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Making Sense of Counseling and Counselor Training in the Chinese Context: Two IPA Studies on U.S.-Trained Chinese Counselors' Experiences Practicing in China

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Abstract approved:

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Deborah J. Rubel

Mental health disorders are the leading cause of disability worldwide. The strong need for mental health services has prompted intensive global efforts to develop, evaluate, and deliver effective mental health treatment, especially for low- and middle-income countries. The counseling profession in the United States has responded to this global need by promoting counseling internationally, collaborating with mental health professionals worldwide, and training counselors to serve diverse populations both domestically and internationally. Despite the strong interest in and need for the U.S. counseling profession to promote counseling worldwide, scholars have been warning the danger of unexamined transplanting of the U.S. counseling model in the international context due to the context-specific, culture-specific, and language-specific nature of counseling.

U.S. trained Chinese counselors practicing in China possess the knowledge, languages, and cultural background to understand both the U.S. counseling culture and their home culture. Their experiences providing counseling based on the U.S. training model in the Chinese context shed light on the validity and feasibility of U.S. counseling and counselor training models in an international context. No previous studies have investigated their experiences practicing counseling in the Chinese context. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) qualitative method,

this dissertation sought to understand their lived experiences adapting counseling to the Chinese context and their sense making of the U.S. counseling training in relation to providing counseling in China.

IPA allows the researcher to explore nuanced human experiences and meaning making processes, paying special attention to the context in which the participants function. The researcher recruited eight participants who met the criteria of 1) self-identified as Chinese; 2) lived in China through high school; 3) graduated from a Master's level counseling program in the United States; and 4) worked with Chinese clients in China after graduating from the counseling program. The researcher utilized IPA data analysis as described by Smith and Nizza (2022) and adopted strategies such as peer debriefing, member checks, reflexivity, and thick description to increase trustworthiness.

The first study (n=8) explored the lived experiences of U.S. trained Chinese counselors adapting counseling to the Chinese context. The study's findings indicate that such counselors experience: multisystemic dissonance leads to a quest to adapt U.S. counseling training to practice in China, actively reaching for internal and external resources to adapt, taking deliberate actions as adaptation strategies, and experiencing professional and personal growth connected to adaptation.

The second study (n=8) explored how U.S. trained Chinese counselors make sense of their U.S. counseling training in relation to providing counseling in the Chinese context. The study's findings indicate that such counselors perceive: U.S. counseling training as a cognitive and emotional experience, lived experience in the United States as essential to learning, the Chinese workplace as a testing ground for training, and a relearning and reorganization process of past training and experiences.

The findings have wide implications for counselor educators and counseling programs, international counseling students and graduates, as well as future research on applying U.S. counseling and counselor training in a global context.

Making Sense of Counseling and Counselor Training in the Chinese Context: Two IPA Studies on U.S.-Trained Chinese Counselors' Experiences Practicing in China

by
Yun Shi

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Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

Yun Shi, Author

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Chapter 1: General Introduction

An estimated 450 million people globally are living with mental illness, yet less than 10% of individuals needing mental health treatment receive it (McCarthy & Habedank, 2014). Governments around the globe recognize the importance of mental health issues and the deficiencies in the current treatment delivery system (McCarthy & Habedank, 2014; Patel & Prince, 2010). To respond to the global mental health crisis, the counseling profession in the United States has increased efforts to promote counseling worldwide, both by collaborating with international mental health professionals and by training international and domestic counseling students to serve diverse populations globally (Lorelle et al., 2012; McCarthy & Habedank, 2014).

As a result, a growing number of U.S.-based counselor educators are getting involved in transnational collaborations with helping professionals and faculty members in different countries (Smith et al., 2018; Tang et al., 2012). U.S.-based counseling students also increasingly participate in overseas immersion experiences (Wathen & Kleist, 2015). Meanwhile, more international students are coming to the U.S. to study counseling (Amparbeng & Pillay, 2021), and the percentage of international faculty in CACREP-accredited counseling programs nearly doubled from 2013 to 2016 (Li & Liu, 2020).

Despite the strong interest in and need for the U.S. counseling profession to promote counseling worldwide, scholars have pointed to the dangers of "a mainly unidirectional" process (Ng & Noonan, 2012, p. 13), in which U.S. and European models of counseling practice have been exported globally without careful consideration of the consequences or implications. Marsella and Pedersen (2004) pointed out that the current U.S. counseling psychology training model is inadequate to meet the needs of international populations because it is based on "western psychology" rooted in "an ideology of individualism, rationality, and empiricism that

has little resonance in many of the more than 5,000 cultures found in today's world" (p. 414). Ng and Smith (2009) also argued that U.S. counselor training programs operate from a Western paradigm which embodies "Western values, beliefs, traditions, and practices" (p. 67).

A growing body of evidence indicates that a counseling practice and training system focused on Western ideology is unlikely to meet the needs of the global population. For example, Smith et al. (2018)'s Delphi study highlighted the contextual nature of counseling work and argued that knowledge and experience obtained in the U.S. counselor education system might not apply internationally. Both pioneering studies (Ng, 2006; Ng & Smith, 2009) and a recent literature review (Lee, 2018) on the training and supervision of international counseling students highlight the cultural clash experienced by international counseling students, their struggle with ethnocentricity and cultural encapsulation in the field, and their resulting social and intellectual isolation. In Lau and Ng (2012)'s study of the effectiveness and relevance of U.S.-based training for international counseling graduates (ICGs) who returned to their home country to work, the participants reported experiencing an over-focus on Western and U.S. cultures and issues during their training, leaving them to figure out on their own how to apply the training to their home countries and cultures.

Scholars call for drastic transformation of current counseling practice and training to meet the needs of the global population. Tang et al. (2012) argue that counseling must be reinvented as a profession rather than simply continuing to transplant westernized views globally. Announcing that "counseling is transforming from a Western-based practice to a global phenomenon," Lorelle et al., (2012, p. 115) highlight the need to go beyond a willingness to adapt and redefine current counseling theories, to examining our most basic assumptions in counseling. Ng and Noonan (2012) emphasized that the goal of internationalization of

counseling is to provide and promote mental health wellness and intervention by empowering individuals and communities to meet their needs in culturally respectful and informed ways" (p. 11).

International counseling students and graduates who have attended U.S. counselor training programs provide a unique and valuable perspective on the training and practice of counselors to meet the needs of global populations. Coming from a non-U.S. cultural context and being trained in Western-based, U.S.-focused counseling theories and practices, this population experiences an intense cultural clash which can shed light on the cultural assumptions inherent in counseling as taught in U.S. counseling programs (Interiano & Lim, 2018; Lee, 2018; Li & Liu, 2020; Ng & Smith, 2009). Ng and Smith (2009) argue that international counseling students face the dual challenges of learning Western perspectives of counseling conceptualization and practices while also translating such learning into their own cultural backgrounds. ICGs who work with clients in their home cultures add another layer, namely, the process of adjusting and adapting their counseling training and cultural incorporation into practice when working with clients in their home cultures (Kim-Goh et al., 2015).

Studying ICGs has advantages over studying international students. International counseling students' experiences, albeit valuable, do not reflect the full trajectory of international counselors' professional development. Most international counseling students are in the beginning stage of their professional training and have had very limited time and experiences to reflect on their counseling training and its application. ICGs who practice counseling with diverse populations, especially non-Western populations, have both the educational and practical experiences and time to reflect on and digest their training, practice, and professional identity development (Attie, 2021; Cho, 2019; Kim-Goh, et al., 2015). Working at the front lines of

applying counseling theories and practices to diverse populations, this group personalizes internationalization of counseling.

In the past decade, the counseling field has paid increasing attention to international counseling students, accumulating a large amount of scholarship (Interiano & Lim, 2018; Lee, 2018; Li & Liu, 2020; Ng & Smith, 2009). Yet very limited research has been done on ICGs after they complete counseling training and go into practice in their home countries. A small amount of research has explored the reentry experiences of ICGs who return to their home country after receiving counseling training in the United States (Duenyas et al., 2019; Jung et al., 2012; Lauw, 2017), but few have focused on the ICGs' experiences providing counseling in their native contexts. So far only one study has been located that explored the experiences of ICGs practicing counseling in Asia; even there, the participants were not all counselors, nor were they all trained in the United States (Taephant et al., 2015). The same relative dearth of information exists for studies exploring how ICGs perceive and make sense of their U.S. counseling training in relation to practicing in their home countries. One study (Lau & Ng, 2012) examined ICGs' perceptions on the effectiveness and relevance of their U.S. counseling training, but the majority of the participants (seven out of nine) were doctoral level graduates, and not all participants graduated specifically from counseling programs. Several other studies examined the experiences of ICGs who practice as counselors in the United States rather than in their home countries (Attie, 2021; Cho, 2019; Kim-Goh, et al., 2015). Thus, little is known so far about the experiences of ICGs as they apply their U.S. counseling training to home culture clients in a non-U.S. context.

