at the age of 32 or 33, I can score well, and my brain is still working. Because in India we have this view that once you get out of college, you are too old to study again, especially when you have worked 10 years. That was one thing in my mind that kept me from joining as a full-time student. But, when I didn't have an

> alternative, I thought it was the only way to do some work and get a degree. (INT 7 – pp.6-7)

Arjun's perspective about the United States changed after he came to the United States. Commenting on how his perspectives about the social aspect changed, Arjun stated:

> I was not aware that in the United States there were so many divisions. Because when you look at the United States from India, my perspective was that it's of really free, liberal country, where everybody respects everyone. But, only when I came here, I realized that United States is no different from India, everybody has their own problems. (INT 7 – pp. 5-6)

After coming to the United States, Arjun's views about the world also transformed. He realized that countries might differ in terms of providing comforts to their citizens, but people are the same anywhere in the world. Describing, he stated:

> There are lot of things in the United States, like comforts, you get a telephone, you get it in 24 hours, which sometimes takes much longer in India. Those are some things great about the United States, but I think in terms of human beings, I felt that it was same as in India. There are good ones, bad ones, there are ones that discriminate, and there are some that don't discriminate. So, I felt that it's the same; it's

not different at all. (INT 7 – pp. 5-6)

Summary. Arjun was working in a multinational company in India as a regional manager before coming to the United States. He was highly paid and was living close to his parents and was much contended. Eventually, his wife decided to come to the United States to receive a Ph.D. degree in Physics. Though, Arjun didn't want to come to the United States, it was becoming difficult for the couple to stay apart. Eventually, Arjun came to the United States to join his wife. During his initial days in the United States, he had lost a sense of purpose. He was in a dilemma whether to take up a job or to join the school and finally, decided to join a Masters program in Business. Initially, Arjun did not have an assistantship. Not working and not receiving a pay check every month was challenging for Arjun, as he was used to receiving a pay check every month for the past ten years. Not working made him feel helpless and useless. Though, he completed his Masters, he was not confident about his knowledge, skills, and abilities to call himself an expert in Business. Consequently, he joined a Ph.d. program. Like other participants, he also found the freedom to choose courses in the United States academic system to be beneficial.

New country and culture brought some challenges to Arjun, the first being the difficulty in understanding the American accent and the American phrases, and in being understood. He had difficulty in feeling secure regarding his assistantship, visa status

and had to struggle with the fear of whether he will be able to get his Ph.D. degree. To overcome his challenges, Arjun developed persistence, encouraged positive thinking, asked for feedback on his work or accent, and maintained a balance between his work and family. He also learned to talk slowly and calmly. He learned to be careful in making generalizations while talking. Further, he kept himself occupied in extra-curricular activities and involved himself in voluntary work. Arjun realized that the experience of making the transition to a new country brought about certain transformations within him. He became broadminded, confident, patient, calm and composed. He discarded many stereotypes he used to carry about different cultures. His perceptions about the world also underwent transformation. He learned that people around the world are the same. They have same feelings, emotions and similar behavioral patterns.

Summary of Individual Textural Descriptions

Tables 2 through 7, detail an overview of the individual textural descriptions of the study participants. They depict the experiences of the participants' initial first few days in the United States, their expectations of life in the United States, and how different their experiences were from what they expected, the differences they found in being a student in India versus in the United States, the differences between the United States and Indian academic system, the coping strategies they adopted to adjust and their

suggestions for new students to adjust successfully in the host country and finally, how they got transformed.

Table 2

Participant's Initial Experiences in the United States

Positive	Opposite
Thrilled	Lost a sense of purpose
Learned the rules	Miserable
Liked the campus	Tired
Found people friendly	Jet lagged
	Sleepy
	Reluctant to go out
	Self-consoling
	Occasional crying
	Wondering if all of it was worth the efforts

Table 3

Differences between Participants Expectations and Experiences Regarding the Nationals, Nurture University and the University Town

Expectations	Experiences
Weather: Scenic, snow clad mountains	Hot and dry, not as scenic
Americans: Open minded about different cultures, aggressive, an amalgamation of all kinds of people, and liberal	Conservative, religious, informal, casually dressed, caring mothers, have values
University with many resources	Lack of resources
Very nice people	People are same everywhere

Table 4

Differences between Being a Student in the United States vs. Being a Student in India

Student in United States	Student in India
More responsibilities	Responsibilities are shared
Independence	Dependence
Faculty-friendly and informal, but not caring	Caring faculty
Away from family	Close to family
Can not converse about Indian festivals, movies, food, and in native language	Can converse in own language
	Can converse about multiple things
No personal bonding	More personal bonding
Insecurity	Security
Feeling out of place	No fears
Fear of being misunderstood	No consciousness
Conscious feeling	Feelings of being in your own place

Table 5

United States and the Indian Academic System

United States	**Indian**
Homework	No homework at graduate level
Take home exams; open book exams	In-class exams
Classes at a specific time	All day long classes
Classmates change in every class	Classmates consistent in every class
Not much scope for interaction with classmates	More interaction with classmates
Not much discussion in class	More discussions in class
Could be more than 100 students in a class	Maximum 60 students in class
Professor may not know students' names	Professor knows students' names
Not much respect for professors	More respect for professors
Very organized	Less organized
Flexible	Structured coursework
Autonomy	Less Autonomy
Use of technology	Less or no technology
More student organizations	Less student organizations
funding opportunities	Less funding opportunities
Same teaching style	Same teaching style

Table 6

Coping Strategies-Suggestions

Individual	Situational
Maintaining balance between work and family	Providing more scholarships to international students
Talking in a calm manner	Crash course on what to do after coming here
Not generalizing	Better off campus bus service with more routes
Positive thoughts	
Keeping oneself occupied	
Being mentally strong	
Being organized	
Being economical	
Picking a field of passion	
Building on skills that one already has	
Developing good writing skills	
Being polite	
Academic honesty	
Considering graduate education seriously	
Keeping in contact with professors and staff	
Goal oriented	
Accepting the new culture	
Being social	
Being thankful	
Being responsible	
Role reversal scenario	
Being confident	
Adjusting with others	
Making friends	
Being helpful	
Getting family and friends support	

Table 7

Personal Transformation

Beneficial	Opposite
Calm	More stressed
Composed	Worrisome
Tough person	Less carefree
Realized the importance of parents and friends	
Realized virtues of networking	
Confident	
Humble	
Appreciative	
Patient	
Open minded	
Independent	
Mature	
More organized	
Planning in advance	
Writing lists	
Scheduling	
More focused	
Career-oriented	
Self-directed	
More informative	
Building relationships	
More sociable	
Capable of handling various situations	
Accommodative	
Hopeful about things	
Need to improve further	

Step 7: Individual Structural Descriptions-The "What" and "Cause" of an Experience

This section provides individual structural descriptions of each participant. Structural descriptions are explanations of how certain feelings and perceptions are related to an experience and the cause for such feelings. I developed a conceptually clustered matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Appendix E) to analyze and reflect upon the data, utilizing imaginative variation. The application of imaginative variation helped me to identify sub-themes within the two major themes identified in Step 5. The two major themes identified in step 5 were (a) individual experiences and (b) situational experiences. The sub-themes situated under individual experiences were (a1) individual factors that helped in adjustment and (a2) individual factors that hindered adjustment. The sub-themes under situational experiences were (b1) situational factors that helped in adjustment and (b2) situational factors that hindered adjustment. These subthemes that explicate the "how" and the "why" of the participants' experiences are delineated in my own words.

Krishna

Individual factors that helped in adjustment. Among the individual factors that helped Krishna adjust, the first was his self confidence. He always felt confident that he would be able to handle life in the United States and that he would get over the initial stress. He knew why he had come to the United States and realized that in making that

decision, he was correct. After that, it was more of a question of how to face the challenge rather than question why he had come to the United States. Whenever he felt low, Krishna's positive attitude helped him. He would remind himself that he was feeling so because of the change from Indian to American landscape. He would recall the reasons why he chose to come to the United States. He possessed a strong desire to learn, which helped him concentrate on attending classes. When Krishna encountered problems, he would self-counsel, by thinking of ways that he could overcome his loneliness: meeting new people, finding a job or calling home to talk to his parents. Thus, Krishna's self-confidence, belief in himself, positive attitude and self-consoling helped him manage the situation and work out problems that he was facing in the new country.

To cope with cultural differences, Krishna learned about acceptable behaviors by observing Americans. This helped him overcome self-doubt in terms of interacting comfortably with Americans. Additionally, reading material on the Indian Student Association's website and having siblings in the United States helped Krishna to prepare for life in the United States. He knew exactly knew what to expect and how to deal with most situations. His friends would come to him for advice on "how to do something in America." For Krishna, visiting his sister in the United States (who had settled there a few years ago) benefited him a great deal, as she helped him get acquainted with the American lifestyle in a very short span of time. Krishna had visited her immediately

before coming to his university in the United States. She told him how to get along in the United States and shared small tips that may seem unimportant but enhanced his adjustment; for example, finding the price of an item in Wal-Mart or learning what kind of bread to have with chicken patties.

Krishna figured out that homesickness crept in when he was idle and had no work. To overcome the feeling that he was away from his family, Krishna kept in touch with parents/friends on a regular basis. He also made new friends, who helped him channelize his emotions. He kept himself occupied with studies and campus activities, or with his hobbies, such as photography. He joined a few student organizations to meet a circle of students and he also made more friends where he lived. He even took Chinese classes just for fun. He participated in exchange programs to mingle with Americans. The exchange programs worked at two levels for Krishna: they exposed him to the American lifestyle and secondly, they helped him make American friends. All these activities served as stress busters.

Individual factors that hindered adjustment. There were some individual factors that hindered Krishna's adjustment in the United States. Homesickness and the feeling of being far away from loved ones often struck Krishna. He would think of the times when he was in India, and this, sometimes led him to cry. He felt this way while doing everyday jobs like making breakfast, or while listening to Indian songs that had some

special meaning for him. He would feel lonely before going to sleep, or while chatting with his relatives or parents, or visiting a mall. Krishna initially felt lonely when he had very few friends. Krishna also thought that everyone in graduate school seemed to be so much focused toward academics that it was hard for Krishna to make friends. Also, Krishna had been employed in industry for three years in India, which hindered his transition back to academic life.

Situational factors that helped in adjustment. The main situational factor that helped Krishna's adjustment was his dissertation chair, who eased his adjustment by sorting out some issues that Krishna was facing at the university. Academically, Krishna likes classroom practices in the United States. He feels welcome to enter a classroom without asking for permission and to ask any questions during class. An orientation by the International Student Services that taught new students how to help themselves in a new country was also beneficial for Krishna.

Situational factors that hindered adjustment. One situational factor that hindered Krishna's adjustment was the academic workload. Initially, he felt the stress especially when rushing from his part-time job to classes and vice versa. Many times, he stayed up all night to finish assignments or prepare for exams. Meeting deadlines related to courses, as well as the job, was difficult for Krishna. He found it challenging to juggle

multiple assignments at one time, and approaching exams would trigger stress for Krishna.

Shreya

Individual factors that helped in adjustment. The individual factors that helped in Shreya's adjustment to life in the United States were support from family, her roommate and a lab mate, knowing English language, feeling confident, not letting things affect her and having no expectations. Shreya's parents and sister were with her for the initial few months in the United States. Thus, she was not alone and had their emotional support. Shreya also had relatives in the United States, whom she visited for a month before she was admitted into her university. This helped her to get an idea of life in the United States. Her cousin attended another university in the United States, and she guided Shreya through the U.S. academic system. This kind of support system helped Shreya feel comfortable and settle down more easily.

Having a roommate who was, understanding and caring also helped Shreya by having a peaceful atmosphere at home. When Shreya was stressed about deadlines and skipped some meals, her roommate was very supportive in cooking meals and counseling her to meet her deadlines without any worries. This touched Shreya deeply, and she looked forward to going to her apartment. Such support also helped Shreya to concentrate on her work. Additionally, having studied in an English medium school in

India, Shreya had no problem with the language. Knowing English fluently helped her explain things to people very well, which increased her self-confidence.

Another factor that helped was Shreya's confidence in being able to handle situations. Initially, while doing lab rotations, Shreya found a lab matching with her interests and wanted to join that lab. The professor gave Shreya a project, which was new and never attempted by her. He told her he would evaluate her work for a month, and make his decision to hire her based on that evaluation. Shreya began from scratch, and after three days, the professor decided to hire her as his graduate assistant. Clearly, Shreya worked hard, which resulted in gaining her professor’s confidence; made him trust her abilities and give her more work. This process developed a feeling of self confidence in Shreya that she could handle any task in spite of being in a foreign country. Shreya also does not let sad incidents affect her. She forgets them and moves on with her life. This attitude helped Shreya to maintain good relations with people.

Finally, Shreya attributes her smooth transition to having no expectations. She told herself that there would be no one for her, that she would be alone and that she would have to adjust all by herself. Shreya, in advance, thought that not everything would be smooth, that there would be problems that she would have to handle. She thought that she would not be able to make friends immediately, the way she did in India. She told herself that people in the United States would be different, that everyone might not be friendly with her or talk to her. Some might even be rude, although she

might find some, who would be nice to her. This kind of self-talk helped Shreya value everything positive that she received from the people around her and the United States itself. In doing so, she developed a positive attitude.

Individual factors that hindered adjustment. Five individual factors, hindered Shreya's adjustment in the United States – namely, after her family left, homesickness, loneliness, doing all the chores on her own at home, and understanding the American accent. Initially, when Shreya's family was with her, things were easy; however, when they left after a month, life became much tougher. For the first time, Shreya had to live on her own and do so in a new place: she felt homesick. Shreya is attached to her mother the most and missed her presence in her life. Even though she could talk to her parents quite often, lack of their physical presence disturbed Shreya. Therefore, the first semester was very difficult. She frequently felt stressed because she didn't have her family around during certain times, like during examinations. Shreya was used to having her mother wake her up in the morning and she missed that. When Shreya got frustrated with her lab work, she wanted to share it with someone close, yet she could not share it with her family, as she did not want them to worry about her. This inward reflection made Shreya feel lonely. She felt lonely especially during special days like her birthday, since she used to celebrate her birthday with her parents.

Another factor that hindered Shreya's adjustment was the need to do household chores. In India, Shreya never did household chores, as she had a helper who did everything for her. However, in the United States, she had to prepare food, do laundry and dishes, and shop all by herself. Shreya had difficulty adjusting to that as she would get tired after coming from school and had no practice managing the many demands within her time. Though Shreya had no problem with the English language, she initially had difficulty understanding the American accent. Studying in an English medium school helped, but Shreya was used to speaking and listening to English in an Indian accent. She faced the same problem, of being understood with an Indian accent, when she was teaching a class as all her students were Americans. Shreya speaks very fast in her native language, which transited into her English usage, making it difficult for her students to understand her.

Situational factors that helped in adjustment. Situational factors that helped Shreya adjust include her professors indicating confidence and trust in her abilities and work, which helped her increase her self-esteem. Shreya likes being treated with respect by her professors. Shreya also finds the informal behavior of Americans to be helpful. Support from the department head helped Shreya immensely when she was deciding which lab to join. In her field, students are required to do a one year lab rotation, where they select about three labs during the course and finally select a lab out of the three to

complete their Ph.D.'s. However, by the end of the third lab rotation, Shreya was not able to decide which lab to join because the lab she wanted to join did not have funding and the other two had funding, but she was not keen on joining them. This made her too anxious. So, Shreya went to her department head regarding his input on which lab she should join. He gave her some contacts to seek advice. At the same time, he tried to explain to her not to narrow her focus of interest, to read more and expand her knowledge, which would help her choose between labs. This advice helped Shreya become more knowledgeable, and choose a lab sensibly. Once in the lab, Shreya's lab mates offered to help her with her experiments when she was stressed with the workload.

In addition, Shreya found the orientations organized by her department and the university to be helpful in terms of helping her network. In her departmental orientation, she was introduced to the department faculty, which helped her to be comfortable. They also provided an opportunity where, new students could meet senior students in the department and every new student is assigned a senior student, who guides them throughout the Ph.D. The orientation, organized by the university helped Shreya interact and meet with international students, including Indians, and make more friends.

Though initially, Shreya had difficulty understanding the examination system in the United States, she now likes the examination questions that focus more on critical thinking, as they hone her analytical abilities. She likes the semester system as opposed to the annual system, wherein she had to remember course material taught throughout

the year and take a three hour exam at the end of the year. She likes assignments, as she finds them similar to the examination questions and also because students earn points for doing assignments. In addition, Shreya likes the system of doing small projects and giving presentations on those projects. For Shreya, having a teaching assistantship, getting in-state tuition, and receiving scholarships from the university have been very beneficial, as they fund her living in the United States, and not depend on her parents. Shreya has found the Indian Student Association, supported by the university, to be very helpful. It helps new students interact with more Indians. The senior students in the association provide guidance to the new students, and help in shopping for groceries by giving car rides and such.

Situational factors that hindered adjustment. Workload was one of the situational factors that initially hindered Shreya's adjustment to the United States. Searching for labs for her two month rotation, teaching for two semesters (which she had never done before), taking multiple courses, reading and doing assignments, working in the lab for eight hours per day and then doing all the household chores by herself was difficult for Shreya to handle. Additionally, doing more work so as to impress her professor was an added stress for Shreya. She feels that her transition would have been easier if she had experienced a lesser workload.

Another factor causing difficulty was the academic system in the United States. The way the studies and exams are designed are completely different from what Shreya had been used to back home. The first exam that she took was quite different from what she had expected. She expected the examination questions to be based on what was taught in the class, but she found the questions to be totally different. The classroom environment also affected her. She did not like it when people slept beside her during class, and she found it odd when students ate during class. She encountered difficulty taking notes, because her peers would not write down notes when the professor delivered the lecture, hence felt self-conscious in taking notes. She was worried about what other students in class would think of her if she took notes. This stopped Shreya from taking notes in the class, which stressed her as she was missing out on information.

In her lab, Shreya initially encountered being treated differently than her peers. When Shreya got delayed in accomplishing a task, an email, addressing her, was sent out by her professor to everybody in the lab, with a warning in a strict tone. When the same incident happened to Shreya's peer, although everyone was reminded through an email, yet, specific name was not mentioned in it. This difference in behavior made it difficult for Shreya to adjust in her lab, initially. Shreya misses the opportunity to make friends with her classmates in the United States. In India, she would have the same students throughout her classes, whereas in the United States, every class has different students, and because there is not much interaction time, she finds it difficult to make close

friends. She disliked going to class, studying, and leaving. She missed having friends in class, studying, but at the same time having fun.

Shruti

Individual factors that helped in adjustment. The individual factors that helped Shruti adjust were the urban atmosphere in which she grew up, knowing English language, not regretting coming to the United States, being at ease, carrying positive thoughts, overcoming fear of rejection and being courteous. Growing up in Bangalore, a cosmopolitan city, Shruti had an opportunity to interact with people from different states of India, with different languages, and also some international populations. After coming to the United States, the culture shock of being with an amalgamation of different cultures was less for Shruti. She studied in an English medium school in India, which eased her transition. She also had no significant problems understanding the American accent. Shruti never regretted her decision to come to the United States, because if she had stayed in India, she wouldn't have had much opportunity to pursue her chosen subject area.

She believes in being herself and doing things with which she is most comfortable, which increases her confidence level when interacting with people. Shruti's self-confidence and feeling accepted for who she is developed a more positive attitude in her, which helped her adjust to a new country. She has become more hopeful about her

life. This also helped Shruti overcome a fear from back home that she might not be accepted. In terms of her interactions with professors, Shruti found that being very formal and extremely polite kept her from worrying about whether or not her behavior was acceptable. Being very polite and courteous helped her formulate good and healthy relationships with faculty and people in general.

Individual factors that hindered adjustment. The individual factors that hindered Shruti's adjustment were living away from family, lack of positive attitude, and multitasking. Living far away from her parents made Shruti feel homesick and lonely and became one of the most crucial factors that hindered Shruti's adjustment. Initially, Shruti was not very positive about her life. For instance, if she did not perform well in an exam, she would conclude that she would fail, that she might be sent back to India, and that she was a terrible student. This hampered her self-confidence and adjustment. This also led Shruti to think that she would be rejected as a person. One other factor that hampered Shruti's adjustment was, doing multiple chores, such as cleaning, cooking, and shopping, along with studying. Shruti did not have any practice back home in doing these chores, so it was difficult for her to adjust to the concept of working at home after coming back from school each day.

Situational factors that helped in adjustment. The situational factors that helped Shruti in adjustment were the school work back home, faculty support, being organized, staff support, and housing. The school that Shruti attended in India focused on independent work, critical thinking, and analytical abilities. Shruti found this exposure to help her easily adapt to the course structure in the United States. Support from the faculty has helped Shruti immensely in adjusting to the United States' academic life. If Shruti cannot do a task, she feels comfortable conveying that to her professors. She receives productive feedback from her professors in a timely manner, which helps with her research. She finds it helpful when her professors are organized in terms of having their assignments and lecture notes prepared.

She finds the university staff to be very helpful, and she likes that they do not shout at her if she does make a mistake. She feels comfortable asking them any question and feels confident that they will answer. She admires that the university staff take their work seriously and contribute to the adjustment of the students very well. Additionally, living at University Apartments has made Shruti's transition smoother, in terms of providing internet, cable, and phone for free and keeping her housing cost affordable.

Situational factors that hindered adjustment. The situational factors that hindered Shruti's adjustment were difficulty in understanding American professors, and public transportation. It has been difficult for Shruti to judge how formal or informal she could

be with her American professors. She often contemplates whether or not what she says is right. At times, this has hindered her interactions with her professors. Also, Shruti has had difficulty gauging what American professors think about her work, whether or not they are pleased with her work, because they never tell her if they do not like the work. Instead they ask her to make some changes, which makes Shruti think that it is just a minor change, whereas in reality it is much more than that. This has made it difficult for Shruti to know what is expected of her, academically.

In terms of mobility, lack of public transportation and a car has created a major obstacle. Without either public transportation or a car, Shruti is dependent on others for transportation, which she finds demeaning. To go grocery shopping, she must ask someone to take her and wait for them to take her shopping. This feeling of irritating somebody is very painful for Shruti. She could avail the transportation provided by the university, but she must walk a few miles to catch the shuttle, and carrying the heavy shopping bags back to her apartment makes it a very time consuming and difficult process. Also, she is limited to shopping in the local town, and cannot go to any other place for a change of scenery. Because of this, her social life has become quite limited, which is challenging for Shruti.

Pragya

Individual factors that helped in adjustment. Six individual factors contributed towards Pragya's adjustment to the American and to Nurture University life: having someone close in the United States to rely on, being proficient in English Language, socializing, keeping occupied, exercising, and being proud of her origins. When Pragya came to the United States, Venkat, a graduate student from India asked her out on a date. Pragya accepted the offer as she was not seeing anybody. Venkat, who has been living in the United States for the past 3 years, familiarized Pragya with the place and helped her in her everyday life. Venkat became a support system for Pragya. She had somebody to go to, by the end of the day. Pragya felt comfortable sharing her thoughts with Venkat, which prevented her from feeling lonely.

Being proficient in English helped Pragya immensely in navigating her academic as well as social life. This skill enabled Pragya in securing a teaching assistantship at Nurture University. Pragya developed fluency in conversing in English because, at home, all her family members spoke in English along with their native language. Additionally, Pragya went to an English medium school in India. Her Kindergarten teacher always corrected her when she spelled words wrong. Further, Pragya grew up in Mumbai, a metropolitan city in India, where people from different states of India reside. English plays the role of a common language as they all have their own languages. Thus, Pragya had to develop the habit of communicating in English to be able to socialize with

the individuals from various states. Pragya also watched a number of American shows that helped her catch the American accent, which in turn assisted her in making Americans understand her easily. Her ability to communicate in English makes her less shy and conscious, as she does not have to fear, that she may stutter. This in turn helps her to conveniently interact with Americans and have a bigger social circle.

When Pragya is alone in her house, she gets worried by thinking of several 'what if' scenarios, such as, 'What if her research fails'?, 'What if her professor is thinking bad about her'?, and 'What if something goes wrong back home'? Such questions make her feel lonely and homesick. To prevent herself from such thoughts, Pragya avoids being alone in the house. Instead, she goes to her lab or visits her friends. Socializing with friends and lab mates helps Pragya in becoming active, productive and in having positive thoughts. She and her friends play board games, have an ice cream, or pot luck. Pragya also goes to the gym to exercise, which helps her de-stress and feel refreshed. Keeping healthy and the realization that she is utilizing her time productively makes Pragya feel accomplished, confident and good about herself. Additionally, Pragya is very proud of her origins. Being strong in her identity makes Pragya feel more confident about herself.

Individual factors that hindered adjustment. Five individual factors that hindered Pragya's adjustment to life in the United States are: sense of non-belonging, homesickness, difficulty in expressing, loneliness, and being torn between work and

personal life. Pragya continues to struggle with the feeling of non-belonging and being lost in the United States, despite being able to proficiently communicate in English and having friends. The reason for feeling so is because she considers everything about her to be different – her skin color, ethnicity, food and the country. Feeling of homesickness troubles Pragya immensely. When she falls sick, she misses the presence of her mother, father and siblings and the comfort.

Pragya also has difficulty in expressing herself and her true feelings as she doesn't know whom to trust. She fears her statements being misconstrued and spreading of rumors. Having to suppress her feelings and not being able to express her inner feelings became one of the factors for Pragya to feel lonely, which in turn led her to feel 'miserable.' Additionally, in India, Pragya was involved in activities, such as sports and dance, however, having transitioned to the student life in the United States, she realized that the graduate life doesn't allow time for any leisurely pursuits. Pragya feels that if she had more time for other activities, she would have been less stressed.

Situational factors that helped in adjustment. Two situational factors contributed to Pragya's adjustment: support from the staff and support from her lab mates. Pragya became ill during her first month in the United States. Because she was new, she was ignorant about the workings of the health system and therefore didn't know how and whom to approach for help. She took advice from some of the senior graduate students

and was suggested to contact a staff member named, Amanda. Amanda directed Pragya to Nurture University's health system and continued to maintain contact with Pragya till she recovered. Pragya was immensely touched to see the concern and understanding Amanda had for her. This act of Amanda helped Pragya feel welcomed into the university and to the new country.

Support from lab mates too proved valuable for Pragya. Pragya would feel low and homesick at times, which hindered her concentration on her work. During these times, her lab mates would offer help and conduct the experiments for her. The lab mates characteristics of not being competitive, sharing their knowledge and experiences with Pragya helped her immensely in adjusting to the new academic environment. Further, the American students in Pragya's lab would take her to the grocery store, to coffee shops, pubs and movies. Her American friends would cook their cuisine with her and introduce her to different kinds of American food. They made Pragya a part of their lives, which helped her feel more comfortable in the United States.

Situational factors that hindered adjustment. A situational factor, that is, lack of faculty support hindered Pragya's adjustment in the United States. Because of facing a new academic system, Pragya had to encounter some adjustment difficulties. For instance, she had difficulty in meeting her professor's expectations. She would be asked to read and critique advanced scientific literature. Pragya being in the second semester of

her program would be lost reading such literature because of her unfamiliarity with the subject and also because she was used to studying in a specific manner for several years in India. Hence she had to make a conscious effort to meet the requirements. Such instances made Pragya doubt her abilities; she felt that her professors should have been more patient in their approach to teaching her and other international students.

Rishi

Individual factors that helped in adjustment. In order to adjust well and not feel lonely, Rishi made a conscious effort to change his perspective regarding socializing. In his previous university, he preferred staying home and was not interested in meeting people, which made him become isolated. After he came to Nurture University, he changed his outlook. He began meeting people and made more friends. This helped him be occupied, so he did not feel lonely. In India, Rishi was not used to planning. Because he was not very well aware of how things work in the United States, he learned that he needed to be organized and plan in advance. For instance, if he needed to travel, he began booking the airline tickets in advance, informing the people he was visiting, and booking the hotel in advance, as opposed to beginning his travels the very day he thought of traveling. He also applied this system to academics, which helped him meet deadlines on time.

Initially, Rishi thought about the risk factors involved if he did not pass the qualifiers or did not get a good grade in a course. He considered the risk of failing to be considerably greater in the United States than in India, mainly because of being unfamiliar with the American academic system. He was not prepared for that because he left a well-paying job back home to earn his Ph.D. in the United States. To conquer this fear, he prepared himself psychologically, saying that he had come this far to get his degree and that he is a confident and hard-working person. This helped him gain the confidence that he would be able to achieve his goal, that is, the Ph.D., for which he had come to the United States.

Rishi asked himself certain questions, such as, "if internationals came to India to study, would people welcome other cultures, would they be accepting?" This role reversal helped Rishi to be thankful to the United States for letting him come to their country and providing educational resources. Learning that a student is treated like a professional, and that he had to act like a professional helped him as well. He began being on time, meeting deadlines, and being more organized. Also, while teaching, Rishi identified some words that he had difficulty pronouncing. He wrote those words on the board and told his students that those were the words with which he had difficulty. This helped him to concentrate on teaching and not to worry about his students not being able to understand him.

Individual factors that hindered adjustment. Up to tenth grade, Rishi studied in his native language. Even while he was doing his Master's, he rarely spoke in English, as everybody around could speak and understand Rishi's native language. After joining industry in India, however, Rishi had to speak in English, which gave him some practice with the language. Despite this exposure, Rishi was self-conscious when talking to Americans, and had questions about whether they could understand him, whether he was communicating properly, whether he was pronouncing words properly, or whether his vocabulary was acceptable. Because of this self-consciousness, he encountered difficulty expressing himself to Americans. Therefore, he has guarded himself and kept a noncommittal or a professional relationship with Americans. Because of the difference in language, and culture, Rishi has always considered himself to be an outsider in the United States. He never felt at ease and therefore never tried to mingle with Americans, which in turn added to his feelings of being an alien. Rishi missed student life in India. He also missed having lots of friends in his lab, all of them working together, going to 'chai dukans' and discussing research problems over a cup of tea or 'samosas', an Indian snack. He missed the personal bonding that he had with his colleagues or peers. In addition, he missed the culture, the atmosphere, and the ambiance that he was used to back home.

Rishi feels that his adjustment difficulties were more because of internal reasons, that is, factors within himself, than external reasons, such as the culture of United States

and such. Rishi feels that his initial lack of organization, in terms of meeting deadlines or planning ahead, hindered his adjustment. When Rishi resigned his well-paid job back home, he invested valuable years of his life to earn a Ph.D. He sacrificed so much for his Ph.D. that he constantly worried about the risks involved in completing his doctorate. He found himself dealing with worrisome "what if" questions like, "what if I do not pass qualifiers, or what if I fail a course"?

Situational factors that helped in adjustment. The available resources, such as affordable housing, Indian groceries and vegetables, and Indian students themselves, helped in Rishi's adjustment. Also, he was amazed at the resources and the services provided by the university library. He always found the books that he wanted. Even if the library didn't have those specific books, it would get them from other libraries within a week. The university library made Rishi's academic life very convenient by providing access to the information that he needed. Rishi found the university's student computing center to be useful, as well; for one thing, he could buy software at a discounted price. He found the university full of resources. For those who need counseling, there is a Counseling Center; to learn about jobs, there is a Career Center; to become a better teacher, there is a Center for Teaching Excellence; to workout, there is a Recreation Center; and to live affordably, there are university apartments. All these resources made Rishi's adjustment to the academic life much easier.