Chinese ICGs serving Chinese clients in the Chinese context potentially provide a valuable lens for this study. One of the oldest cultures in the world, Chinese culture is rooted in

Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, which hold vastly different values from those of the West (Wu et al., 2016). Professional counseling did not exist in China until recently. Although the field of counseling has grown rapidly in China in recent years, scholars are warning of the discrepancy between newly arrived Western counseling concepts and longstanding native cultural beliefs (Duan et al., 2011; Wu et al., 2016). Thus Chinese ICGs' lived experiences adapting their U.S. counseling training to the Chinese context can yield important insights into the validity and feasibility of applying counseling internationally.

Extant literature has shown that ICGs practicing in home cultures need to adjust and adapt their U.S. counseling training to meet the needs of their home culture clients and contexts (Lauw, 2017). What is missing from the literature, however, is an in-depth understanding of how ICGs adapt. Also missing from previous research is an in-depth understanding of how U.S. counseling training prepares its graduates to work in non-U.S. contexts. This dissertation's two research studies aim to shed light on these questions by exploring the lived experiences of U.S. trained Chinese ICGs who provide counseling in the Chinese context.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

The two research studies in this dissertation use IPA as their research methodology. IPA is a contemporary qualitative approach that is gaining popularity in counselor education research (Miller et al., 2018). Rooted in principles of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography, IPA aims to get as close as possible to the lived experiences of its participants, identifying commonalities yet respecting individual differences among participants (Smith & Nizza, 2022). IPA recognizes the context-specific nature of human experiences and is interested in "understanding particular experiences of particular people in particular circumstances" (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 8). Aligning with the hermeneutic tradition, IPA holds the view that "human

beings are sense-making creatures, and therefore the accounts which participants provide will reflect their attempts to make sense of their experiences" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 3). In addition, IPA emphasizes the "double hermeneutic" nature of research, as the researcher is attempting to make sense of the participants' sense making of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

IPA's data collection and analysis processes reflect its theoretical underpinnings. It uses in-depth interviews to gather rich data from a small sample of participants who share "a specific contextualized experience" (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 13). During data analysis, it focuses on understanding how each participant makes sense of their experiences. Thus data for each participant is analyzed on its own terms and researchers take careful actions to prevent their own biases and assumptions, as well as other participants' experiences, from interfering with understanding the perspective of each participant. Yet IPA acknowledges the subjective, interpretative nature of data analysis and utilizes strategies such as reflexivity, peer review, member checking, and an audit trail to improve trustworthiness. Last but not least, IPA acknowledges the iterative nature of data analysis, stating that "each stage can potentially lead to revising prior interpretative decisions" (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 31). Leading scholars on IPA have provided detailed guidance for data collection and analysis, which the studies in this dissertation followed (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022).

IPA serves the purpose of this dissertation, as the two research studies aim to explore both the lived experiences of participants and how they make sense of their experiences in a specific context. The participants shared similarities but also vastly different personal experiences and perceptions, which were well addressed by IPA data analysis and presentation. Working on the front lines of applying a Western culture-rooted discipline to a considerably

different cultural and social context, the participants have first-hand, rich experiences and unique perspectives. IPA helps to mine the wealth of their knowledge and experiences.

Purpose of Dissertation

This dissertation aims to explore the lived experiences of U.S.-trained Chinese counselors who provide counseling in the Chinese context. Specifically, it aims to examine how these counselors adapt their U.S. counseling training to the Chinese context, and how they make sense of their counseling training in relation to practicing in China. There is limited research on whether or how counseling, as taught and practiced in the U.S., can be applied internationally, and the firsthand experiences of international counseling graduates who were trained in the U.S. and practice counseling in a global context provide a unique perspective to explore this issue. Currently there is a dearth of studies exploring the rich experiences of these ICGs. This dissertation hopes to help fill this gap in the literature. Understanding the lived experiences of ICGs applying U.S. counseling training to a non-U.S. context can offer insight into providing counseling in a culturally informed manner and benefit international counselors-in-training, counselors, U.S. and international counselor educators, and above all, international clients.

Manuscript 1 Overview: Counseling in the Chinese Context: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of U.S.-Trained Chinese Counselors' Experiences Adapting Counseling to the Chinese Context

The first manuscript, Chapter 2 of this dissertation, was a qualitative research study using IPA. This study explored the lived experiences of U.S-trained Chinese counselors as they adapted their U.S. counseling training to serve clients in the Chinese context. Manuscript 1 began with the global mental health crisis and the U.S. counseling profession's efforts to promote counseling globally. It then discussed the danger of unexamined application of

counseling, as currently taught and practiced in the U.S., to non-U.S. populations in a global context, with a review of relevant research. The need to explore how counseling is practiced in a global context was noted. The manuscript then discussed the benefits of studying U.S.-trained ICGs who apply counseling to international populations in their daily work. It noted the unique characteristics of Chinese ICGs that recommended this particular group for this qualitative study. Finally, extant studies on ICGs were reviewed, which highlighted the paucity of research on ICGs and their experiences practicing counseling in their home cultures.

To provide a better understanding of the experiences of these ICGs, and to assist in filling the gap in qualitative research that exists on this topic, a phenomenological research design was chosen. This study used IPA as the tool of inquiry. Through the use of purposeful sampling, eight Chinese ICGs serving clients in the Chinese context were recruited to participate in this study. The researcher collected data by conducting semi-structured interviews with each participant. IPA data analysis procedures described by Smith & Nizza (2022) were employed, and peer debriefing, member checking, reflexive journaling, and an audit trail were used to enhance trustworthiness. Thick description of participants' experiences and contexts were provided to aid transferability. This study sought to answer the central research question: "How do U.S.-trained Chinese counselors experience adapting mental health counseling to the Chinese context?" Understanding these experiences can help to inform and prepare international counselors, counselors-in-training, and U.S. counselor educators for working with populations globally.

Manuscript 2 Overview: Making Sense of U.S. Counseling Training in Relation to Practicing Counseling in the Chinese Context: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The second manuscript, Chapter 3 of this dissertation, was a qualitative research study using IPA for data analysis. This study explored how U.S.-trained Chinese counselors made sense of their training in relation to practicing counseling in the Chinese context.

Manuscript 2 began with a discussion of how a global mental health crisis calls for promotion of counseling worldwide. It then explored U.S. counseling model as culture-, language-, and context- specific, and thus not necessarily well-suited to meet the needs of the global population. It further noted that the U.S. counselor training system reflects this specific counseling model and often fails to prepare international counseling students to work with their home country clients. As counselor educators look for new ways to train counselors to work in the global context, international counseling graduates (ICGs) provide a valuable perspective as they apply their counseling training to clients from their home cultures in daily practice. The unique characteristics of Chinese ICGs recommended this group for this qualitative study. Extant studies on ICGs were reviewed, which highlighted the lack of guidance and support for ICGs serving clients in their home culture contexts. The sparse research to date on the clinical experiences of ICGs, and lack of studies on in-depth understanding of how ICGs make sense of their training and develop their adjustment and adaptation ideas, were noted.

IPA qualitative research methodology was selected to address the central research question: **"**How do U.S.-trained Chinese counselors make sense of their training in relation to providing counseling in the Chinese context?" The data collection and analysis processes followed the principles and procedures discussed in Manuscript 1 Overview.

Dissertation Organization

This dissertation followed the Manuscript Document Format (Contemporary Style) as defined by Oregon State University. As such, this manuscript is a single document that consists

of two scholarly articles which address a common theme. These two articles are companion studies examining different aspects of U.S.-trained Chinese ICGs' experiences practicing counseling in China. Chapter 1 provided a general introduction and linked the two manuscripts thematically. Chapter 2 consisted of the first research study, which explored the lived experiences of Chinese ICGs adapting counseling to the Chinese context. The third chapter consisted of the second research study, which explored how Chinese ICGs make sense of their U.S. training in relation to practicing in China. The fourth and final chapter offered a general conclusion to the dissertation and highlighted the links between the two manuscripts.