For Rishi, the flexibility in choosing courses was beneficial, as opposed to being limited to taking courses in his department alone. This helped him get used to the American academic system quickly, with the course structure, assignments, lectures and examinations being very organized. He admired the fact that there are special clauses for dealing with disabilities in the United States. Rishi considers himself fortunate to have a patient and an accommodative chair. Initially, Rishi would not go to his department, as he did not want to meet people. Because of this mental block, he was not seen in the department. This made Rishi fear losing his assistantship. His chair, however, empathized with Rishi and supported him. Even if Rishi did not come to the department, his chair was okay with it. He allowed Rishi to take his time to get accustomed to the new environment and waited until Rishi felt comfortable coming to the department. His chair's behavior helped Rishi immensely in adjusting to his new academic surroundings. Rishi also found the university staff to be very supportive as he felt that he was treated like a customer. Also, when Rishi had a little trouble communicating, they would understand him because of their experience with international students. This helped Rishi communicate conveniently with the university staff.

Situational factors that hindered adjustment. It took Rishi some time to understand that, though he is a student, he needs to behave like a professional. Until he understood this concept, he encountered difficulties adjusting to the academic life in the

United States. He was still in the frame of mind of taking things lightly, or not responding to emails. He had to realize that even grading work must be done professionally and on time. At his previous university in Chicago, Rishi did not have faculty support, which made his initial adjustment difficult. There, he needed a lab and a computer, which were not provided to him, despite requesting his professor. This was disappointing for him. For Rishi, the unfamiliar U.S. academic system was a hindrance towards his adjustment, as he was not familiar with terms like credit system or qualifiers. Not being familiar with the academic system, produced anxiety in Rishi. He would think, for instance, that he might not be able to pass qualifiers.

Vishnu

Individual factors that helped in adjustment. Seven individual factors that helped Vishnu in adjusting to the life in the United States are: networking in India, having friends, socially being prepared, being proficient in American English, keeping in touch with family, open-mindedness and having no expectations. Vishnu started attending Nurture group meetings in his city, Chennai, which gave him an opportunity to meet people, and speak to them. This networking helped Vishnu to find a roommate at the Nurture University town. They all were a mutual support as they all came to Nurture University as a group. Vishnu already had friends in the United States. They picked him up at the airport, took him to their house, where he stayed for a month or so until he had

his own house. Vishnu enjoyed staying with his friends, he felt comfortable and at home with them.

Socially, Vishnu was very well prepared. After having transitioned to the United States, in order to fit himself into the society, he almost immediately developed an American accent by watching American TV shows and Hollywood movies. He also read a book called '*American language, American slangs*' while in India. This skill assisted Vishnu in interacting with the local nationals and widening his social circle. Keeping in touch with the family and having friends prevented Vishnu from feeling low, emotionally. Having an open mind towards various cultures helped him to be receptive and accept various possibilities. Not having any expectations regarding life style in the United States helped Vishnu in making the transition easier for him and prevented him from feeling shocked over any situation.

Individual factors that hindered adjustment. Feeling lonely and homesick hindered Vishnu's adjustment. Summer holidays make Vishnu feel lonely when several of his friends go on vacation. Vishnu feels homesick whenever he thinks about India or his family.

Situational factors that helped in adjustment. The situational factors that helped Vishnu in adjustment are: having faculty support, colleagues support, welcoming

environment, funding, and identifying the topic of interest. Vishnu considers himself fortunate to have a helpful and a supportive advisor. His advisor sends his research group to conferences and encourages interaction and collaboration with other professors in the conferences. Because of the trust developed between Vishnu and his advisor, he feels comfortable in sharing his opinions and thoughts with his advisor and seek advice. Vishnu also considers himself fortunate for having supportive colleagues who helped him making a smooth transition. One of the colleagues also trained Vishnu in all the technical aspects and in operating the equipment in the lab.

Vishnu always felt welcomed to attend classes in the United States because the students are not penalized for, if the work is not delivered. In India, if students miss a class, they are punished with extra work to make up for the lost time. Not having any such rules makes Vishnu feel welcomed in classes. Additionally, receiving assistantship and scholarships have prevented Vishnu from anxiety over finances.

Situational factors that hindered adjustment. The only situational factor that initially hindered Vishnu's adjustment was adjusting to the academics in the United States. Having the passion for a topic, but not the required skills to carry on the research on that topic was the most difficult situation for Vishnu.

Arjun

Individual factors that helped in adjustment. Six individual factors helped Arjun adjust in the United States - meeting his wife's goal, being persistent, having self-confidence, being himself, doing voluntary work, and having friends. For Arjun and his wife, Priyanka, the main intention of coming to the United States was Priyanka getting her doctorate. Arjun feels contented that his wife's goals have been achieved, which makes him happy and not regret coming to the United States. Further, when confronted with a problem, Arjun would think of the ways he could solve a problem instead of losing hope. Each time Arjun encountered a challenging situation, he tried to conquer his fear by solving the problem. This has taught Arjun to survive and has given him confidence in his abilities to perform successfully even in hard conditions. Also, his passion for his subject and being knowledgeable in his field helped him gain respect from people, which in turn increased his self-confidence and self-esteem. Additionally, asking for feedback and correcting himself helped Arjun to improve and feel contended as he evolved into a more learned person.

Self-confidence helped Arjun to always be himself. He does things with which he is comfortable, the quality which enables him to be more relaxed and at ease. Arjun volunteered to work in various student organizations, a church and other community settings. This experience turned out to be valuable for Arjun. It helped him gain work experiences, meet people from various countries, learn about different cultures, and most

importantly, it kept him occupied. Arjun's amiable demeanor helped him make many friends, who would come to his home, talk and laugh and share views and thoughts. Arjun thus built a coping mechanism for himself, wherein his friends became a support system for him.

Individual factors that hindered adjustment. Nine individual factors that hindered Arjun's adjustment are nervousness, feeling conscious, low self-confidence, missing India, dilemma about having made the right decision to come to the United States, a feeling of not fitting in, missing his job back home, difficulty with the American accent, and lack of financial stability. Arjun kept thinking about how Americans would perceive him when he was talking or how they would view his expressions. Arjun constantly had this feeling in mind when he talked to people from different cultures and that he needed to be careful when talking to them. He checked his tone, expressions, and language so that he would not be misinterpreted. At times, he became so nervous and conscious that it affected the way he talked or made presentations. This lowered Arjun's self-confidence. Though Arjun's passion and knowledge for his subject helped him gain self-confidence, he still feels that he has not gained the confidence that he desired.

He continues to miss India. Comparing the lifestyles, for Arjun, communication was just automatic in India, he did not have to worry about his expressions, the way he talks, being misinterpreted or being a different person, from a different culture. He

missed the comfort he had back home. Arjun is also more self-conscious about his accent than anybody else. He feels that he still talks the way he used to talk and when he speaks to Americans, he reminds himself that he is talking to an American audience. Language became a problem for Arjun. Although Arjun finds the United States to be a great place, he felt that he didn't fit here because of differences in culture, language, the way people talk and interpret things, food habits and just about everything. Because of this, he wishes to go back to India.

He misses his job back home, because he was doing great in his career. Without much effort, he had cordial relations with his co-workers, he did not have to worry about how to talk, and how he would be interpreted; besides, it was a very well-paid job. He looked forward to going to work every morning in India; he thinks about the job in India and misses it. Arjun carries the dilemma of whether he has made the right decision by coming to the United States. At present, he and his wife work in different cities in United States and his daughter cannot see Arjun on a daily basis. He misses living without his wife and daughter. Additionally, it bothers Arjun that he is 41 and still has no savings. The financial instability makes him insecure. These factors have made it difficult for Arjun to adjust to the life in the United States.

Situational factors that helped in adjustment. The factor that encouraged Arjun to adjust and stay in the United States is the positive feedback and evaluations that he

received from his colleagues and the individuals he trained at work. This helped him to understand that people are concentrating more on the subject matter than on his language. This also helped him understand that his language is not a problem for most people. If at all, they had any problem, it was with a few words, which he would spell or talk slowly and clearly.

Situational factors that hindered in adjustment. Lack of support from some of the faculty sometimes made Arjun get concerned and doubtful about receiving his Ph.D. degree.

Summary of Individual Structural Descriptions

Figures 1 and 2, detail an overview of the individual structural descriptions of the participants of this study. They depict "What" and "Cause" of the feelings that the participants of this study underwent in the United States.

Figure 1
Individual and Situational Factors that Helped in Adjustment in the United States

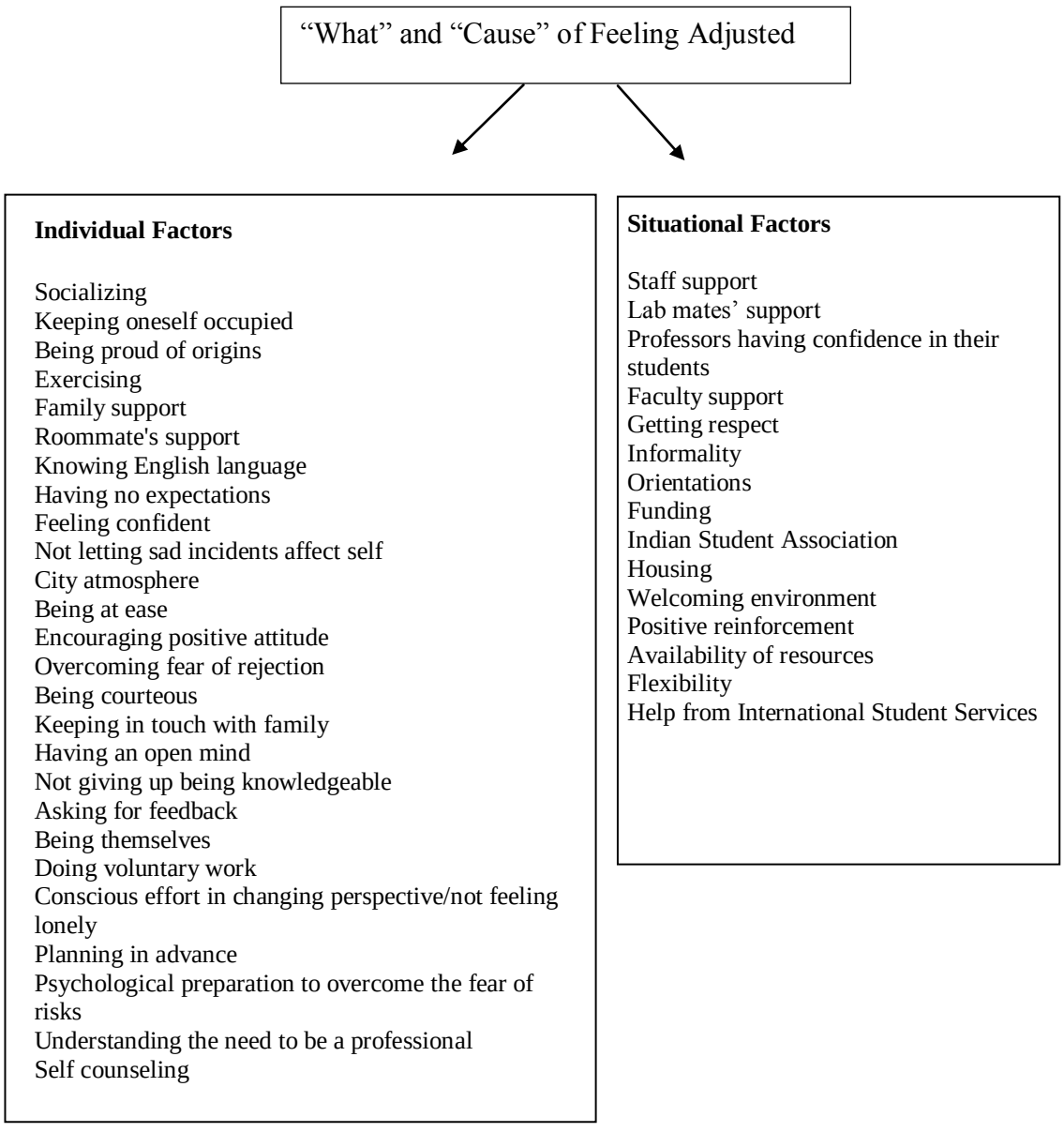
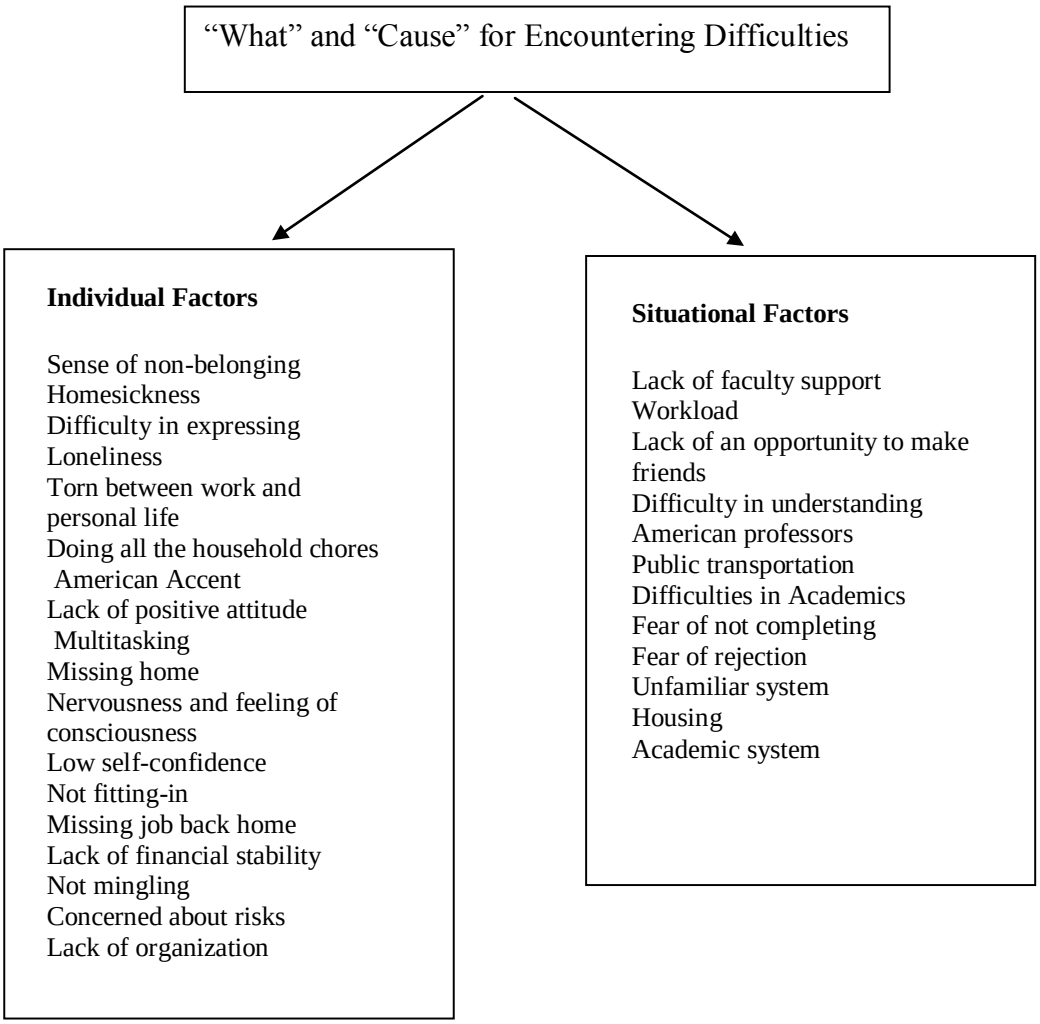


Figure 2
Individual and Situational Factors that Hindered Adjustment in the United States



Member Checks

After the individual textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon of transition were developed in steps 6 and 7, each participant was interviewed for the second time to affirm their descriptions, their transitional experiences and the reasons for feeling the way they did. Each participant was emailed his or her textural and structural descriptions in written form. They were given a week's time to read the descriptions and make any changes to them. To find out about the changes, each participant was interviewed either in person, through telephone or via email. Three participants suggested removal of certain information from their textural descriptions. One of the participant added information to the textural description. Another participant suggested changes in the structural description. Rest of the participants accepted the descriptions as they are.

Step 8: Composite Textural Description

Composite refers to a combination of many components or parts (Moustakas, 1994). The individual textural descriptions developed in Step 6 were analyzed and then combined to delineate the individual and situational experiences of all the participants as a group. In this section, a description of the suggestions provided by all the participants is explicated. Finally, a synthesis of the ways in which the entire group of participants of this study got transformed in their personalities and perceptions is delineated.

Individual Experiences

For some participants, the individual experiences of transition began even before coming to the United States. They began gathering information about life in the United States and tried to acquaint themselves with American English by watching TV shows, Hollywood movies and reading. When they finally came to the United States, the participants experienced mixed feelings, ranging from sadness, anxiety and disorientation, to thrill and excitement. Three of the participants began exploring their new location. One individual immediately concentrated on learning the rules on which the United States system is based. He began thinking of how to start socializing with his fellow students. Another participant visited the university to get a feel for it. She liked the campus and found strangers greeting her. This was new to her, because in India, strangers don't greet each other. She, however, liked it and found people to be friendly. The other participant's parents and sister were with her during the first month, during which she felt very comfortable, though in a new country.

For four of the participants, the first few days were difficult. One person left his job back home and came to the United States to join his wife. He lost a sense of purpose the first few days, as he did not know what to do: seek a job or pursue additional schooling. Another participant felt "miserable" and disliked being in a foreign land and in unfamiliar surroundings. She went home every night, talked to her mother and cried until she slept. Her mother woke her up in the mornings with a phone call, at which time

she would cry again, saying that she wanted to go back home. One participant slept a good deal during the first few days, until the university re-opened, as he was reluctant to go out and mingle with anybody. The final participant described his first few days as "hell", because of the stress of looking for funding, meeting various professors and prospective employers, doing several academic formalities, looking for an apartment to live in, asking for a ride or walking 2 miles to catch a shuttle to go grocery shopping, and managing finances, along with sudden realizations that he was away from his family and friends. In the little time that was left at nighttime, he would think of the reasons he came to the United States, console himself, and wonder if all of this was worth the effort to leave his well-paying job back home.

In accordance with the information in the audio-visual and print media, a majority of the students came to the United States with an imagined characteristic picture that was formed in their minds. An overarching image of the United States was that of a visually-pleasing, scenic and snow-clad atmosphere, complete with high-rise buildings, an amalgamation of people with diverse cultures who are liberal and open-minded, and a university with plentiful resources. The somewhat unexpected scenario in their university town was contrary to their imagined expectations. The weather, especially during the summers, was hot and dry, and the surroundings and buildings of the town were not very scenic. The people did not represent an amalgamation of cultures. On the other hand, the students realized that the imagery presented on

television and in the movies of skimpily dressed, aggressive individuals who party and have fun with little attention to family responsibilities was not true. Instead, they came across a vast number of people who attach importance to families, complete with mothers who study as well as take care of their babies. On campus, they learned that the resources in the university, in terms of office space and exclusive computer access, are not available for everyone as they are obtained only through the competitive process of awarded assistantships. Students found that they needed to make a conscious effort to understand and mingle in the new culture of the host country.

Situational Experiences

In terms of the situational experiences, the participants discovered a vast difference between the Indian and the U.S. academic systems. An important aspect, however, to consider here is that none of the participants in this study completed graduate studies in an Indian university, and the comparisons they draw are mostly based on assumptions related to their undergraduate experiences. In spite of this limitation, the subtle differences that occur in the students' lives are of notable importance when explored in a broader perspective.

The participants found each system to have its own advantages and disadvantages. The participants found the structure and timing of classes to be more flexible in the United States, whereas in India, they had day-long, back to back lectures.

The flexible class structure allowed them more free time, which they could utilize to assimilate the subject content, but at the same time, a bonding and friendship among fellow classmates was almost absent because of the spaced out classes that left little time for student to student interaction. Two participants initially found the casual classroom environment in the United States, such as students' eating, drinking and not taking notes during class, to be disrespectful towards the professor or reflected a lack of discipline in the classroom. Other participants, however, welcomed this environment and liked the open interaction they could have with the professors. The semester system that exists in the United States was perceived to be more beneficial than the annual assessment system with year-end examinations in some Indian institutions.

The American examination system, with take-home exams, open book exams and graded homework, was considered to be more beneficial than more theory driven, in-class examinations back home. The participants found the course content in India to be more structured and textbook based, whereas the flexible coursework in the United States, complemented by web-based interactions, was seen as more tailor-made for individual students with varying learning abilities. An overarching advantage in the U.S. educational system, seen by a majority of the participants, is the opportunity to network through the various student organizations, which in turn enhances their academic profiles. Furthermore, the availability of funding in the form of assistantships and

student worker positions was a new concept, not available in India. The only type of funding available in India was through scholarships.

The participants also found differences between student lives in India versus that in the United States. A student in India has tremendous personal support and backing. Students back home have complete financial and emotional support until they finish their studies, and as most of the students interviewed recalled, they would have "a home to go back to at the end of the day." This aspect is what they miss the most about student life in the United States. Students here have more responsibilities thrust on them and they must successfully juggle academic and personal chores, as well be financially and emotionally independent during graduate school. In the classroom set up, the rote learning and memorization of vast amounts of theoretical knowledge, where the personal involvement of an instructor is paramount, has been replaced by student independence in the United States. Instructors in the United States serve as facilitators, and it is left to the students to creatively assimilate the subject content.

The advantage of this pattern is that the student not only has the potential to learn the theory, but accumulates the practical aspects of applications involved in the subject. Students back home address their professors as "sir" or "ma'am." and two of the participants mentioned needing time to get accustomed to addressing professors by their first names or as Dr. so and so. The one crucial thing that most of the participants missed was the personal bonding that occurred among fellow students in India. Even casual

chats over a coffee break no longer are punctuated with personal anecdotes they could relate to, mainly due to cultural differences. Some participants, however, more easily transitioned into the U.S. educational system, primarily students from institutions such as the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), where the educational system is somewhat closer to the U.S. system, in terms of the classroom structure and assessment procedures. The only things that were new to these participants were the practical aspects, such as the responsibilities in research assistantship and student-related jobs. The familiarity with the classroom and assessment processes, however, ensured a smoother transition for these participants.

Coping Strategies-Suggestions

To overcome their difficulties upon their transition to the United States, the participants in this study applied certain coping strategies. Based on their coping strategies, experiences, and reflections, the participants suggested strategies for successful adjustment to the individual, situational, and institutional systems in the United States. Some participants suggested not to stereotype and generalize across cultures and people and to not to judge someone based on their actions immediately. Maintaining a balance between work and family is considered important and a general feeling among the participants is that individuals should not neglect either of these

aspects. Slow and calm conversations with locals were suggested to help with better understanding and also to avoid misunderstanding people in a foreign land.

A generally positive feeling in daily life was suggested for successful adaptation and a chance to excel- "If you are focused, you can come out with good outcomes, you have an opportunity to be recognized and excel if you want to." Being mentally strong was also seen as a sign of confidence to tackle everyday situations. Family support system, especially from siblings and senior fellow students, would help in gathering a comprehensive acquaintance with the American way of life, both in routine chores, such as shopping, laundry and driving, as well as official tasks, like administrative formalities and signing apartment leases. At least four participants felt that a general socialization, both at a personal communicative level as well as getting involved with international student organizations and clubs was of major help in getting to know the diverse cultures around them.

What participants emphasized here is that students should not remain confined to their own department or job, but should make a general effort to better integrate their lives on many social and official fronts. Being organized and economical in daily lives, was also suggested as a necessary skill when living away from home and to better manage finances. A majority of the participants felt that identifying and polishing the vital components of academic life, such as the nuances in research assignments, choosing the right research topic, being focused on short-term and long-term goals

(“When I ask new students as to what courses they are going to take, they say 'whatever works', I say it's a bad attitude, it's not whatever works, but whatever you can do, that's all that matters”), building on already existing personal skill sets, developing good writing skills, maintaining a vital communication link with advisors, and realizing that there are vital differences between the systems of education in India and the United States, would go a long way in inculcating a well grounded personality.

An acceptance of the new culture with an open mind was seen as a smooth way of blending into the social life, one that is devoid of culture, academic and social shocks. They suggested that students who make the transition to a new country should develop social skills and be free to mingle with people from all walks of life, to learn about life in general. Some participants also called for cultivating a more responsible self-image. Certain other personal traits, such as doing role reversal scenarios of “stepping into the natives' shoes” in a foreign land, being confident about the home country's roots, adjusting with foreigners and making friends, and being helpful and hospitable to incoming fellow students were seen as added factors to help in transition.

Personal Transformation

As a result of spending several years in a foreign land, away from family and friends, living independently, encountering various cultural, personal and academic difficulties, and learning to overcome those difficulties, the participants of this study

have been transformed in numerous ways. All of them transformed into confident, independent, and stronger individuals, capable of tackling difficult and unknown situations on their own, with ease. Three of the participants transformed into patient, calm and composed individuals. They feel they have evolved into more mature individuals. Two of the participants realized the importance of their parents and siblings in their lives and became appreciative of them. Two participants became more social.

Their perceptions about the United States and the world in general were also transformed. Five of the seven participants initially considered America to be a very liberal country, with people who have low value systems. Two participants thought America would be a country where people respect everybody, and are very open minded. Similarly, all the participants had some stereotypes about people from other countries and cultures. After being exposed to the United States and meeting people from other countries, the perceptions of all the participants underwent transformation. They learned that there are Americans who are conservative, traditional, and religious, with strong value systems. All the participants transformed into individuals who would not judge anybody from any part of the world based on what they heard or watched on TV or in the movies. After making the transition to the United States, they realized that to know about a country or its people, it is essential to go to that place and live for several years. Finally, the participants of this study realized that people from any part of the world

have much in common and that all kinds of people, with all kinds of temperaments, perceptions, and personalities, can be found in every country.

Although the transformations are positive for most of the participants, one individual found the transformations to be tilted a little more toward the stressful side. She finds herself transformed into a less carefree, more worrisome, more cautious and more stressed individual, as her responsibilities have increased.

Step 9: Composite Structural Description

In step 9, the individual structural descriptions developed in step 7 were combined and imaginative variation was applied to formulate a composite structural description of all the participants as a whole (Moustakas, 1994). This step resulted in promoting an understanding of "how" an experience is felt and the "cause" of that experience for all the participants as a group.

Nine individual and six situational factors influenced how the participants felt about being well adjusted and why they felt so. These individual factors were knowing the English language, socializing, family/roommates'/friends' support, having no expectations, self-confidence, not losing hope, being positive, keeping occupied, and being prepared. The situational factors were support from the faculty, staff and colleagues, availability of resources, funding, and a welcoming classroom environment. The structural factors that hindered adjustment were six individual and five situational

factors. The individual factors were homesickness, doing all the chores by themselves, difficulty in communicating, accent, missing India, and negative thoughts. The situational factors were difficulties in academics, lack of faculty support, workload, fears, and public transportation.

The "What" and the "Cause" related to each theme for all the participants, as a group, are delineated in detail below.

Individual Experiences: Individual Factors that Helped in Adjustment

Making preparations in advance helped the participants of this study feel well adjusted to life in the United States. They began their preparations by telling themselves that they were going to a different country, away from their family and friends, and they might encounter some adjustment difficulties and thus some stress, which they would have to overcome. They prepared themselves psychologically to be homesick and lonely. Some attended Nurture group meetings held in their city to learn about the university and to network with students at Nurture University. They gathered information about the United States by talking to their friends, relatives and even the professors and staff at Nurture University. To learn about the United States in general, Nurture University, and current affairs in the United States, they read books, newspapers, blogs, and watched travel channels. To get accustomed to American English, they watched Hollywood movies and American TV shows, and one participant read a book called *American*

Language, American Slangs. Additionally, having studied in English medium schools and having parents correct their grammar helped the participants feel comfortable with the language.

For some of the participants, mingling with Americans almost immediately after coming to the United States helped with social interaction. They developed an American accent so that they could fit in well and to help Americans understand them as well. For a few individuals, observing American behavior helped them understand the aspects that are acceptable or not acceptable in the United States. Making friends helped in socializing, making the lives of all the participants enjoyable, comfortable, and feeling right at home. Friends served as a support system. The emotions of the participants found a channel through their newfound friends. Socializing with friends and lab mates and avoiding staying in the house alone, especially during weekends, helped all the participants become active and have positive thoughts. Having a change of scenery and people was cleansing for them. Additionally, keeping good relations with roommate(s) helped maintain a pleasant and peaceful atmosphere at home. Additionally, continuing to keep in touch with family benefitted the participants tremendously. They felt less lonely, and gained emotional support. Visiting family members or relatives residing in the United States helped the participants to get an idea of life in the United States, and to understand the U.S. academic system.

Keeping a healthy body through exercise made the participants feel refreshed,

productive, recharged, and confident and helped them de-stress. Keeping their minds healthy by letting loose and not letting sad incidents affect them, helped them maintain good relations with people. Being proud of their origins, country, and ethnicity and having a strong identity of their own enhanced the self-confidence of most of the participants in this study. Another factor that increased the self-confidence of six of the participants was being knowledgeable in their field of expertise. This gained respect from others, which increased their self-esteem.

Believing in themselves, knowing that they could make the right decisions and could handle life in the United States too increased the self-confidence of my participants. Trying to solve a problem, instead of giving up or losing hope, asking for feedback when in doubt and taking it in positive stride to improve themselves, and accordingly putting in conscious effort to change their perspectives, all helped increase the confidence of the participants in their abilities to perform successfully even in hard conditions, and evolved them into more learned individuals. Being confident helped the participants to be themselves and to do things with which they were comfortable, and enabled them to be more relaxed, at ease, and not losing hope.

For four of the participants, being involved in other activities, along with studying, such as learning other languages, dancing, exploring other cultures, doing voluntary work, and being involved in exchange programs, prevented them from feeling lonely, made them more productive, exposed them to the American lifestyle, helped

them make American friends and most importantly, served as a stress buster. Three of the participants attribute their smooth transition to the United States to not having any expectations. They told themselves that there would be no one for them in the United States, they were going to be alone and they would have to adjust by themselves. They, in advance, thought that not everything would be smooth for them, that there would be problems, which they would have to handle. One of the participants thought that she would not be able to make friends immediately, the way she did in India. She told herself that people in the United States would be different, and not everyone would be friendly to her or talk to her. This self-training helped them value everything that they received from the people and the United States itself, and nothing shocked them.

Individual Experiences: Individual Factors that Hindered Adjustment

Feeling homesick and doing all the household chores by oneself contributed profoundly to why all participants in this study encountered difficulty in adjusting to the life in United States. They felt homesick: specifically, living far away from their loved ones, not being able to go to them when they fell sick, lacking their physical presence while preparing breakfast, chatting with the relatives or parents, or thinking of the times they spent back home, and during summer holidays when most friends went on vacation. Feeling homesick made the participants stressful and lonely. Though they would keep in contact with their family and friends via phone or email, lack of their physical presence

made them feel deprived of emotional support; they felt lost, with a sense of non-belonging. Living on their own without family in a new country and doing all the household chores by themselves was difficult for my participants. In India, they were involved in many activities, such as classical dance, Carnatic music; however, in the United States, graduate school didn't allow time for a personal life. They were torn between the academic demands and personal time. In India, participants had help is doing the household chores, which resulted in no experience in doing laundry, cleaning, dishes, preparing food, and grocery shopping. Learning to do chores, after coming home, tired from school, initially made the participants stressed.