Counseling in the Chinese Context: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of U.S.-Trained Chinese Counselors' Experiences Adapting Counseling to the Chinese Context

A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

Unexamined application of counseling, as currently taught and practiced in the U.S., to non-U.S. populations can be counterproductive. To explore how counseling is practiced in a global context, this qualitative study explored the lived experiences of U.S.-trained international counseling graduates (ICGs) from China who work with Chinese clients in China. The purpose is to gain an in-depth understanding of these counselors' experiences adapting counseling to the Chinese context. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used as the method for data analysis, resulting in the identification of four themes that describe how these counselors, facing a wide range of multisystemic dissonance between their U.S. counseling training and their practice in China, actively reached for internal and external resources and took deliberate actions to adapt to the Chinese context. In this process, they experienced increased flexibility, empathy for their clients, and growing self-reliance. Implications for counselor educators and international counseling students and graduates, as well as future directions for research, are presented.

Keywords: international counseling graduates, China, adaptation, qualitative, IPA

Counseling in the Chinese Context: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of U.S.-Trained Chinese Counselors' Experiences Adapting Counseling to the Chinese Context

Mental health disorders are the leading cause of disability worldwide, and the need for mental health care is increasing as the world undergoes sustained global conflicts, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and other challenges (Collin & Saxena, 2016; Kola, 2020). In recent decades, this need has prompted intensive global efforts to develop, evaluate, and deliver effective mental health treatment, especially for low- and middle-income countries (Collin & Saxena, 2016). The counseling profession in the United States has responded by promoting counseling internationally, collaborating with mental health professionals worldwide, and training counselors to serve diverse populations both domestically and internationally (Interiano & Lim, 2018; McCarthy & Habedank, 2014; Smith et al., 2018).

Despite the strong interest in and need for the U.S. counseling profession to promote counseling worldwide, scholars have been warning of the danger of unexamined transplanting of counseling, as currently taught and practiced in the United States, into the international context (Ng & Noonan, 2012). Duan (2019) questions the cultural appropriateness of applying mental health counseling, "an indigenous European-American cultural product," in non-Western cultures, and cautions that practicing Western mental health counseling internationally without culturally-informed strategies can potentially cause problems and even harm (p. 71). An increasing body of research has pointed out the context-specific, culture-specific, and language-specific nature of counseling (Cho, 2019; Duenyas et al., 2020; Interiano & Lim, 2018; Jung et al., 2013; Lau & Ng, 2012; Smith et al., 2018), leading scholars to question the validity and feasibility of U.S. counseling and counselor training models in an international context (Wu et al., 2016). As U.S.-based counselor educators working overseas have observed, "knowledge and

experience obtained in U.S. counselor education might not be globally relevant" (Smith et al., 2018, p. 9).

The counseling profession has been concerned with these challenges and has actively searched for strategies to promote collaboration of counseling professionals around the world and empower individuals and communities to meet their mental health needs in "culturally respectful and informed ways" (Ng & Noonan, 2012, p. 11). One such effort is to learn from the lived experiences of counselors working with international populations (Duan et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2018; Tang et al., 2012). One group of such counselors, international counseling graduates, provides uniquely valuable perspectives on practicing counseling in a global context (Lau & Ng, 2012).

As the name indicates, international counseling graduates (ICGs) are those born and raised outside the U.S. who came to the U.S. to study as international students and completed training in a U.S. counseling program. Ng & Smith (2009) argue that international counseling students face the dual challenges of learning Western perspectives of counseling conceptualization and practices, and translating such learning into their own cultural backgrounds. International counseling graduates who work with clients from their home cultures add another layer in the process, namely, the process of adjusting and adapting their counseling training and cultural incorporation into practice when working with clients from their home cultures (Kim-Goh et al., 2015). Familiar with both U.S. counseling culture and their native culture, the ICGs possess the knowledge, languages, and cultural background to understand both cultures' perspectives and can serve as cultural brokers (Cho, 2019; Kim-Goh et al., 2015).

Just like international counseling students, ICGs come from markedly different cultural backgrounds and have considerable within-group variation. Prior studies report that students

from non-Western countries experienced greater levels of cultural conflicts than those from European and Western countries (Interiano & Lim, 2018). This study explores the experiences of ICGs from China because China has a cultural heritage that differs considerably from that of the United States. As Wu et al. (2016) observed, Chinese culture emphasizes self-cultivation and harmonious interpersonal relationships rooted in Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Its long-held cultural values such as reverence towards authority, indirect communication style, and seeking help from in-group circles such as family and trusted friends can have significant impact on counseling practice. Professional counseling was a novelty in China until a few decades ago but has become one the fastest growing professions in recent years (Duan et al., 2011). As China actively embraces counseling, scholars are becoming acutely aware of the discrepancy between newly arrived Western counseling concepts and longstanding native cultural beliefs (Duan et al., 2011; Wu et al., 2016). Chinese ICGs' shared experience of growing up and practicing counseling in a sociocultural context that is considerably different from that of the United States makes them a desirable study population for the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) methodology chosen for this study, as a "closely defined set of people for whom the experience has been particularly meaningful" (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 14).

There is very little research that has focused on ICGs practicing in China or elsewhere. The limited number of studies about ICGs who returned to their home countries focused on their overall readjustment experience, not on their counseling practice experiences (Duenyas et al., 2021; Jung et al., 2013; Lauw, 2017). One study (Lau & Ng, 2012) explored the ICGs' experiences and perceptions of the relevance and effectiveness of U.S. counseling training programs, which again was related to but not specifically about the ICGs' counseling experiences themselves. One study has been located that explored the experiences of ICGs

practicing counseling in Asia, with a focus on group counseling, but the participants were not all counselors, nor were they all trained in the United States (Taephant et al., 2015). Thus little information is available about the experiences of ICGs as they apply their U.S. counseling training to home culture clients in a non-U.S. context.

These above studies, however, all mentioned clashes between U.S. counseling culture and ICGs' home cultures, and ICGs' challenges in applying their counseling training to their home cultures (Duenyas et al., 2021; Lau & Ng, 2012). A brief review of studies on Asian mental health professionals (including those of Chinese origin) serving Asian immigrants in the U.S. confirmed the same challenges. Asian mental health professionals report having to be "creative" and "make adjustments to therapeutic approaches to honor the cultural beliefs and practices of clients and families" (Kim-Goh et al., 2015, p. 73). They highlighted the lack of guidance in their clinical work and the need for "improvising with the best intentions" as they are "working in an uncharted territory of counseling" across language and cultural gaps (Cho, 2019, p. 141).

In light of the importance of studying the experiences of the growing number of Chinese ICGs and the dearth of research conducted, this study explores the experiences of Chinese ICGs who work with clients in the Chinese context after receiving counseling training in the United States. The purpose of this study is to give a voice to practitioners who are living the process of adapting counseling in a non-Western context and to learn from their experiences digesting, translating, and transforming their training to meet the needs of non-Western populations. The central research question that will guide this study is: "How do U.S.-trained Chinese counselors experience adapting mental health counseling to the Chinese context?"

Method

This study is one of two companion studies by the same author examining different aspects of U.S.-trained Chinese ICGs' experiences practicing counseling in China. Here, the researcher seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences of international counseling graduates (ICGs) from East Asia as they adapt Western-rooted mental health counseling theories and practices to work with clients in their home cultures. The study employs qualitative research methodology to produce a detailed understanding of a complex issue, especially when there is limited extant information from the literature (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, qualitative research empowers participants to share their stories and make their voices heard, thus highlighting and strengthening underrepresented populations. This acts as a counterbalance to traditional research in which "the vast majority of studies have been conducted on populations that are unrepresentative of human culture more globally—those from WEIRD (Western, educated, industrial, rich, and democratic) backgrounds" (Nielsen, Haun, Kartner, & Legare, 2017, p. 32).

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is the selected approach for this qualitative study. By committing to understanding people's lived experience and how they make sense of it in their unique contexts, IPA allows nuanced human experiences to be explored in the context in which they occur, and participants' meaning-making process to be acknowledged and examined (Smith & Nizza, 2022). This study aims to "get as close as possible to the lived experience of participants" (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 4), ICGs who must determine how best to apply U.S.-based counseling training when providing mental health counseling to clients in their shared home culture. It seeks to understand international counseling graduates as unique individuals with their own specific perspective on their work, a perspective influenced by their

particular social, cultural, and personal circumstances. This study thus aspires to describe "a pattern of convergence" in the accounts provided by participants, while acknowledging and analyzing the "particular and different ways participants express that commonality" (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 8-9).

This study is rooted in the Constructivism-Interpretivism research paradigm. Such a paradigm rejects the claim of "a single objective external reality," and holds that realities are constructed in the minds of individuals, and thus are "multiple, apprehendable, and equally valid" (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 129). Reality is constructed by the participants who are actively experiencing, processing, and interpreting the world, and co-constructed through the researcher-participant interactions when they jointly attempt to make meaning out of the participants' experiences. In this tradition, this study takes a critical stance against long-held assumptions in the counseling field and explores the unique and varied experiences of non-Western clinicians in applying Western counseling theories and techniques to non-Western clients with whom they share a specific cultural and historical context (Burr, 2015).

The Constructivism-Interpretivism research paradigm highlights the interpretive and subjective nature of human activities. IPA recognizes the "double hermeneutic" inherent in research, in which the researchers attempt to make sense of the participants' sense-making of their experiences (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 8). From selecting research questions, choosing research design, and interviewing participants, to interpreting, analyzing, and writing results, researcher subjectivity permeates the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). IPA acknowledges this and offers rigorous procedures to work with these subjective and interpretive experiences, prompting the researcher to regularly examine their own assumptions and biases throughout the research process.

Researcher Positionality and Research Assumptions

Morrow (2005) argues for the importance of reflexivity and researcher self-disclosure in managing subjectivity in qualitative research. Accordingly, I will describe my own positionality and assumptions about U.S.-trained international counselors providing counseling services to clients in the context of their home countries. As a foreign-born and -raised, U.S.-trained counselor providing counseling services to Asian populations in the U.S. for over a decade, I developed the following assumptions: (a) Counseling theories and techniques are rooted in Western culture and philosophy; (b) Chinese counselors trained in U.S. counseling programs adjust their practice to meet the mental health needs of Chinese clients; (c) Understanding adaptation practices helps to internationalize the counseling field to meet global mental health needs.

Participants and Setting

The detailed exploration of a shared experience calls for a homogenous sample (Smith & Nizza, 2022). To ensure that this study captures the personal and clinical experiences of international counseling graduates from China, the following criteria have been established for selecting participants. They have: 1) self-identified as Chinese; 2) lived in China through high school; 3) graduated from a Master's level counseling program in the United States; and 4) worked with Chinese clients in China after graduating from the counseling program, and in some cases during the program as well (via online counseling).

Purposeful sampling is commonly used in IPA to identify the desired homogenous sample (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022). This includes referral by gatekeepers, referral by other participants, using researchers' own contacts, and other appropriate purposeful sampling techniques (Smith & Nizza, 2022). Upon receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board

(IRB), the researcher recruited participants through purposeful sampling using professional listservs and referrals by professional contacts. IPA focuses on the in-depth understanding of individual participants. Thus, it is the quality, rather than quantity, that matters. A higher number of participants doesn't necessarily correlate with higher quality of analysis (Smith et al., 2009). Given the complexity of human experiences, scholars have found it difficult to specify the number of participants for a quality study. The general recommendations range from four to ten (Smith et al., 2009) to 10 to 12 (Smith & Nizza, 2022). In the current study, the researcher conducted interviews with eight Chinese international counseling graduates who work with Chinese clients in China.

There are six women and two men among the participants. Most of them (seven out of eight) are younger than 32, belonging to the "born after '90 generation in China, while one participant belongs to the "born after '80 generation. The participants attended counseling programs in different regions in the United States, with an average of 3.5 years of practice post-graduation. One participant completed their counseling training during the data collection, but since they worked with Chinese clients in China for two years during the training and had been actively involved in the discussion and practice of providing counseling in the Chinese context, they were included in the study.

The participants averaged slightly over 2 years working with Chinese clients in the Chinese context. The majority of them live and work in Central and Southern China, in both major metropolitan regions and mid-sized cities. Two participants currently reside in North America and provide online counseling for their Chinese clients. They all have a master's degree in counseling, and one is also pursuing a doctoral degree in counseling.

Table 1

Participants' Demographic Information

	Gender	Age/ Generation	Practice Location	MS Counseling Specialty	Practice Setting (with Chinese clients)	Total Years in Practice	Total Years in Practice with Chinese clients
1	Female	<42	Central China	MFT	Chinese private school/private practice.	4	1
2	Female	<32	Southern China/ online	CMHC	International school/online private practice	4	2
3	Female	<32	Central China	CMHC	International school/private practice	5	3
4	Male	<42	Overseas/online	CMHC	Private company/ private practice	7	4
5	Female	<32	Southern China	CMHC	Chinese company/ international school	5	3
6	Female	<32	Overseas/Online	CMHC	Online platform	2 during training	2 during training
7	Female	<32	Central China	CMHC	Chinese company/private practice	5.5	7 months
8	Male	<32	Central China	CMHC	Chinese private school/online private practice	4	2.5

Data Collection

In-depth interviews are the most suitable and commonly used method for gathering information in IPA studies (Smith & Nizza, 2022). In this study, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview with each participant to gather information. The interview lasted between one and 1.5 hours. The researcher met with the participants again after data analysis for

member checking and to clarify any remaining questions. Interviews were conducted via Zoom, recorded, and subsequently transcribed using transcription software. To ensure accuracy, the researcher reviewed all the transcriptions while listening to the recorded interviews, making corrections as necessary.

The central research question guiding the proposed study is: "How do U.S.-trained Chinese counselors experience adapting mental health counseling to the Chinese context?" Sub-questions are: 1) How do counselors experience the need for adaptation? 2) How do the counselors experience the adaptation process? 3) What factors have influenced the counselors' adaptation experience? 4) What are the challenges and positive aspects of the adaptation experience? 5) How has the adaptation experience evolved over time? 6) What is the impact of the adaptation experience on the counselors?

Open and straightforward interview questions and prompts help researchers to better prepare for the interview process and help participants to develop their responses more fully (Smith & Nizza, 2022). The interview questions are designed to address the research question while remaining open enough to allow participants to fully express their experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interview questions are:

1. What is your experience adapting counseling knowledge and techniques from your training in the U.S. counseling program to work with clients in China?
2. When did you first experience the need for adaptation?
3. Can you give me an example when you adapted counseling knowledge and techniques from your training to work with your client?
4. What factors influenced your adaptation experience?
5. Were there challenges about the adaptation experience? If so, what were they?

6. How has the adaptation experience evolved over time?
7. How has the adaptation experience impacted you personally and professionally?

Prior to the interview, the following questions were also asked:

1. Gender, nationality, age group, any identity characteristics that are relevant to the experiences being studied.
2. What is your training background?
3. Where do you work? What is your professional identity? Professional roles?
4. How many years have you been working as a mental health counselor?
5. How many years have you been working with clients in your home country?

Data Analysis

This study followed the IPA data analysis procedures outlined by Smith & Nizza (2022), which analyzed the patterns across the group as whole while paying attention to the nuances of individual experiences. It included the following steps:

Step 1: Reading and exploratory notes. The researcher immersed themself in the transcript by carefully reading and relistening to the interview recording. At this stage, they wrote down initial reactions to the text in the form of descriptive notes (basic notes summarizing what the participant has said at face value), linguistic notes (noting the participant's use of language to indicate areas of significance or interests), and conceptual notes (the researcher's questions and comments in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of what is being said by the participants.

Step 2: Formulating experiential statements. Experiential statements are "a concise summary of what emerges as important in the notes associated with the corresponding portion of the transcript," aiming to capture a key psychological process and its context (p. 39).

Step 3: Finding connections and clustering experiential statements. At this stage, the researcher identified a structure by gathering similar or related statements together and highlighting the key features of the participants' experience.

Step 4: Compiling the table of personal experiential themes. Once the clustering of experiential statements was done, the researcher named each cluster as a personal experiential theme (PET) and converted all PETs into a table. In the table, each PET was followed by its cluster of experiential statements. This table served as an audit trail by showing where the experiential statements and PETs were derived from the transcript.