Three of my participants faced difficulty in expressing themselves, though for various reasons. Two of them are always self-conscious when talking to Americans. The feeling that they are talking to people from different culture always keeps them on guard regarding their expressions, what and how they talked, their tone and language, so that they were not misinterpreted. For another participant, it was difficult to express herself, as she did not know whom to trust. She did not know what was acceptable to talk about and what was not, and she also feared spreading rumors. The nervousness and self-consciousness occurring through this difficulty affected the way they spoke or made presentations, lowering their self-confidence. It made my participants remain noncommittal, and maintain only professional relationships with Americans, depriving them of close, friendly relationships. This in turn added to their loneliness. Also, having

to suppress feelings and not being able to talk about certain things became a factor leading to feeling lonely and "miserable."

Though, not an issue with English, the American accent created a hindrance in adjustment for three participants in this study. Being used to talking in and listening to an Indian accent for more than 20 years, understanding the American accent and being understood in an Indian accent was difficult. For two of the participants, though others did not have trouble understanding them, their own self-consciousness about their accents created the hindrance. Though not major, difficulty with the accent created some problems while teaching. Two of the participants continue to miss India tremendously. They continue to compare lifestyles in the United States with that of in India. For Arjun, communication was automatic in India; he did not worry about his expressions, the way he talked, how he spoke, or about being misinterpreted. He misses the comforts he had back home, particularly his job. Rishi misses student life in India, having lots of friends in his lab, all of them working together, going out and discussing research problems over a cup of tea or Indian snacks. He misses the personal bonding with his colleagues and peers. He also misses the culture, atmosphere, and ambiance that he is used to, in India.

For two participants, possessing fears and negative thoughts hampered their adjustment. The fear of not being able to complete their Ph.D.'s led to constant worry, making them think of all the investments they made, such as resigning their well-paid jobs back home, investing time, and sacrificing many things in their lives to come to the

United States to obtain their degrees. The fear of losing all that they had invested made them constantly deal with worrisome "what if" questions like," 'what if I don't pass qualifiers," "what if I fail in a course," or "what if my chair doesn't let me graduate." For another participant, constantly carrying thoughts of self-doubt about her abilities as an individual hindered her adjustment. This inward reflection deteriorated her self-confidence and led her to think that she would be rejected as a person.

Situational Experiences: Situational Factors that Helped in Adjustment

Situational structural elements contributed to how and why the participants in this study felt well-adjusted. Those structural elements are support from faculty, staff, and colleagues, availability of resources and funding, and a welcoming classroom environment. For most of the participants, a welcoming, flexible, and informal classroom environment promoted a feeling of adjusting well. Having the flexibility in choosing courses, class attendance, and not requiring the professor's permission to enter classroom made them more relaxed and responsible. Also, positive feedback and evaluations on their work encouraged them to adjust well to the American academic system. Having assistantships, receiving in-state tuition and scholarships from the university proved beneficial for the participants. They could pay their own tuition, take care of their living expenses, and not depend on their parents, which eliminated much financial stress. The availability of resources from the university, specifically

orientations by the department, the university, and International Student Services helped the participants to network with fellow students, faculty and staff. The friendships made through the orientations helped some of the participants find rides for grocery shopping. The Indian Student Association, supported by the university, proved to be very helpful. It helped new students interact with more Indians, the senior students in the association provided guidance to the new students, and they helped with shopping for groceries by giving car rides and such. The university library was found to be very helpful in providing needed information quickly and making academic life more convenient.

Situational Experiences: Situational Factors that Hindered Adjustment

Heavy workload contributed significantly to why the participants had difficulty in adjusting to life in the United States. Searching for labs for rotations, searching for assistantships, teaching, taking multiple courses, reading, working in the lab for eight hours per day, doing multiple assignments, rushing from job to classes and vice versa, and many times staying up all night to finish assignments or prepare for exams, doing all the household chores by themselves, added to the stress of most of the participants. Lack of faculty support in terms of not providing feedback on work, not providing guidance, not treating students well, and not being able to provide a lab and equipment for their own students created difficulties for three of the participants in this study to adjust to academic life in the United States. The unfamiliar American academic system was one

major contributor to making the participants of this study feel not well adjusted in the United States. Difficulties were encountered because of lack of understanding of terminology like credit hours, and qualifiers. It was difficult for some participants to identify the expectations of their American professors. A lack of understanding about how to maintain a professional relationship with professors was a major hindrance.

Step 10: Textural-Structural Synthesis-Essence of the Phenomenon of Transition

Textural-Structural synthesis is the final step of the phenomenological data analysis and presentation of findings. This synthesis was developed by carefully reading composite textural and structural descriptions and combining them to capture the essence of students' transitions from India to the United States (Moustakas, 1994). As mentioned previously, the process of Epoche was applied to generate a newer understanding of the phenomenon of transition, based on experiences of the participants, and to capture the nature of the transition.

The transition of students from India to the United States encompasses four stages: initial experiences; adjustment processes; applying strategies for overcoming difficulties; and transformation. Each of these transition periods is characterized by distinctive qualities, as detailed below.

Individual and Situational Experiences in the United States

Of particular importance in the initial experiences in the United States were the feelings and thoughts attached to leaving family and friends and coming to a foreign country, with the hope of obtaining a high quality education. Six out of seven participants came to the United States for education, while one of the participants came because of his marriage. When they came to the United States, participants had mixed feelings ranging from thrill and excitement to sadness and anxiety. A majority of the students came to the United States with an imagined picture of visually-pleasing, scenic and snow-clad atmosphere, an amalgamation of people with diverse cultures who are liberal and open-minded, and a university with plentiful resources, that was formed in their minds through media representations. The somewhat unexpected scenario at their university town and the state was contrary to their expectations. After the semester began, they began to observe the differences between being a student in the United States and a student back home. For instance, some participants began to feel out of place in the classrooms and had difficulty discerning what is acceptable and what is not when interacting with professors and colleagues and such. Because of this realization of differences, the participants gradually underwent adjustment processes.

Individual and Situational Factors that Helped and Hindered Adjustment

The participants gradually realized that they needed to make certain individual and situational adjustments. They realized that because they were living alone in the United States, away from family and friends, needed to become responsible, maintain good relations with people around them, manage their finances and if they felt low psychologically, they needed to console themselves and take good care of their health, so that they wouldn't have to depend on anybody. Because they were used to a different kind of schooling at home, they had to adjust to the institutional aspects as well. They began to perceive a wide gap between the individual, situational and institutional cultures of India and the United States. Because of such gaps, they encountered individual, situational and institutional adjustment difficulties. Individual difficulties included homesickness and loneliness, missing India, and the occurrence of negative thoughts, such as "What if I fail"? "What if my professors don't like me"? "What if I don't get my Ph.D"? "What if I don't have money to study"? and "What if I do something that is not acceptable"? In addition, individual difficulties included nervousness, feelings of self-consciousness, less self-confidence, uncertainty about having made the right decision to come to the United States, missing a job back home, self-doubts about the English, lack of organization, and understanding the American accent. Situational factors--living away from family, difficulty in fitting into a new culture, lack of financial stability (mainly because of leaving jobs back home and

coming to the United States for higher studies), difficulty in expressing themselves (mostly because lack of an understanding regarding what might be acceptable or not acceptable, and therefore a fear of being misunderstood), and a sense of non-belonging—contributed to adjustment difficulties, as well. For example, in India, all the participants concentrated on studying, while the household chores, such as cooking, laundry, cleaning dishes were done by helpers. After coming here, the participants had to do their own chores, along with their study. This required some adjustments. Institutional difficulties included the unfamiliar academic system, difficulty in understanding expectations of American professors or the meaning of gestures or conversation, lack of faculty support, and a heavy workload. The participants began to realize that to overcome these difficulties, they needed to be peaceful and successful in their personal, social, and academic lives.

Coping Strategies-Suggestions

Participants learned about various strategies and applied them to overcome the adjustment difficulties they encountered in the United States. For instance, they learned that it is essential to arrange their house efficiently, so as to get into the habit of doing all the chores conveniently. They learned to be very confident in themselves. Learning how to adapt to others is essential, especially while living with a roommate. Being flexible to the culture of the United States is essential. If someone offers help, making sure to return

the favor, and being thankful are important. Participants noted that maintaining work-family balance, speaking calmly, not encouraging stereotypes or generalizing across cultures, encouraging positive thoughts, keeping occupied in student activities, learning from other cultures, making use of everything the university has to offer, being mentally strong by believing they will get through any situation, being organized and economical, having somebody for an emergency contact, asking local individuals what is acceptable and maintaining a polite behavior, and showing gratefulness verbally or otherwise, are all quite helpful. In general, having an open mind to the new culture reduces cultural, social and academic shocks.

To make the situational factors work for them, they developed social lives by being open and talking to everyone, regardless of their country of origin, learning to get along with people to improve relationships, and not making enemies in this small community. In other words, cultivating a solid social life, without getting into problems, helped the participants. They avoided being aloof, not talking to people, and not socializing. The realization of being grounded and sensible was essential for them. They kept in touch with family and friends via phone or email, thus constantly receiving their support.

Institutionally, it was essential for them to pick a field of their passion, not simply take up a topic related to their assistantships. They built on the skills set they already had, rather than taking up a new topic and starting from the scratch. They

learned to choose tasks which they can handle and carry out in a convenient and easy manner. Realizing the importance of good writing skills, being polite to the faculty, academic honesty, considering the serious nature of graduate education, and communicating with professors and staff, all helped the participants of this study to adjust successfully to the host country institutions.

Personal Transformation

Back home, even when the participants encountered small difficulties, they had the support of their family and friends around them. After coming to the United States, difficulties initially made them panic; however, they realized that a panicked response was not helping. They became more calm, composed and patient, and tackled their problems. Being able to handle different and sometimes difficult situations in a new country on their own, transformed the participants of this study into stronger and tougher individuals. Once they achieved success in tackling different situations, they became confident, independent and their self-esteem increased. Paying bills, managing finances, planning studies, and balancing academic and social life made them responsible, organized and systematic. Learning to do things on their own, instead of relying on parents or friends, transformed them into self-directed learners. Living away from family and friends made them realize their importance, and they became more appreciative of them. The participants transformed into more mature individuals.

Mingling with people from different countries and cultures transformed the participants into more open-minded individuals who were more accepting of other cultures and their habits. The views of the United States and other countries developed through media and print began to change. They realized that all that is shown on TV or is printed in newspapers may not be necessarily right, and many stereotypes needed to be shattered. Academically, they transformed into more focused and career-oriented individuals. The majority of the participants in this study transformed into more evolved individuals, but one of the participants became a much more stressed, worrisome person, less carefree, as her responsibilities increased. Also, being in a different country, she transformed into a person who is more careful about every step she takes and considers all possibilities before making a decision, so that she does not make any mistakes.

All in all, of the seven participants in this study, four are happy with the transformations that occurred in them, and they are glad they made the transition to the United States. Three participants are happy with the transformations within themselves, but feel stressed. One of those three wishes she had stopped her education with a master's degree, looked for a job back home and got married, instead of seeking a Ph.D. Another participant is in the process of identifying the value of his Ph.D. The other participant feels that there is much more to learn for true transformation to occur. These three participants all miss India and wish to go back home.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the description of the participants in the study. The analysis of the data obtained through long interviews, generated rich data that formed the basis for examining the perspectives of the seven participants regarding the phenomenon of transition, from various view points. It concluded with analysis of the data obtained by employing a modified version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen's method, presented by Moustakas (1994). Utilizing this version, the following ten step process was applied: (a) epoche (b) obtaining an understanding of the data (c) horizonalization (d) identifying invariant constituents (e) identifying themes (f) individual textural descriptions (g) individual structural descriptions (h) composite textural description (i) composite structural description, and (j) textural-structural synthesis. The final goal of application of these ten steps was to capture the essence of the phenomenon of transition from the perspectives of the participants in the study. The trustworthiness of the data was ensured by undertaking three steps: (a) Epoche, (b) providing rich, thick descriptions of the participants' experiences, and (c) conducting member checks.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Overview of Study

The purpose of this study was to understand and describe the phenomenon of transition from the view point of students from India who have made the transition to Nurture University in United States to further their academic studies. More specifically, the following five questions were used as a guide to this study: (a) How do adult graduate students from India describe their transitional experiences from the country of origin to the higher education system in Nurture University? (b) What individual (the characteristics of an individual), and the situational factors (the context and the characteristics of an institution) impact the transitional adjustment of students from India? (c) What suggestions or coping strategies can be applied to overcome the adjustment challenges? (d) What personal transformations do students from India undergo because of their transition to the United States? and (e) What is the overall essence of the phenomenon of transition? In presenting the textural and structural descriptions of each participant, the main goal was to assist the students from India to apply the content to identical situations and to their respective higher educational institutions.

The main concept that this study is based on is transition. Transition, which refers to an advancement from known to an unknown environment, involves new

cultural, social, and cognitive challenges, leading to personal transformations among the individuals making cross-cultural transitions (Prescott & Hellsten, 2005), and it, therefore, is most used to study the international student adjustment and transformation (e.g., Hellstén, 2005). All the seven participants were selected from a Research Level I University located in the South-Central part of the United States based on the following criteria: born and raised in India; studied in regular schools instead of international schools in India; completed their undergraduate degree in India; not have lived or visited United States for more than two months; must be Masters or Ph.D. students in the United States; and have lived in United States for more than a year.

In this qualitative study, phenomenological research methodologies were employed. According to Moustakas (1994), in a phenomenological study, long interview method is the method through which data is collected. Accordingly, interviews that lasted for 2-3 hours served as the pivotal source of information. The selected participants were asked to respond to the questions related to their demographic information, transitional experiences, the impact of individual and situational factors in their adjustment process, the coping strategies they adopted to overcome the adjustment challenges and personal transformations that they underwent. The basis for formulating the interview questions was the literature on transitional adjustment, stress and coping framework, and transformational theory.

All data were analyzed by employing a step-by-step process presented by Moustakas' (1994) modified version of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen's phenomenological data analysis method. The steps included: (a) Epoche (b) obtaining an understanding of the data (c) horizonalization (d) identifying the invariant constituents (e) identifying themes (f) individual textural descriptions (g) individual structural descriptions (h) composite textural description (i) composite structural description, and (j) textural-structural synthesis-essence of the phenomenon of transition. The process of Epoche, thick descriptions and member checks served to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. The remainder of this chapter will present a brief overview of the research findings and discussion of the findings in relation to prior studies. The chapter concludes with implications of the findings to sending country, receiving country, adult education, policy, theory and future research.

Overview of Research Findings

All the seven participants provided detailed and extensive amount of information related to their experiences of the phenomenon of transition. As mentioned previously, several themes emerged during the data analysis process that formed the basis for presenting the perspectives of the seven participants, regarding the phenomenon of transition, from various view points. The identified themes that are combined in this chapter were: (a) individual and situational experiences in the United States (b)

individual and situational factors that help and hinder adjustment (c) coping strategies-suggestions, and (d) personal transformation. An overview of the findings related to each of these themes will be provided.

The first two themes, individual and situational experiences in the United States revealed that the participants had mixed feelings ranging from thrill and excitement to sadness and anxiety when they first came to the United States. A majority of the students came to the United States with an imagined picture of the United States and its academic system that was formed in their minds through media representations. An overarching image of the United States was of a visually-pleasing, scenic and snow-clad atmosphere, complete with high-rise buildings, an amalgamation of people with diverse cultures who are liberal and open-minded, and a university with plentiful resources. The somewhat unexpected scenario at their university town was contrary to their expectations. After the semester began, they began to observe the differences between being a student in the United States and in India. For instance, they found students to take their own responsibility and work independently in United States when compared to India. The participants also found a difference in the United States and the Indian academic system, such as take home exams, open book exams, change of classmates in every class, was an aspect which is new to them.

The subthemes under the first two themes, individual and situational factors that help and hinder adjustment, reveal that some of the individual factors that helped in

adjustment, as described in Figure 1, were socializing, knowing English language, and encouraging positive thoughts; and some of the situational factors that helped in adjustment, as described in Figure 1 were availability of resources, and support from the faculty, staff and colleagues. Whereas some of the individual factors that hindered adjustment, as described in Figure 2 were difficulty in expressing, lack of financial stability, and lack of organization. Similarly, some of the situational factors that hindered adjustment, as described in Figure 2, were workload, and an unfamiliar system.

The theme on coping strategies-suggestions indicated that in order to adjust successfully, all the participants adopted certain coping strategies. Based on these strategies and their personal experiences, they provided some suggestions to assist in successful adjustment. Some of the suggestions, as described in Table 6, were, encouraging positive thinking, keeping occupied, and making friends. Additionally, some of the academic related suggestions provided were, developing good writing skills, building on the skills that one already has, picking a field of passion, and being polite with the faculty and staff.

The final theme, personal transformation, revealed that all the participants, as a result of their stay in the United States, underwent transformations in their behaviors, perceptions and in their world view. Most of the personal transformations were reported to be positive. For instance, becoming mature, realizing the importance of parents and friends, networking, and becoming more appreciative, were some of the positive

personal transformations that occurred among the participants. One of the participants, however, reported transforming into a more worrisome and cautious person (Table 7).

Discussion of the Findings in Relation to Prior Studies

The purpose of this study was to describe and capture the phenomenon of transition of students from India who are enrolled in graduate programs in U.S. higher education. Accordingly, this study was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the three aspects involved in transition: adjustment processes, coping strategies-suggestions, and personal transformation. As the study participants described their transition experiences from India to the United States, four key themes emerged: individual experiences, situational experiences, coping strategies-suggestions, and personal transformation. The process of developing individual structural descriptions, created two subthemes under individual experiences: (a). individual factors that help in adjustment; and (b). individual factors that hinder adjustment. Similarly, two subthemes were formed under the key theme, situational experiences: (a) situational factors that help in adjustment, and (b) situational factors that hinder adjustment. I compared and distinguished the findings of this study with prior studies in relation to each of these themes.

Individual Factors that Helped in Adjustment

Exploring the relationship of residing in ethnic communities and adjustment of international students, Duan and Vu (2000) investigated the impact of Vietnamese students who stayed in their own community in the host country, as opposed to staying in other communities. The study concluded that Vietnamese students who lived in their own ethnic communities acculturated more successfully than those who did not. Disagreeing with these findings, Poyrazli et al. (2004), in their effort to investigate the impact of social support on acculturative stress of international students, found that international students experienced more acculturative stress when they interacted with non-Americans instead of Americans. Similar finding was also reported in a previous study by Jacob and Greggo (2001) who found that international students had smoother adjustment when they interacted with the host nationals. Partially consistent with both the studies, this study found that interaction with host nationals as well as with individuals from one's country leads to good adjustment. This finding is consistent with the findings of Rajapaksa and Dundes (2002).

Garimella (2008) conducted a study to describe the life of Indian immigrants in the United States using 15 adult immigrants from India, using a semi-structured interview. She found that preparing for life in the United States, while in India, by talking to their friends and family, and watching TV or Hollywood movies, and reading comics, helped students in adjustment. The present study confirmed these findings. In

order to prepare themselves to interact socially in the United States, Vishnu and Pragya honed their English accent and learned the colloquial American English by reading books, watching Hollywood movies, and travel channels. Vishnu and Shreya prepared themselves by telling themselves that they are going to a foreign country and that they shouldn't expect anything. They began networking, in India itself, with friends and professors residing in the United States. Krishna read books and on the internet to learn about the United States. He also gathered information by talking to his sister residing in the United States.

Ramsay, Barker and Jones (1999) found that when international students learned English language, it had a positive impact on their lives. Explaining how ability in conversing in English language had a positive impact on their lives, this study participants reported the proficiency to help them in communicating freely, without feeling conscious, and in improving their social interactions with the host nationals.

Toyokawa and Toyokawa (2002) indicated that facilitating the engagement of Asian international students in activities that inform them of the academic and social opportunities in which they can get involved is very crucial. The authors noted that involving international students in extracurricular activities could be one of the ways to enhance their chances of mingling with members of the host country. Elaborating on this finding, the participants of study reported that keeping occupied through voluntary work, getting involved in student organizations, mentoring programs, exchange programs,

learning foreign languages, cooking and such, contributed in diverting their mind, in mingling with students from various countries and in making more friends.

Kaur (2006) found that some of the participants in her study considered diversity to be a positive factor that helped them with their academic adjustment. The participants observed other international students and instructors in class and on campus who had also come from different countries, with varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This observation was found to provide the motivation and a positive impetus to deal with loneliness. Though the participants in this study did not report of diversity helping them, they did report about the benefits of thinking positively and its positive impact on their adjustment.

A study by Reynolds and Constantine (2007) found that lack of confidence and security negatively impacted the future career goals of international students, decreasing their competence academically, personally, and culturally. Thus, I speculated that an increase in self-confidence would help individuals become competent academically, personally, and culturally. Though the participants in this study did not indicate confidence to be promoting their academic competence, four of the seven participants did report self-confidence leading to feeling relaxed and at ease, easily being able to interact with people, facilitating easy transition from India to the United States, and in handling various tasks in the host country.

Additional factors reported in this study, to aid in successful adjustment in the

host country were: exercising, being proud of their origins, having no expectations, overcoming fears and insecurities, keeping in touch with the family and friends, not letting sad incidents effect their lives, being brought up in a city atmosphere, being courteous, open minded, persistent, knowledgeable, themselves, asking for feedback, investing a conscious effort in changing perspectives, employing various strategies for not feeling lonely, planning in advance, understanding the need to be professional and engaging in self-counseling (Figure 1).

Situational Factors that Helped in Adjustment

Research on international students indicated faculty support (Kaur, 2006, Ramsay et al., 2007), peer support (Kaur, 2006), staff support (Ramsay et al.,1999) and social support (Crockett et al., 2007; Misra, et al. 2003; Trice, 2004) to play a major positive role in facilitating academic adjustment, development and motivation among international students, by reducing their depression and stress levels.

Though the findings of this study indicated consistent results, the findings also indicated following situational factors to aid in successful adjustment and easy transition to the United States: professors having confidence in their students, treating students with respect, informal classroom atmosphere, Indian Student Association, positive reinforcement from faculty or colleagues, flexibility in choosing courses, help from International Student Services; availability of resources, such as, free access to the

internet, availability of books, computer labs, university apartment housing, journals, scholarships, and teaching assistantships (Figure 1).

Individual Factors that Hindered Adjustment

Sandhu and Asrabadi (1994) found that the main concerns of international students are alienation, feelings of powerlessness, loneliness, homesickness, fear, sense of insecurity and stress in the host country. These findings were later confirmed by Lin and Yi (1997) and recently by Rajapaksa and Dundes (2002) and Heggins and Jackson (2003). The results of this study are consistent with these findings.

Several researchers (e.g. Fritz, Chin, & DeMarinis, 2008; Lee, 1997; Lewthwaite, 1996; Ramsay et al., 1999) indicated international students to encounter difficulties with the English language such as being able to understand lectures, communicate, note talking, accent, reading and writing. Constantine et al. (2004) found international students with difficulties in English language to be more depressed and stressed. Though, some of the participants in this study reported encountering initial difficulties in understanding the American accent, they did not report having any major and persistent problems with conversing or understanding American English.

Dasgupta (1992) found immigrant families to miss the assistance they get from their family and friends in India. The participants in this study not only reported missing their families and friends, but also reported missing India, the culture, food, and their

jobs.

Fritz et al. (2008) found Asian students to report significantly higher levels of anxiety, difficulties in multitasking, and managing finances. The findings of this study are consistent with these results. Fritz and colleagues also reported Asian students to encounter difficulties in making new friends. In this study, however, only one participant reported having this difficulty during his initial days in the United States.

Kaur (2006) and Garimella (2008) found that because most of the students from India belong to elite families, they had helpers to help them do the household chores such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, and therefore encountered difficulties in doing the household chores in the United States along with studying. Additionally, difficulty in demonstrating assertiveness has been found by Chen (1999) as one of the major factors in hindering the adjustment of international students. The findings of this study are consistent with these findings.

In addition to these findings, individual factors such as negative thinking, and lack of organizational and time management skills were also reported by the participants as hindering their successful adjustment (Figure 2).

Situational Factors that Hindered Adjustment

Situational factor, that is, lack of immediate availability of family and social support and institutional factor, that is, problems related to academics were identified to

engender significant difficulties for international students in adjusting to the host country (Abu Al Rub, 1995; Burns, 1991; Misra, et al., 2003; Rice & Dellwo, 2002). The academic-related concerns reported in this study were: lack of faculty support, workload, unfamiliar academic environment, unfamiliar academic terminology, and difficulty in understanding American professors (mainly because of lack of understanding of their expectations).

Researchers (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992; Sandhu, 1995) found international students to become deprived of social support which negatively impacts their self-esteem. Yeh and Inose (2003) reported that lack of social support leads to anxiety, feelings of social outcast and feelings of disorientation in an unfamiliar environment. Though the participants in this study did not report such severe consequences of lack of social support, they did report a feeling of emptiness and sometimes sadness because of lack of immediate and direct family and social support.

Among the academic related problems, Ramsay et al. (1999) found severe concerns for international students to be related to the lack of faculty support. For some of their participants the issue lied in difficulty in understanding the content of the lecture, not providing feedback, lecturer's use of complicated English vocabulary, speaking at a fast pace, which in turn led to feelings of frustration (Ramsay et al, 1999). The findings of Robertson, Line, Jones and Thomas (2000) indicated lack of recognition on part of professors, regarding the emotional and psychological problems experienced by

international students such as stress, homesickness, loneliness and financial insecurities to be detrimental to learning (Robertson et al, 2000). The participants in Kaur's (2006) study indicated a difficulty in talking to the U.S. instructors and clarify their doubts because of the unavailability of the instructors, unlike in India (Kaur, 2006). Consistent with these findings, the participants in this study reported lack of faculty support as a hindrance to the adjustment. The reasons reported, however, were different from the findings of the above mentioned researchers. Faculty's lack of an understanding of prior academic background of the participants was mentioned as a difficulty in this study. In other words, an understanding, that the participants have been used to a certain style of learning and teaching for several years in India, and accordingly will take some time to adjust to the new academic system of the host country was lacking. Some indicated concern over lack of much interaction with the faculty, and difficulty in understanding faculties' expectations from students because of unclear instructions.

Misra and her colleagues found international students to possess greater stress from the feelings of social outcasts. The pressure was because of competition, deadlines, and workload (Misra et al., 2003). Some of the participants in this study reported similar difficulties, however not feeling like social outcasts, but feeling stressed because of academic workload and balancing tasks at home along with studying.

Unfamiliar academic environment was reported by some of the participants in this study as a difficulty in adjusting to the academic environment of the host country.

Edwards and Tonkin (1990) found that the informal student-teacher interactions are confusing and troublesome for international students as they are used to a greater distance in student-professor interactions in their countries. Consistent with this finding, one of the study participants also indicated difficulties with the unfamiliar academic terminology such as qualifiers, and credit hours.

In addition to the above findings, the situational factors found to hinder adjustment of the study participants were: lack of an opportunity to make friends in the class because of having different classmates in every class, and a lack of public transportation (Figure 2).

Coping Strategies-Suggestions

Researchers, like, Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998), Poyrazli et al. (2004) and Toyokawa and Toyokawa (2002), provided suggestions to help international students in smooth transition and adjustment. For instance, Poyrazli et al. (2004) suggested that designing on-campus activities or cultural workshops may help the international students to interact with host nationals, increase their English proficiency, and thus help them adjust better. More specifically, they suggested that offering a workshop that encompasses training in how to interact and communicate with the host nationals and provides tips on living in the United States might facilitate international students in successful adjustment in the United States, thus reducing acculturative stress.

The study participants adopted various coping strategies, as mentioned in Table 6, to adjust successfully in the United States. Based on these and other experiences, the participants made following suggestions for successful adjustment: maintaining a balance between work and family, talking in a calm manner, not generalizing, encouraging positive thoughts, keeping occupied, being mentally strong, organized, and economical, choosing a field of passion, building on skills that one already has, developing good writing skills, being polite, maintaining academic honesty, considering graduate education as a serious task, keeping in contact with professors and staff, being goal oriented, accepting the new culture, being social, being thankful to others, being responsible, involving self in role reversal scenario, being confident, adjusting with others, making friends, and being helpful.

Personal Transformation

One of the most enlightening findings of this study was how transition from home country to the host country leads to transformation in personalities and perspectives of the study participants. Unknown culture and system makes international students learn to adjust to the various demands of the new country. Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003) posit adjustment as a process of "Working out a fit between the person and the new cultural environment" (p. 107), which requires an international student to transform his perspectives, personality, and world views. Kim and Ruben

(1988) describe intercultural transformation as a process where an “individuals' 'old' person breaks up, and the intercultural knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral capacities construct a 'new' person at a higher level of integration” (p. 314). Analogous to this, Mezirow (2000) elucidates an international individual to start the journey of transition from being confused and disoriented to the final stage of being competent and self-confident. Garimella (2008) conducted a study to identify the acculturation process of Asian Indians in the United States. Her findings indicated her participants to grow into more self-reliant, self-confident, and independent. The participants of this study reported similar transformation in them. They transformed into individuals who are confident, capable of tackling varied situations, more independent and take the responsibility of planning their education, managing finances, and their health.

In addition, as delineated in Table 7, the study participants also reported transforming into much evolved, sociable, and open-minded individuals, who learned to accept other cultures. They build more relationships, became more accommodative and strong individuals. Two of the participants reported transforming into calm, composed, and patient individuals. One participant reported realizing the importance of parents and friends. He realized the virtues of networking, became humble, and appreciative. Another participant reported transforming into a more organized individual, who began to plan in advance, write lists, schedule, became more focused, career oriented, and self-directed and felt the need to improve further. One of the participants reported

transformation in her thoughts from negative to positive. She became more hopeful about things. Contrary to all the positive transformations, one of the participant reported transforming into a more stressful, worried, less carefree and a cautious individual.

Implications

The findings indicate that this study has implications for the home country, the host country, adult education, policy, theory and future research. The potential beneficiaries of this study are adult students from India, other international students with similar backgrounds, international student advisory committee, international student services, adult education and literature on transitional adjustment.

Implications for the Home Country

This study has implications on the importance of having awareness among the students from India regarding differences between being a student in the United States versus India. For instance, results indicate that an international student needs to be more independent in terms of earning and managing finances and multitasking in the United States, an aspect not necessarily needed in India. Similarly, students from India need to develop problem solving skills on their own in the United States. In India, they have social, family and friends support during difficult situations. This suggests that, workshops offered in the home country, to the students aspiring to come to the United

States, might be most effective, if they promote awareness and preparation regarding the personal and academic life of the host country.

Speculations regarding why the contradictory results were found regarding difficulties with English language, indicated that students from India who went to English medium schools, unlike others, had no difficulty in speaking or understanding the language. Also, students whose parents are educated and encourage their kids to speak in English don't have much of a problem. Parents who might think that their children might go abroad for higher studies to the United States should send their children to the English medium schools.