Step 5: Compiling the table of group experiential themes. IPA emphasizes the importance of treating each case on its own terms, requiring the researcher to try their best to bracket knowledge and assumptions from working on other cases and instead focus on one case at a time. Thus, the researcher individually analyzed all eight interviews before performing cross-case analysis. The cross-case analysis involved identifying common patterns and higher order qualities while keeping in mind individual differences between cases, resulting in the creation of group experiential themes (GETs), which form the basis of the analysis write-up.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the rigor of qualitative research that allows the researcher to persuade their audiences that the findings are worth paying attention to and taking seriously (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005). According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), it is composed of four criteria: (1) credibility: the findings are credible and approved by the participants, (2) transferability: the research provides sufficient descriptive data to allow the readers to judge whether the findings are applicable to their own situations, (3) dependability: the findings are consistent across time, researchers, and analysis techniques (Morrow, 2005) and (4)

confirmability: the findings, though never perfectly objective, should represent the situations being researched rather than the researchers' own assumptions and biases. Morrow (2005) further argues that criteria of trustworthiness in qualitative research are closely tied to the specific research paradigms employed, while certain criteria such as social validity, subjectivity and reflexivity, adequacy of data, and adequacy of interpretation transcend paradigms. This study utilized the following measures to achieve trustworthiness: researcher reflexivity, peer debriefing, member checks, thick description, and an audit trail.

Researcher reflexivity, an integral part of the research process, refers to being aware of the researcher's opinion and feelings related to the research, in order to monitor the researcher's influence on the research outcome (Smith & Nizza, 2022). Reflection memos were written throughout the data analysis process to make the self-reflection process formal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005; Smith and Nizza, 2022). Sharing the researcher's positionality and assumptions helped to make my own experiences and expectations explicit. Having a colleague interview me before I started interviewing others further helped me to become aware of my preconceptions (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Peer debriefing is another way to make the researcher's implicit assumptions and biases explicit and to establish the credibility of the study. It involves having a disinterested peer who is knowledgeable about the research subject and process examine the entire research process, probing research biases, inquiring into methodological issues, and acting as a devil's advocate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, a doctoral level counseling student who is familiar with qualitative study and multicultural counseling issues acted as the peer debriefer.

Member checks, "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314), invite the participants to comment on how well the researcher's

interpretation reflects their perspectives of the experience. Informal member checking occurred throughout the interview process and a formal member check was conducted near the end of the data analysis stage to give the participants opportunities to comment on the study results.

Thick description provides ample details of the participants' experiences and contexts, thus allowing the reader to judge whether the research results are transferable or applicable to their unique situations. An audit trail establishes the dependability and confirmability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study kept a record of all the raw data, reflexive notes, data analysis procedures, and instrument development information to maintain the audit trail at every step (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Results

Four themes emerged from data analysis of participants' experiences adapting mental health counseling to serve Chinese clients in the Chinese context. First, the participants' experiences of multisystemic dissonance between their U.S. counseling training and their practice in China led them to realize that they would need to embark on a process of adapting their training to the new environment. Second, the participants described broadly similar experiences of drawing inspiration and support both from within themselves and from outside resources to aid their adaptation efforts. Third, they took deliberate actions to adapt by using a variety of strategies. Finally, the adaptation process resulted in the participants experiencing personal and professional growth.

Theme 1: Multisystemic Dissonance Leads to a Quest to Adapt U.S. Counseling Training to Practice in China

This theme describes the participants' experiences of multisystemic dissonance between the participants' US counseling training and their practice in China. As a result, they realized that their U.S. counseling training hadn't and couldn't prepare them adequately for working with

Chinese clients in the Chinese context. Among the participants, there is a common sense of the need to explore on one's own to adapt to the demands of their Chinese clients and environment. Two sub-themes emerged during data analysis: (a) multisystemic dissonance and (b) "on my own": a quest to adapt to the new environment.

Multisystemic Dissonance

This sub-theme provides the starting point for the adaptation experience of the participants. From clients in counseling sessions to colleagues and management in work settings, from the mental health system and the counseling profession to the broader social, cultural, and economical systems in China, the participants have encountered understandings, assumptions, norms, rules and expectations about counseling in their practice in China that are often vastly different from their counseling training in the United States.

In Counseling Sessions. In working with clients, many of the participants observed client behaviors and expectations that are likely culturally based: viewing counseling as an educational or medical experience, the counselor as a teacher or an authority figure, and counseling services as solutions that would quickly fix their problems. Participant 5 provided a vivid example of such expectations.

> A lot of my Chinese clients came into my session and says, … "Teacher, what do you think I should do? Can you give some suggestions? [Are] there any like instructions that you can give to me? I just have this problem…" It's just like, they're really here to be ready as the students instead of a client, and this is happening a lot in my sessions. (5)

While Participant 5 works primarily with children and youth, Participant 3 observed similar behaviors and expectations in adults, but added that adults tended to wait until their

mental health symptoms were quite severe before seeking counseling, and then expected the counselors to fix their problems in a few sessions, as with a doctor's visit.

> So I think in most cases it is already at a very severe level when they started to see me.… And they put a lot of expectations on counseling. Like sometimes after just three or five sessions, they will say, "You just asked me all the questions. Like, I don't think it's working." Then they will, you know, drop the session, just stop. (3)

These client expectations clash with the participants' understanding and assumptions about counseling, as well as their existing professional roles and counseling styles, all of which are based on their U.S. counseling training and previous experiences. Participant 1 reflected on the dissonance:

> But in my work, the client is used to treating you as an authority figure, expecting that you can give very good solutions to their problems. But for me I am more inclined to have a collaborative relationship between us. This I feel is an adjustment, that is, the expectations of the client and what I am used [to] for my role as a counselor. (1)

In Work Settings. For many of the participants, the immediate environment is their work settings. Participant 1, for example, works in a Chinese school setting, where all of their counselor colleagues are trained in China and seem to better match the client expectations described above. Further complicating the situation is the fact that their expected role as a school counselor at work actually comprises two roles: a counselor and a teacher. Participant 1 found the dual role requirement challenging because "your relationship with your clients is more blurred and complex." This situation is different from their previous training and work experience in the United States, where "my role was quite straightforward. I was just a counselor." This combined pressure of meeting the needs of both the clients and the work setting

forced the counselor to reexamine their previously held values and assumptions about roles and boundaries in counseling when deciding what path to take for the future.

Many participants shared Participant 1's dilemma of how to fit into the Chinese workplace, and in the process "experimented" with a variety of settings. Some of the early experiments seemed difficult and disappointing for participants who worked for local Chinese schools and counseling agencies. These participants faced considerable value clashes with agency administrations, experienced role and boundary confusion, and at times were concerned about potential violations of their ethical standards, which prompted them to leave their jobs:

> So what I used to do in that year, I thought I was the full time therapist, but what I do exactly was offering some programs, you know, collaborating with some big companies for their activities, selling the workshops or classes that that private practice is offering. Some admin work that is not really clinical [or] being a therapist, so I was not satisfied with it. And I definitely would say that I'm not satisfied with my experiences with that place and the owner of it. (5)

> I experimented… I worked for another agency that's more of "Chinese characteristics," not so ethical on that side. (7)

The majority of the counselors eventually chose either private practice, especially through China's online counseling platforms, or international schools as their work setting. Private practice allows the participants more autonomy and control over their work and working environment. International schools, often owned and managed by foreign entities, provide an environment for counseling that is more in line with the participants' U.S. counseling training.

The preferred work settings reflected the participants' unique positions and challenges transitioning into fully Chinese-operated counseling agencies.

The mental health system (or lack thereof). Many of the participants lamented the lack of an established system of support for their work with at-risk clients or vulnerable populations in China. The knowledge of the mental health system they have acquired and the legal and ethical duties they have been trained to perform in the United States are no longer applicable. As Participant 7 commented, "Everything I know about American levels of care, . . . I don't have that system anymore." (7)

Child abuse reporting, a mandatory legal and ethical obligation for a counselor in the United States, serves as a good example to demonstrate the systemic differences between U.S. training and practice in China. Participant 8's experience trying to intervene in a child abuse case at work further highlights the struggles facing U.S.-trained counselors attempting to fulfill a deeply inculcated professional requirement of their U.S. training.