Implications for the Host Country

The results highlight the importance of knowing American English and accent in facilitating communication and smooth interaction with host nationals. American English and accent training workshops may be implemented to make the new students from India gain an understanding of the American language, vocabulary, accent and idioms.

The results indicate the importance of having guidance in relation to familiarizing the academic environment and to the general life in the United States. This can be achieved by providing a senior student as a guide to mentor the new student throughout his or her course of study, and assigning another international senior student

to provide guidance related to cultural aspects and general living in the United States. Further, the suggestions suggested by the study participants can be disseminated by International Student Services to the new students for successful adjustment.

Implications for Adult Education

According to Ewert and Grace (2000), "Education" refers to "Intentional teaching and learning situations, formal and informal, that lead to new ways of thinking as well as the acquisition of new knowledge or development of skills" (p. 328). Adult learning refers to "How adults actually learn" (Merriam & Brockett, 1997, p. 129). In other words, adult education indicates what is being taught, and adult learning refers to what is being understood. Merriam and Brockett (1997) state that for successful adult education practice, it is crucial to have an understanding of how adults actually learn (Merriam & Brockett, 1997). Further, Merriam and Associates (2007) delineated that the more we know about adult learners, the changes they go through in life, and how these changes motivate and impact them in their learning, the better we can structure learning experiences that lead to their development. Additionally, Merriam and Associates (2007) emphasized that examining non-western perspectives of learning expands one's understanding of learning and knowing so that the practice of adult educators becomes more inclusive and effective.

This study utilized adult Indian graduate students to examine their transitional, adjustment, coping and transformational experiences. Accordingly, the results of this study have implications for adult education by providing adult educators with information on adult Indian graduate students' academic experiences; non-western views of knowledge; the factors that helped or hindered them in navigating through the U.S. higher education system; the factors that impacted their adjustment; and the transformations they underwent. These findings can be used by adult educators in structuring learning experiences for adult learners from India and other international students with similar backgrounds.

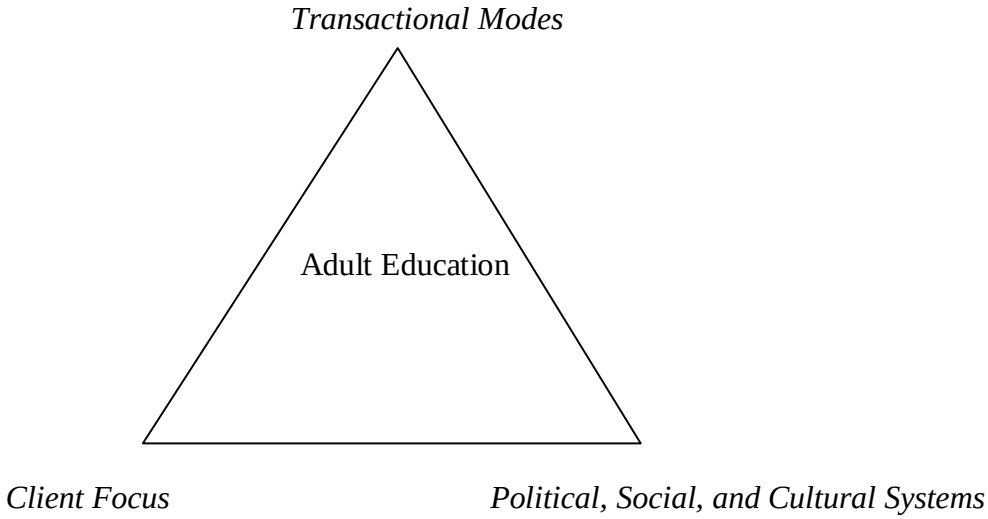
Similarly, Vella (1994) described that adult learners who attend school come with different experiences and expectations. Therefore, she proposed conducting a needs assessment to "discover what the group really needs to learn, what they already know, and what aspects of the course that we have designed really fit their situations" in order to "shape the program that has immediate usefulness to adults" (p. 4). The findings of this study that detail the experiences of students from India may be considered as part of needs assessment and accordingly design the courses and curriculum to suit the needs of international students and ease their adjustment into United States' universities.

To conceptualize adult education, Boyd and Apps (1980) presented a model that includes three dimensions (Figure 3): transactional modes, client focus, and personal, social, and cultural systems. The authors utilize the term 'transactional' to indicate the

nature of learner's situation, that is, whether adults are working individually, in groups, or as a member of a community. The individual transactional mode refers to a situation in which an adult learner learns individually. The group transactional mode refers to a situation where adults learn in groups. Finally, when a group of individuals gather together to solve a problem of their community, they are considered to be working in the community transactional mode (Boyd & Apps, 1980).

Figure 3

Three Dimensions of Adult Education



The second dimension, *client focus* refers to adult education's focus on three types of clients: individuals, groups, and communities. It emphasizes on who among these are benefited from adult education. Finally, according to Boyd and Apps (1980), every adult learner participates in three systems, viz, personal, social, and cultural. Personal system refers to the characteristics of individuals that affect his/her learning. Social systems refer to the status of the individuals in a society, the rules and expectations of a society etc. The cultural system refers to the beliefs, values, rules, principles, and customs of a group of people. Boyd and Apps (1980) suggest that this model contributes to adult education by serving adult educators in formulating questions to encourage the growth of adult learners and in designing their curriculum. For instance, combining the three dimensions of adult education: transactional modes, client focus, and political, social, and cultural systems, with the findings of this study, an answer to the following question may be obtained, which may assist adult educators in designing adult education curriculum for international student population: What cultural beliefs operate in small groups to help or hinder the individuals in learning? Similarly, considering individual transactional mode, group client focus, and the cultural system, following question may be posed: What cultural beliefs about group study promote adult learning?

Because, most of the participants in this study underwent similar experiences related to their transition to the host country, adult educators may facilitate

transformative learning in the classroom through rational discourse. Rational discourse refers to discussion used "When we have reason to question the comprehensibility, truth, appropriateness (in relation to norms), or authenticity (in relation to feelings) of what is being asserted or to question the credibility of the person making the statement" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 77). Rationale discourse is where individuals undergo "A critical assessment of their epistemic, socio-cultural, or psychic assumptions" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 168). Thus, rational discourse leads to an individual's development, enhance critical thinking, construct and reconstruct knowledge in light of new experiences. Such transformative learning, according to Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007), would assist the international students to experience a change in their perspectives and learn to handle the situations from a new perspective.

Similarly, Transformational learning theory, one of the adult learning theories aims at the individual and social construction of meaning. Candy (1991) explained how social constructivism reflects adult education: "Becoming knowledgeable involves acquiring the symbolic meaning structures appropriate to one's society, and, since knowledge is socially constructed, individual members of society may be able to add to or change the general pool of knowledge. Teaching and learning, especially for adults, is a process of negotiation, involving the construction and exchange of personally relevant and viable meanings" (p. 275). According to Kolb (1984), the experiential learning theory refers to, "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the

transformation of experience" (p.38) and involves four types of learning styles: diverging, assimilating, converging and accommodating. Diverging learning style occurs when an individual observes and reflects on an experience. Assimilating learning style occurs when individuals create concepts to develop theories from their experiences and reflect on those theories. Converging learning style occurs when these theories are utilized in solving problems. Finally, after solving problems, when individuals completely involve themselves in newer experiences, it leads to accommodating learning style. The experiential data obtained in this study indicates that international students may be engaged in Kolb's four different types of learning styles through reflective practices, utilizing the information from their experiences, in order to acquaint them with the problem solving strategies, encountered in the host country and thus, involving them in transformative learning.

Implications for Higher Education

The findings emphasize the importance of faculty support in facilitating adjustment and reducing the stress during the initial transition to the academic culture of the United States. The factors identified as faculty support are, understanding the prior academic culture of the students, such as the teaching and the learning styles; an understanding of the prior academic etiquettes, such as interaction with the faculty, how the faculty should be addressed; and an understanding of student's dilemma regarding

what and when to converse. Such understanding can be facilitated through orientation programs for the higher education faculty, in the beginning of the Fall semester that familiarize the faculty with the culture of the students from India, the factors that promote and hinder adjustment, and the strategies that the faculty may apply to promote factors that help in adjustment or diminish factors that hinder adjustment.

This study indicates that difficulty in adjusting to the academic culture and terminology in the host country causes stress among adult students from India. Higher education faculty or staff may conduct orientation programs to familiarize students with the American academic system; the definitions of the academic terminology such as qualifiers, preliminary examination, and credit hour system and the procedures involved in carrying out these steps. Additionally, the results indicate difficulty in choosing courses because of lack of information about the courses or understanding of terminology. A training session can be conducted to explain the difference between the 400 level courses and the 600 level courses, and how to make the decision of choosing courses based on their program requirements and interests.

The results also highlight the importance of interactions of new students with the faculty and the senior students in the department. This can be achieved through organizing an orientation program within the department where the new students are given an opportunity to interact with the faculty, staff and the senior students.

Implications for Policy

Some of the participants in this study reported financial insecurity because of lack of sufficient funding. Funding can be increased by making more scholarships, research and teaching assistantships, available to the students from India. Some participants reported difficulties in commuting to a place outside the university town, and also difficulty in going for grocery shopping, especially during weekends, because of lack of transportation facilities. Participants reported an embarrassment in requesting for rides. This can be addressed by providing off-campus bus services and services on weekends.

Implications for Theory

The findings of this study hope to add to the extremely limited literature on the transition, adjustment and transformation of students from India. Stress and Coping Framework implies the impact of individual and situational factors on adjustment. The individual factors, popularly studied under Stress and Coping Framework are personality, language ability, self-perceptions, perceptions about host, socializing, homesickness, loneliness, and alienation. The situational factors popularly studied are social, family and faculty support, cultural distance, unfamiliar system and length of stay in the host country. The present findings add the following factors to the individual aspects of Stress and Coping Framework: positive thinking, keeping oneself occupied

with extra-curricular activities, exercising, being proud of one's origins, having no expectations, asking for feedback, being knowledgeable, and lack of organizational and time management skills. To the situational aspect of Stress and Coping framework, this study adds the following factors: professors having confidence in their students, treating the students with respect, lack of an opportunity to make friends in the classrooms, workload, and lack of public transportation.

Implications for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to capture the essence of the phenomenon of transition from the perspective of students from India. This study captured the essence of students from India with specific backgrounds. Therefore, more research needs to be done to explore the essence of the phenomenon of transition from the perspective of students from India, but with different backgrounds than this study's participants. Replicating this study with a sample population from more varied parts of India, with more varied length of stay, educational degrees, and marital status may be beneficial in adding to the cross-cultural literature on students from India.

The findings revealed that though transformations among the participants were mostly positive, there were some transformations which were stressful, leading to the participant becoming more cautious and worrisome. Such transformations would negatively impact their well being and successful stay in the host country. This finding

calls for further research. Future research could focus on the extent to which students from India would be contented with the transformations in them, the impact of negative transformations on their personal, academic, and social lives, and the strategies that could be adopted to eradicate the causes that may engender negative transformation and instead, promote positive transformation among students from India.

Of the few studies conducted on students from India, very limited studies considered aspects such as, the impact of positive thinking and training oneself not to have any expectations in terms of receiving social support or help on transitional adjustment. As such, future research on the phenomenon of transition should explore the impact of these aspects on the adjustment process in the United States. Self-confidence has been studied to some extent, using quantitative methodology with participants from thirty seven countries (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & Van Horn, 2002). Future research focusing on understanding the role of self-confidence on the adjustment processes of students from India through interviewing could be beneficial. Research on these aspects would benefit future students in understanding the behaviors, that if, cultivated might help them in adjusting successfully to a new country. Two of the participants in this study indicated difficulty in making the transition from the industry to the university. Future research that focuses on identifying factors that aid in smooth transition from industry to the university would be beneficial to those who aim at such transitions.

According to the U-curve theory, suggested by Lysgaard (1955), the international students are initially excited, followed by encountering adjustment difficulties. Eventually, they adjust to the difficulties. Replicating this study by conducting comparative interviews between Indian international students in their first year versus those who have lived here for over 5 years would provide information about these adjustment phases and test this model with the students from India. This study presents some contradictory findings. Though some of the participants were excited upon their arrival to the United States, some were neither excited nor happy. Similarly, though four of the participants adjusted well, three of the participants still feel disintegrated and not well adjusted even after five years of stay in the United States. Future research could explore the adjustment phases of Indian international students in the United States.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to present an overview of the study findings and discuss them in relation to the prior studies. The findings revealed the experiences of the study participants in the United States; the "What" and "Cause" of the factors that impacted their adjustment; how they overcame the adjustment challenges; and finally, the various kinds of personal transformations they underwent upon having transitioned to the United States. This chapter concluded with the implications of the findings to the

home country, host country, adult education, higher education, university policies, theory and future research.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPATION REQUEST EMAIL

Dear fellow students from India,

I am Prashanti Chennamsetti, a doctoral student in the department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development, Nurture University. I am presently in the data collection stage of my dissertation. I am emailing you as a request for a possibility of your participation in my study.

In my dissertation, I investigate the phenomenon of transition of students from India, the coping strategies that they adopt to overcome the adjustment problems, and the various transformations that they undergo. For this study, I intend to choose a qualitative research paradigm, using a phenomenological study approach. I will be using semi-structured interviews, focusing on the following six domains: (a) demographic data (b) the process of transition (c) individual factors impacting the process of transition (d) situational factors impacting the process of transition (e) coping strategies-suggestions for the incoming international students and the host university, and (f) transformation process resulting from the transition. The interviews will tend to last two to three hours.

As an Indian international graduate student, I am aware of the various adjustments that the students from India have to make in a foreign university. Therefore, I proposed to conduct this study, whose findings might help future Indian students or other international students from a similar context, at Nurture University, to understand the experiences that they might have to undergo and various coping strategies, so as to adjust successfully.

To protect the anonymity of the participants, pseudo names will be provided to each interviewee. Additionally, all the transcripts and the audiotapes of the interviews will be stored in a locked box and will be erased after 5 years of the completion of the study.

I highly appreciate your time and willingness to assist me in my study. I will email you in two days to confirm your consent and schedule an appointment for the interview. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at p-aggie@tamu.edu, or (979) 862-9409.

Sincerely,

Prashanti Chennamsetti

APPENDIX B

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND CONFIRMATION EMAIL

Dear Ms/Mr. Last Name,

Thank you for agreeing to devote your invaluable time by participating in my study. Let me again describe the purpose of this study. I am exploring the process of adjustments that Indian international students have to undergo because of their transition to a university in the United States. I am also exploring the coping strategies that are adopted to overcome the adjustment problems.

As we discussed on the phone, our interview date and time have been confirmed for …(date)…….and ……(time)……Please find attached an interview protocol and two consent forms. Please sign both the consent forms, one for your records and the other for me.

Thank you again for your cooperation. In case you have any questions or concerns before our interview, you may contact me anytime at p-aggie@tamu.edu or (979) 862-9409.

Sincerely,

Prashanti.

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

- I have been explained the purpose of this study, which is to explore the experiences of transition, adjustment, and adaptation processes of Indian international students.
- I agree to volunteer in this study and be interviewed. I understand that the interview will be transcribed. This interview will last for approximately 1-2 hours. I will be asked to talk about my experiences during my transition to U.S., the various adjustment challenges I faced, the strategies I used to overcome these challenges, and any suggestions that I can make to help the adjustment of Indian international students at a U.S. university smooth.
- I understand that there will not be any physical injury involved by participating in this study. While answering some questions, there might be a possibility of me feeling uncomfortable. I, however, am free to choose not to talk, without giving any reason. I am free and may also choose to withdraw from the interview anytime.
- I understand that the confidentiality of my identity and the information I share with the researcher will be maintained and will not be released without my prior consent, unless required by law, as related to any child/elder abuse or a threat of violence to myself or to others.
- The records of my taped interview and the researcher's notes will be kept in a locked cabinet and will be available only to the researcher, peer examiner and her dissertation committee. The tapes will be erased after five years of this study. I understand that the work will result in research presentations and publications, but a pseudonym will be used when reporting the results to protect my identity.
- Questions arising from the research will be answered by the researcher in the present time or during the course of the research work, and I can receive a copy of the findings upon request.
- I have read and understood the explanation provided to me to my full satisfaction and agreed voluntarily to participate in this study. The researcher will provide me with a copy of this consent form.
- This research will be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB)-Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For questions and research related queries, the IRB board may be contacted at 979-458-1467.

_____	_____
Participant	Date
_____	_____
Researcher	Date

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Demographic Data

- Pseudonym: _____
- Age : _____
- Gender: _____
- Highest level of education received in India: _____
- The degree currently enrolled in U.S: _____
- Length of stay in U.S: _____
- Lived or visited a foreign country for more than 2 months before coming to the United States: _____

The Transition Process

- What made you decide to come and study in the United States?
- Tell me a story about your transition from India to the United States.
- Describe how you felt the first few days in this country.

Individual Factors and the Process of Transition

- Describe the factors that helped your adjustment in the United States.
- Describe the factors that hindered your adjustment in the United States.
- Who are the people who helped you in learning the culture? What kinds of advice did they give you?
- What advice did you receive before coming to the United States?
- How prepared were you for life in the United States?
- Describe the social group with whom you interact most?
- Do you interact socially with Americans? If so, would you describe your experience? If not, why don't you socially interact with Americans?
- Describe your relationship with fellow American students.
- Describe your relationship with faculty.
- Describe your relationship with university staff /administrators.

Situational Factors and the Process of Transition

- Describe your experiences of being a student in United States and India.
- Describe the classroom environment of the United States with that in India.
- What challenges did you encounter in the United States classroom? Are these still challenges for you? If not, how did you overcome them? If they are still challenges, how are you managing?
- How welcomed do you feel in the classroom?
- Describe your experience with the course work, assignments, and examinations that you take in the United States.
- Whom do you rely on for support?
- How would you describe the role of faculty in your adjustment?
- How would you describe the role American students have played in your adjustment?
- How would you describe the role staff and administrators have played in adjustment here?
- What institutional supports did you find helpful?
- What resources did the university made available to you? How helpful were these resources? Which ones were most helpful? Least helpful?
- Describe your experience of receiving advice when needed, from the faculty, advisors, or peers. Is it helpful?
- Describe your experiences with cost of living in the United States.
- Describe housing. How convenient is it, in terms of rent, finding it, and comfort.

Coping Strategies – Suggestions

- What are some of the emotions you experience as an international student away from home? What would trigger some of these emotions? Can you give me an example?
- Describe the various strategies you adopted to overcome the challenges in the United States.
- After you adopted these strategies, how did you feel, in terms of stress; welcomed into the American system, culture: fitting in to the American society?
- Describe the strategies you plan to adopt to deal with the adjustment difficulties that are still there.
- In your opinion, how can the students back home be more prepared when making the transition to a university in the United States?
- Describe what you have learned from the coping strategies that you applied to adjust in the United States.

- Is there anything else that you would like to talk about regarding adjustment or coping strategies?
- Would you like to give any suggestions?

Personal Transformation

- Describe the behavioral transformations you underwent after having transitioned to the United States
- Described what and how your perspectives about the world got transformed.
- Describe how you feel about the transformations that occurred within you.

Prompting Questions

- Would you describe it further?
- Would you give examples to explain it?
- Why do you think so?
- What could be the reason?
- What does that mean to you?
- You said....., does it mean .....?
- Would you clarify it more?

APPENDIX E

CONCEPTUALLY CLUSTERED MATRIX

Participants	***Individual factors that helped in adjustment***	***Situational factors that helped in adjustment***	***Individual factors that hindered adjustment***	***Situational factors that hindered adjustment***
Krishna	***Self-confidence***: *No matter what, I knew that I would be able to handle things.* Positive attitude: *it was more of a question of how to face this challenge rather than Why did I land in this mess.* ***Confidence in the decisions taken***: *The strong sense of learning that I used to get by attending classes used to make me feel confident that the decision was well made.* ***Self counseling***: *I used to self-console myself and think of things that I could do to (say) meet new people or find a job or handle homesickness.*	***Help from ISS:*** *An orientation by ISS for all new students also helped me. They had described all that could happen and had told us how to help ourselves.* ***Feels welcomed:*** *I feel welcomed to enter classroom without having to ask for permission. I feel welcomed to ask any questions during class.* ***Faculty support:*** *Some of them like my grad advisor have actually helped me in sorting out some issues that I was facing in college.*	***Being away from family****: Homesickness and feeling of being far off from your loved ones often strikes you.* ***Loneliness:*** *Initially, I felt lonely, when except for very few, I knew nobody else in the town.* ***Difficulty in transition from industry to university:*** *having been employed for three years in India hindered my transition to academic life back.*	***Workload:*** *I feel the stress from academic load which one has to carry along with a part time job.* ***Housing:*** *Lack of furnishing is one big missing point.*

Participants	***Individual factors that helped in adjustment***	***Situational factors that helped in adjustment***	***Individual factors that hindered adjustment***	***Situational factors that hindered adjustment***
Krishna	***Observation***: *I learned by observing the behavior of Americans as to what is acceptable and what is not.* ***Prepared***: *Amongst my group of friends I used to generally have answers for any such 'How to do it in America' questions?* ***No difficulty in fitting into American culture***: A*s I knew what to expect from my siblings.* ***Family support***: *She helped me get acquainted to American lifestyle in a very short span of time.* ***Keeping in touch with family:*** *By keeping in touch with parents/friends back in India regularly I stopped feeling that I was away from them.* ***Making friends:*** *My emotions got a channel through my new found friends.* ***Keeping occupied:*** *I also started keeping myself busy in studies & various campus activities or my hobbies such as photography. I took Chinese classes just for the fun sake. I knew that this all would also help me in fighting stress. And it worked.*	----------	----------	----------

Participants	***Individual factors that helped in adjustment***	***Situational factors that helped in adjustment***	***Individual factors that hindered adjustment***	***Situational factors that hindered adjustment***
Shreya	***Family support:*** *My family was there for me.* ***Roommate's support****: My roommate is very nice.* ***English Language****: It definitely helps to know English.* ***Having no expectations:*** *Having no expecations helped me transit easily.* ***Feeling confidence****: I feel confident of being able to handle things here.* ***Not letting sad incidents affect her:*** *I don't let sad things affect me.*	***Professors having confidence in their students:*** *Over here they give you responsibilities with a level of confidence.* ***Faculty support:*** *Our head of the department helped me a lot.* ***Labmates support:*** *People in my lab offered me help.* ***Getting respect:*** *I like it when your ideas are respected.* ***Informality****: When people are informal, you feel comfortable.* ***Orientations:*** *Orientations help you meet people.* ***Academics:*** *I like the academic system over here.* ***Funding****: Funding is very beneficial.* ***Indian Student Association****: They are very helpful.*	***After family left****: It was tough phase for me.* ***Homesickness and loneliness****: Lack of my mother's presence in my life made me homesick.* ***Doing all the chores on her own at home:*** *I had difficulty adjusting to doing all the chores on my own.* ***American accent:*** *Initially I had to problems with the American accent.*	***Workload:*** *I wish I had manageable work.* ***Academic system:*** *It's very different. That was initially difficult for me.* ***Treating differently:*** *When she was treated lightly, I got hurt.* ***Lack of an opportunity to make friends:*** *You do not interact with them personally.*

Participants	***Individual factors that helped in adjustment***	***Situational factors that helped in adjustment***	***Individual factors that hindered adjustment***	***Situational factors that hindered adjustment***
Shruti	***City atmosphere***: *May be the city environment helped me.* ***English language***: *Knowing the English language helped me a lot.* ***No regrets***: *I never regretted coming to US.* ***At ease***: *I try to be most comfortable.* ***Became more positive***: *Having more academic success than you ever had in India.* ***Overcoming fear of rejection***: *It's kind of diminished a bit after getting here* ***Courteous:*** *Being very formal and extra polite helps*	***School work***: *The school that I went to back home focused more on independent work that might have helped.* ***Faculty support:*** *Most of the faculty has been very supportive.* ***Organized***: *The professors here are organized.* ***Staff support:*** *All the support staff and everybody, they don't really scream at you or shout at you if you make a mistake, so that has helped a lot.* ***Housing***: *Living in the university apartments, you get so many things for free, so that's very nice too.*	***Living away from family***: *I don't think I like being away from my parents too much. That I don't like at all.* ***Lack of positive attitude***: *I wasn't very positive about things.* ***Multitasking***: *Here you have to do so many other things along with studying.*	***Difficulty in understanding American professors:*** *I don't know how formal you can be and how informal can't you be.* ***Public transportation***: *You have to have a car and that for me is most difficult.* ***Workload***: *It is constant work all through the semester.*

Participants	***Individual factors that helped in adjustment***	***Situational factors that helped in adjustment***	***Individual factors that hindered adjustment***	***Situational factors that hindered adjustment***
Pragya	***Having someone close in US to rely on:*** *I think, if he had not been here, I would have been a much more a miserable person.* ***English language:*** *My ability to communicate in English helped me mingle with Americans comfortably.* ***Socializing***: *Socializing; having a change of scene, people; it definitely helps; it is cleansing.* ***Keeping occupied***: *I keep myself occupied.* ***Exercising:*** *I would do cardio, weight training, and yoga.* ***Being proud of origins:*** *The fact that I am so strong on my identity as an Indian, I think they like that.*	***Staff support***: *They are very motherly towards me.* ***Lab mates' support***: *They just made me a part of their lives, which was very nice.*	***Sense of non-belonging:*** *You just don't belong; this is not your country.* ***Homesickness:*** *I feel terribly homesick. Even now, I do.* ***Difficulty in expressing***: *I don't trust anybody here the way I trust people back home.* ***Loneliness****: I feel miserably lonely.* ***Torn between work and personal life:*** *I am extremely torn between work and personal life.*	***Lack of faculty support:*** *The faculty didn't make my life any easier.*

Participants	***Individual factors that helped in adjustment***	***Situational factors that helped in adjustment***	***Individual factors that hindered adjustment***	***Situational factors that hindered adjustment***
Rishi	***Conscious effort in changing perspective/not feeling lonely:*** *Definitely it's to do with your outlook, how you want to be, you will be like that.* ***Planning in advance***: *Now, if I go, I plan ahead and I book, I inform, schedule, organize.* ***Psychological preparation to overcome the fear of risks:*** *Psychologically, I had to prepare myself saying that, 'no, I have come this long to pursue phd and there is no way I was going back'.* ***Positive Attitude***: *I ask myself this question, suppose the same situation was reversed, and let's say, this is India, you are in India, they are Americans, it's like role reversal, will you be so acceptable, and will you be so welcoming to other cultures? If you see everything in that light, then what you see is definitely a service to you.* ***Understanding that he needs to be a professional:*** *I understood that though I am a student, I need to behave like a professional.* ***Preparing people in advance:*** *Whenever I teach the course, I tell them that these are the words I have difficulty with, so please be aware of it.*	***Availability of resources***: *You pretty much get everything.* ***Flexibility***: *Here I have lots of flexibility in terms of choosing courses.* ***Faculty support***: *My advisor has been very supportive.* ***Staff support***: *The administrative staff considers students as their customers.*	***Self doubt on English***: *I always doubt, am I communicating properly?* ***Considering self as an outsider:*** *I always considered myself as an outsider* ***Difficulty in expressing***: *Particularly when I am talking to Americans, I always doubt, what is acceptable.* ***Not mingling:*** *I was not willing to go and meet people* ***Misses India:*** *The culture, the atmosphere, the ambiance that I am used to is not here.* ***Lack of organization***: *Its lack of discipline or disorganization on our part than anything else. It's definitely internal than external.* ***Concerned about risks:*** *The risk of failing is more here.*	***Unfamiliar system***: *I didn't understand the credit system, even qualifiers.* ***Lack of faculty support***: *I mean the faculty did not take the initiative to provide me with those facilities.*

Participants	***Individual factors that helped in adjustment***	***Situational factors that helped in adjustment***	***Individual factors that hindered adjustment***	***Situational factors that hindered adjustment***
Vishnu	***Networking in India:*** *We started having these Nurture group meetings in Chennai.* ***Having friends in US***: *I had friends over here.* ***Prepared socially***: *I was pretty well prepared as far as the social aspect in US was concerned.* ***English Language****: There was nothing about English language that really shocked me over here.* ***Keeping in touch with family***: *Emotionally, I don't feel low as I talk to my parents.* ***Open mind***: *I have a very open mind.* ***No expectations:*** *I didn't have any expectations; it made it easier for me.*	***Faculty support***: *I would have to give a lot of credit to my advisor.* ***Colleagues support***: *My colleagues have been invaluable to me.* ***Welcoming environment***: *It's welcoming to attend classes in US.* ***Funding:*** *It's a very, very big thing.* ***Identifying the topic of interest***: *After I identified my topic of interest, it became smooth flowing.*	***Feeling Lonely***: *I feel lonely during summer holidays.* ***Homesickness:*** *I have been feeling homesick of late.*	*None*

Participants	***Individual factors that helped in adjustment***	***Situational factors that helped in adjustment***	***Individual factors that hindered adjustment***	***Situational factors that hindered adjustment***
Arjun	***Meeting wife's goal:*** *I have also the satisfaction that my wife achieved her dream of doing a Ph.D.* ***Persistence:*** *'What other ways', concept always helped me find solutions.* ***Being knowledgeable****: It helps to be knowledgeable.* ***Asking for feedback***: *I evolved with people's feedback.* ***Being himself****: Honestly, one of the things I learned is just be yourself.* ***Doing voluntary work****: For me the expereince of volunteering helped.* ***Having friends***: *I have friends who come home and talk and laugh.*	***Positive reinforcement***: *Positive evaluations have been encouraging for me to stay.*	***Nervousness & feeling of consciousness****: I used to feel nervous. I am more conscious* ***Less self-confidence****: I have not gained the confidence that I wanted to.* ***Misses India:*** *I miss India constantly.* ***American accent****: I was more concious than anybody else about my accent.* ***Dilemma about having taken the right decision of coming to US****: In terms of returns and investment, I still don't know if I took the right decision.* ***Not fitting****: US is a great place, but I don't fit here.* ***Missing job back home****: I was so attached to my work.* ***Lack of financial stability****: There is always that concern that money is not enough.*	***Lack of faculty support*****:** *They never had time for me*

VITA

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Education: B.Sc., Zoology, Chemistry and Fisheries, Khalsa College, Punjab University, India, 1997

M.Sc., Applied Psychology, Guru Jambeshwar University, India, 1999

Honors and Awards:

2010	Who's Who Among Students in American Univeristies and Colleges
2009-2010	Association of Former Students Academic Excellence Award, Texas A&M University
2008-2009	Southerland Aggie Leadership Scholarship, Texas A&M University
2008-2009	AR & MB Turbeville Endowed Academic Excellence Award, Texas A&M University
2008	SERA Dean's Outstanding Manuscript Award, Texas A&M University
2008	Shibata Scholarship, Texas A&M University
2007-2008	Cary N. Smith Academic Excellence Award
2007	Graduate Program Enhancement Award, Texas A&M University
2007	Graduate Teaching Academy Fellow, Texas A&M University.
2007	Outstanding Service, Kappa Delta Pi, Mu Chi Chapter, Texas A&M University
2006-2007	Herman F. Heep Academic Excellence Award
2006	Graduate Program Enhancement Award, Texas A&M University
2006	International Education Study Grant, Texas A&M University
2006	International Education Fee Scholarship, International Programs for Students, Texas A&M University