> For example, one of the students I've worked with … is receiving kind of domestic violence…. [In] the United States … I know where to go. But in China, I have to first to have research, like where can I reach out? And then I have to also ask the principals or the school management managers about whether it's okay, because at first like they think it's not that serious or is not worth reporting.… The parents coming and having a conversation with us, … they kind of made a promise [that] such violent behaviors will not … be continued. And then it ends there. There's no further like steps taken from the schools or from other organizations or resources…. Makes me thinking that if … things didn't go right, then what I can do? (8)

This young counselor, rather than relying on existing systems and following commonly agreed upon steps, had to develop a new process by researching, negotiating with the school administration, and making the meeting happen just to fulfill the basic function of protecting a child. It is no wonder that they felt like "one person fighting against the universe as a school counselor." (8)

Cultural/Social Environment. The participants observed the profound influences that cultural beliefs and social norms had on their counseling practice. For example, Participant 3 pointed out that clients and parents are not the only ones using counseling for educational purposes. "In downtown [of a specific Chinese city], there is an advertisement, saying 'Counseling helps your children to improve their grades!' It is a very good marketing slogan, because all the parents are anxious about their kids' grades." She further described a deepened appreciation of sociocultural factors' impacts on counseling, gained through training with local experts:

> I feel sometimes when we are … providing counseling, no matter individual or family counseling, when you dig deeper, you will see you're actually facing some old Chinese cultural [aspect] that is, you know, not working or some policy in their [past] time. (3)

The following quote from Participant 4 provided a vivid example of the power of some deeply held cultural beliefs:

> When I started working with people from Chinese background, people from Chinese culture, it occurs to me that this is a huge conflict between sort of Western culture and therapy rooted in Western culture and then there's the Chinese culture where [setting boundaries with family] is just viewed as some really negative thing. It [is like] just you

> shouldn't do that. You shouldn’t even think about that. It is like violating something holy. (4)

“On My Own”: A Quest to Adapt to the New Environment

Given all the dissonance participants experienced between their U.S. counseling training and the reality of practice in China, it is not surprising that many participants seemed to go through a period of inner struggle. Here Participant 8 shared their struggle with their professional role and identity:

> When I was back in the U.S., I was considered as a counselor. I'm doing counseling jobs. In China … it's no longer pure counseling. Sometimes I … would ponder what is my role, and like, my counselor identity as well, maybe?

Other participants shared reflections on the limitations of their counseling training. Participant 1 observed that “training just lays the foundation” and “is a beginning,” while Participant 2 emphasized that training provides principles only and can’t answer many real-life questions. “Training doesn’t entirely prepare you,” agreed Participant 4, who saw counseling as rooted in “White male dominated culture” and as not well-suited for working with uniquely Chinese cultural aspects.

If training and past experiences couldn’t provide all the answers to the participants’ daily challenges, what would the participants do? For several participants, they were on their own in learning how to adapt to the Chinese context. As summarized by Participant 3, “So the training is enough, but this just helps me to get in the doors. Once you are inside, you need to learn many things on your own.” This “on my own” message was reflected within many of the interviews, where participants implicitly and explicitly expressed not only the felt need but also the sense of being on a quest by oneself to adapt their training to the new environment.

Just as a hero on a quest is tested, the participants experienced dissonance and challenges in counseling sessions, in work settings, and from the larger sociocultural and professional systems they functioned in. But a hero also has allies and inspirations to assist with the quest. The next theme will examine some of the key support and inspirations for the participants as they continued the quest to adapt their counseling knowledge and experience to serve their Chinese clients in the Chinese context.

Theme 2: Actively Reaching for Internal and External Resources to Adapt

This theme describes the participants' experiences drawing inspiration and support from both within themselves and outside resources to aid their adaptation efforts. Two sub-themes emerged from the data: (a) actively seeking training and support, and (b) drawing from internal resources.

Actively Seeking External Resources

In this subtheme, participants shared their experiences seeking knowledge and support from supervisors, peers, and additional training. For many of the participants, the information, connections, and support from these resources are essential for their survival in the new practice environment, and they are willing to invest considerable amounts of time, energy, and financial resources to secure it.

Clinical Supervision. Most of the participants agreed on the importance of supervision. In fact, having a supervisor is so important that they are willing to use their own financial resources to pay for it even though supervision is not officially required (or at least enforced) in China. Participant 3 illustrated this point passionately: "I want it. The school doesn't propel it. They don't give the money for it. It comes out of my own salary." Participant 2 agreed with them while emphasizing the essential role of supervision:

> Even if you need to spend money on yourself, to support yourself to seek out a supervisor, that's still a big need, because you cannot function on your own, or you need to seek someone who can provide supervision or provide some professional suggestion to you. (2)

For many of these counselors, supervision not only helps them with clinical issues, but also assists with an even bigger challenge: adapting to counseling in the Chinese context, as Participant 5 explained: "I think my supervision definitely helped a lot and I spent my whole year in supervision, like really getting into and getting used to working in Chinese culture."

Because of the different theoretical orientations between these counselors' U.S. training and the dominant practices in China, for these counselors a supervisor ideally would possess expertise in both Western training and practicing in China. Often, such supervisors are difficult to locate. "It's hard to find a supervisor here and especially to find a supervisor that fits your training or knows your training background and can connect with that, in terms of the practicing here." (8)

Another challenge in locating supervisors is grounded in the current professional environment in China. Just as there are no nationwide, official licensure systems for counselors, there do not seem to be widely recognized classification systems for supervisors. Supervisees are often left to their own devices looking for supervisors. Participants 2 and 3 found their supervisors through established connections, and Participant 8 attended a peer supervision group to build connections through which they asked for recommendations for a supervisor.

Faced with the double challenge of finding a supervisor in the current Chinese professional environment who is knowledgeable in both Chinese practice and the US training system, participants got creative. This is where individual differences emerge. Participant 2, for

example, sought a China-trained supervisor. Their good relationship with the supervisor convinced them that whether the supervisor was trained in China or trained overseas “doesn’t matter. . . . I deal with Chinese people. She’ll deal with Chinese people. As long as the population is the same, we won't have such, you know, cultural differences.” Participant 4, on the other hand, decided that he would stay with his White supervisor from the United States:

> It’s really hard to find a Chinese-background supervisor that would supervise me. Most of the Chinese counselors who I think [have] . . . at least 20 years I would say experience does not have that sort of exposure abroad.… I'm mostly a CBT EFT therapist and most of the Chinese-based supervisors or counselors with a long tenure tend to be psychoanalytic. This counseling theory sort of incompatibleness, so it’s really hard. I stick with someone from my own experiences, and over the years I guess that’s a good relationship being developed, made me feel comfortable. (4)

These two counselors expressed very different standpoints on supervisors’ preferred qualifications and the importance of supervisor-supervisee theoretical alignment, but they showed the same emphasis on a good working relationship with their supervisors. Both their supervisors also exhibited a high level of flexibility, giving the counselors autonomy to decide what advice to follow or set aside.

Support From Peers. Many of the participants value and actively seek peer support. Peer support can be perceived as falling into two major camps: support from peers with similar training backgrounds and support from peers with expertise working in China. The first camp seems to offer emotional support, a sense of belonging, and a shared counseling language.

> I think one of the things that I find very helpful is just to connect with other people who share similar experiences. And as we just discussed about our experiences and feelings

> together, and sometimes we just complain about it together. Yeah, it's very helpful, even like sometimes some part of it we cannot change it, and like sharing it makes us feel better and make us to be hopeful for the future. (8)

Peers who are trained in China, called "Chinese peers," "Chinese colleagues" or "local counselors" by the participants to distinguish them from U.S.-trained Chinese counselors, offer a set of knowledge and skills that are essential for working in the Chinese context. One participant comments on the importance and challenges of reaching out to this group:

> But I have to put me out and you know, I have to learn from different stories. So I have some school counselors' Wechat groups. The school counselors, most of them are from China, got training in China. So I tend to keep track even though I don't talk much sometimes. But I keep track on what they shared and try to, you know, to learn something from their stories. And to get exposure to you know how different this could be. (5)

Participant 5 is not alone in belonging to different counselor groups. The participants interviewed in this study tended to have memberships in multiple peer support groups, be it workplace peer meetings, online counselor groups, or peer supervision groups. These groups provided support, professional connection, and information from peers trained both in China and overseas, thus meeting the multilayered needs of the participants.

> I have, like many Wechat groups about counseling and I saw many people like, you know, just volunteer really to form a book-reading group or you know, just focused on certain orientation or training. Yeah, they just, you know, start groups themselves. (6)

Peer supervision provides a good example of the function of such support groups. Utilized by several of the participants in this study, it serves as a creative way to get additional, often complementary, supervision support on top of the existing clinical supervision structure.

Participant 4, for example, has two peer supervision groups that meet bi-weekly with counselors currently practicing in China to complement their individual supervision with their U.S. supervisor.

Additional Training. In addition to supervision and peer support, three participants also sought additional training to improve their clinical knowledge and skills. There is a preference for U.S. training over Chinese training:

> They are all training programs from the U.S. Even the summit, the conferences are all held in the U.S. That's some trainings in in China, but I feel some are not as advanced. (3)

A participant working in the private sector, a Chinese online counseling site, felt intense pressure to pick up more skills and certifications via training in order to be more competitive on the job.

> It is unique, also the unique differences, maybe because when I went back, especially when I started to create the job at (Chinese online counseling site), I felt like a lot of other counselors have so many backgrounds with continued education and trainings. Yeah, it's kind of feel competitive. (8)

Drawing from Internal Resources

Participants also search within themselves for inspiration, information, and support in their efforts to adapt to practice with Chinese clients in China. One such source is their cultural heritage and personal experience as a Chinese person growing up in China. Reflecting on their first work experience with Chinese clients, Participant 4 observed that "I would not imagine myself if not grown up in Chinese culture and being very, very fluent in Chinese [that I could]

adapt to that environment so quickly." They went on to describe the importance of being a cultural insider when doing counseling with Chinese clients:

> The very subtle aspects of culture, like when they were seeking approval, like their tendency of wanting to get things done or get results at the very beginning phase of therapy, I made those connections, because I'm from that culture and I've seen that in my life and I've seen that in my personal experiences in that culture. So it's not entirely impossible for people who haven't had exposure to realize that, it just needs a little bit more time, I think. (4)

Another heavily drawn upon resource for the participants is their personal experiences living and studying abroad. For some of the participants, this experience was instrumental in shaping who they are today personally and professionally. For example, Participant 8 described the impact of their lived experience in the United States:

> Maybe for me … the most important part … I think not from training, but more from maybe the study abroad experience as a whole, for me to learn how to work or how to communicate with different people and how to see from their perspectives. (8)

In addition to lived, personal experiences, participants draw heavily from their past training and work experiences in the United States as inspiration for their current work in China. The training that serves as inspiration seems to be the approaches or perspectives that have been crystalized and fully accepted by the participants. These internalized perspectives serve as a guiding star across clinical settings to help the participants overcome external barriers and connect with their clients. For Participants 3 and 8, for example, it is the humanistic/ person-centered perspective. As explained by Participant 8, "I think my training helps me more in terms of perspectives and like the humanistic part, … instead of the techniques or methods." For

Participant 7, it is the multicultural perspective, which allows her to connect with clients and develop empathy. On the other hand, for Participant 2, whose training experience in the United States seemed disappointing and confusing, it is learning what not to do from the training program: not to be cold, hands-off, and subject clients or students to unequal power status and uncalled-for influences.

To effectively adapt to practicing counseling in the Chinese context, participants drew both from external resources, such as supervision, peers and colleagues, and additional training, and from internal resources such as their own cultural heritage, lived experiences, and internalized counseling principles. Armed with these resources, the participants took deliberate actions to use a wide range of adaptation strategies in their efforts to meet the needs of their Chinese clients and environment, as described in the next theme.

Theme 3: Taking Deliberate Actions as Adaptation Strategies

This theme describes the participants' experiences adapting to the needs of their Chinese clients and environments using a variety of strategies. From accepting the new and different reality of the clients and the environment as they are, to taking active measures to meet clients where they are, to seeing reality from their clients' point of view, to attempting to change that reality when they can, to deliberately choosing clients and environments with best fit, the participants took deliberate actions to meet the needs of their clients, their environments, and themselves.

Accepting Reality As It Is

The participants shared an understanding that they are now working with different client populations in a different environment from their U.S. training context, and that they need to face that reality. However, their emotional responses to this shared understanding were quite varied:

some participants resisted and found this acceptance process challenging, while others readily embraced the new reality. Participant 5, for example, accepted the reality with a sense of sarcasm and resignation:

> They're expecting you to have some kind of like magic power to … see you only once, and the[n] pop, they are fine. How can I do that? I don't even know. Yeah, yeah, it's a reality. (5)

Sometimes, acceptance came after some inner struggles and external consultation, as reported by Participant 8:

> But some of the clients still are confused or like, not ready to accept that fact.… I was … trying to accept that I cannot change them to believe or accept that part. So maybe some of them will, like, pause and not continue the counseling. And it's understandable. I also discussed with the counselors here…. So they also believe it's a step that the clients need to take. What we can do is just to inform them, trying to … accompany [them] while they are learning this, but we cannot really change what they are thinking. (8)

For some participants, on the other hand, acceptance is a professional stand, a natural extension of the counseling training:

> At that time, we were talking, this is what you learned from school, but when you go to work, you need to first understand your agency and its policies. If I expand this, when you go to a new culture, a new society, you need to learn their requirements and expectations for counseling, rather than stubbornly insist. (1)

Participant 2 went one step further, believing that the reality of practicing in China is the real reality, the one that matters, as compared to classroom learning that can't answer many of

life's real questions. "I really realized that there are lots of questions that cannot be answered in class, but can be answered in the workplace."

Taking Actions to Meet Chinese Clients Where They Are

The participants went beyond merely accepting the clients and the sociocultural environment as it is, passively. They took active actions to meet the needs of their clients and environments. This could mean learning new knowledge and skills to better serve Chinese clients or to be more competitive in the local job market. Participant 5, for example, talked about having to learn Chinese school-related laws on her own for her job as a school counselor: "I have like Chinese laws, like all those books in my office right there. I have to read it. I have to remember it just in case something happens." Participant 6 also did additional reading on her own to meet the needs of her adult private practice clients. "I feel like … it's important to … read some books my clients read or like learn more terms about like how certain languages they're using in the Chinese context."

Many participants shared their experiences seeking training, supervision, and advice from Chinese experts, supervisors, peers, and colleagues to increase their culturally specific knowledge and skills in working with local Chinese populations, as detailed in Theme 2 results.

Some participants adjusted their existing counseling styles or approaches to meet clients where they are. Participant 4, for example, talked about how they varied their counseling approach based on clients' levels of awareness of and openness to addressing deeply culturally rooted issues such as dealing with abusive parents.

> So with the higher awareness, high-level readiness group it is easier. Sort of you just help them to see the differences between their family experiences and what constitutes maybe a healthy family relationship.… But with the low level of readiness, … just help them to

> understand what they feel is right, instead of wrong, because [otherwise] they will … justify [their parents' abuse].

A common adjustment shared by multiple participants involves providing more psychoeducation and more specific suggestions to meet clients' expectations:

> One thing I'm using for my counseling session with local clients is that I make sure when I finish the session, I provide them with some techniques, because you can see that they come for some sort of solution, suggestion, or something. (3)

Some participants even expanded their personal style to better fit the environment. Participant 3's self-reflection provides a good example of this. "I usually am the person who prefers to, you know, stays with my own, being with myself. But I have to put me out and you know, I have to learn from different stories."

Some participants talked about holding their personal beliefs in check and learning to compromise. Participants 4 and 8 described inner struggles with some deeply rooted Chinese values that clashed with their personal and professional values, and deciding to choose their battles depending on the circumstances.

> A lot of patients, when they contact me for the first time, they also call me doctor, [and] I ended up spending a lot of time explaining I'm actually not a doctor. And there are some of them that are still calling me that, even though I try to explain to them. I'm like, okay I'm just gonna let it go. (4)

> Being treated as a professional by others instead of a learner or person who is still learning, … I have to balance that. Sometimes if I don't feel safe to disclose that I'm still learning, I have to maintain that expert role. (8)

Taking the Native Perspective

Many of the participants adapted not just in action, but in attitude by seeing the world from their clients' perspective. In doing so, they formed a deeper understanding and connection with the clients and their environments. Participant 7 delved deeply into this issue. They shared a breakthrough in session when they truly saw the context in which the client functioned, and thus understood the client's actions as a logical reaction to their environment, with the client as an active agent making the best of their situation. This understanding broke down their previous assumptions about this type of Chinese clients and allowed them to see clients as individuals rather than stereotypes. Inspired by their new understanding of their clients, Participant 7 criticized some of the Western-trained counselors' perspectives and attitudes towards their Chinese clients:

> I feel like … it is oversimplifying to talk about Chinese clients as …just a one thing, one entity, one population. … I feel like there's a lack of compassion … when you talk about this in Chinese clients in a very general way. Almost like … they are somehow less aware about their mental health, they are somehow less psychologically minded, they're somehow more fitting into the stereotypical type of a person. (7)

Participant 8's sharing provided a good example of seeing from the clients' perspective on the preference for framing sessions as education rather than counseling, an issue that was raised by multiple counselors as being different from their US training and as posing a challenge:

> I think in the client side, maybe they don't know or haven't been prepared about mental health. And also going into or seeing a counselor is different, I think, in terms of norms of learning counseling, learning psychology because, … it get[s] rid of the stigmatizing part. Like you're trying to learn, you're trying to develop yourself instead of you're having issues and having to see someone to deal with that issues. (8)

Changing the Clients and the Environment

In addition to accepting, understanding, and making efforts to fit in with existing systems, many participants took active actions to influence the clients and environments when they could, or considered it important to do so. One way to do this is through *Introducing new concepts, behaviors and relationship styles.* Participants educated their clients about the roles, rules, and boundaries in counseling as they practiced it. "I have to, you know, explain what therapy is, what my role is, what should I plan for, what should the client expect from me. … I have to, like, keep reminding them." (5) They "explain" counseling as new perspectives, concepts, and mindsets. Participant 7 likened it to a socialization process. "It is like in the context of counseling, I socialized the client so he knew what his thoughts were."

> At the beginning, I explained what the counseling was … why we are here and like, what is my approach. I feel like that's an important part of psychoeducation, to let my Chinese client know, … what are some things we're doing here?... I did some psychoeducation about, like, you know, "I expect you [to] talk more about your issues, and I'm just here to help you, you know, guide us through the process. I'm not like a teacher here teaching you." I also explain why directly giving them advice won't work. (6)

Several participants worked actively to change the work environment. In the case of Participant 5, it was changing students' attitudes towards mental health and counseling through an active campaign and reaching out. In other cases, when participants felt that their core values and ethical principles were violated or threatened, they fought the existing systems to do the right thing. An example mentioned above explained how Participant 8 fought with the school administration to intervene in a child abuse case. The following example is a counselor fighting against unethical practices at work:

> The agency she worked with sells counseling packages to clients that they have to purchase and the agency … tell the counselors, "You have to nudge them to buy more packages or to purchase more sessions."… She resigned after practicing for one year. Before she resigned, she told the client that she's going to resign. About the packages, she talked to the client that she wants the client to get a refund as soon as possible or, you know, try to seek alternatives. Don't buy the package anymore.

Finding Best Fit

Like the counselor in the above example, at least three out of the eight participants interviewed resigned from their previous workplace due to value clashes or ethical concerns. The participants chose new work environments and client populations that fit their training, values, and work styles as an effective adaptation strategy. It wasn't a coincidence that three out of the eight participants work in an international school environment, four work in online counseling formats, and only one works in a Chinese organization, in this case, a very progressive, highly resourceful private school. These environments reflect the participants' unique position in Chinese society, with their roots in both the Chinese and U.S. counseling cultures.

Outside the workplace, participants took active measures to form their own professional communities, often with counselors with similar training backgrounds. Some participants attended gatherings with other returning counselors who were trained overseas in order to build connections. Others formed peer support groups with counselors with similar backgrounds. And all participants joined online communities with counselors trained within and outside China. As commented by Participant 1, these self-formed communities are a key adaptation strategy because of the sense of community, belonging, and hope they provide to the participants, who had been searching on their own to adapt their U.S. counseling training in a new environment.

"These years … I found that we have some returned counselors' professional groups.… There are more and more counselors, colleagues, so you don't feel that lonely anymore."

From accepting, adjusting to, and understanding the Chinese clients and environment, to changing, choosing, and forming new environments, participants utilized a wide range of strategies to adapt to the Chinese context where they practice counseling. Such deliberate efforts changed the participants both professionally and personally. The next theme addresses these changes.

Theme 4: Experiencing Professional and Personal Growth Connected to Adaptation

Through tapping into internal and external resources, overcoming multisystemic dissonance, and developing a wide range of adaptation strategies, the participants grew professionally and personally in the process of adapting counseling to work with Chinese clients in a Chinese context. Two sub-themes emerged in the data: (a) increased flexibility, compassion, and self-reliance, and (b) blazing one's own path.

Increased Flexibility, Recognition of Client's Individuality, and Growing Self-Reliance

Several professional and personal changes stood out as commonly experienced by the participants. First, the participants seemed to share a sense of increased flexibility, although they had different interpretations and practices in this regard. For Participant 1, the flexibility was reflected in increased practicality and client focus in counseling. "I am getting more practical, paying more attention to what works with the client, rather than using a theory or intervention of my personal conviction to change or support them. I am more flexible to see the individual needs." For Participant 2, it was the increased ability to see and respect others' perspectives. "I found out that there are people who endorse certain thoughts that I personally don't agree with. That's … what shapes them. So I better respect them." For others, it was the willingness to

accept reality as it is and make compromises if needed. "But sometimes we need to learn to compromise, to take a step back. This takes as much courage and perseverance as charging forward." (3).

Related to this flexibility is the participants' heightened awareness of clients' individual differences, the participants' different fit with different client groups, and the overall acceptance of these differences. As Participants 5 and 7 stated, "after these two years [of working in China], I realized people are different. And each each person has their own culture." (5) "What works with clients of this site will not work with clients from other referral channels. We are not on the same channel. The brain circuits are not working together." (7)

The participants also shared a sense of independence, confidence and self-reliance about their counseling and adaptation ability. "It makes me more clear about what I want." (1)

> I say, my U.S. experience gives me a sense of … this solid feeling. Because right now, if I encounter a situation like the one I encountered in undergrad, I wouldn't feel so conflicted. I would trust my own judgment. And that gut feeling, I would trust my own discomfort. (7)

Blazing One's Own Path

It seems that in their quest to adapt counseling to the Chinese context and adapting themselves to do counseling there, the participants found their own unique ways to adapt and further grow. Participants 1 and 2 were convinced of the importance of rooting their counseling practice in China's unique sociocultural context, while Participants 3 and 4 became more aware of what they termed their "third point perspective": "Just personally it gives you a very third point perspective. You're not involved in one of them [US counseling or Chinese cultures]." (4) And Participant 6 became committed to become fully bilingual in both Chinese and U.S.

counseling languages and cultures. Meanwhile, Participants 7 and 8 relied on the humanistic and diversity-informed aspects of their training to understand and connect with their Chinese clients and environments. Participant 5 summarized the challenges and triumphs, and the flexibility and resilience shared by all participants in this challenging yet rewarding process. "It's not easy, but I think I'm enjoying it right now. . . . I'm always like in the middle and you know, like just switching between. I think that may have caused me to be able to survive."

This theme has shown the professional and personal changes that accompanied the participants' adaptation efforts. The participants shared a sense of increased flexibility, deeper understanding and connection with clients, and increased sense of self-reliance. Given all this professional and personal growth, it is not surprising that participants are forging their own paths with increased confidence and professional sophistication.

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of U.S.-trained Chinese counselors providing mental health counseling to serve clients in the Chinese context. As counseling is increasingly promoted and adopted globally in recent decades, scholars are paying more attention to the cultural appropriateness of applying counseling, which is rooted in Western culture, in non-Western contexts (e.g., Duan 2019). This study seeks to contribute to this dialogue by examining the lived experiences of international counseling graduates (ICGs), in this case, U.S.-trained Chinese counselors, as they applied their U.S. counseling training to serve clients in a sociocultural context vastly different from that of the West.

Overall, data analysis revealed four interpretive themes that described how these counselors, facing a wide range of multisystemic dissonance between their U.S. counseling training and their practice in China, actively reached for internal and external resources and took

deliberate actions to adapt to the Chinese context. In this process, they experienced increased flexibility, empathy for their clients, and growing self-reliance. These themes brought to light both similarities and contrasts with studies in the extant literature.

The participants' experiences of encountering multisystemic challenges adapting U.S. counseling training to the Chinese context bear similarities to other studies of ICGs returning to their home countries to practice. At the same time, their experiences provide much richer descriptions of the multilayered and multifaceted dissonance between the ICGs' U.S. counseling training and their home country practice. The limited number of studies on returning ICGs' experiences highlighted language barriers (Duenyas et al., 2021; Jung et al., 2013; Lauw, 2017), different systems in work settings (Duenyas et al., 2021), client expectations (Jung et al, 2013; Lauw, 2017), and cultural value clashes such as "lack of familiarity and congruence between the culturally influenced system and counseling or group work" (Taephant et al., 2015, p. 84). The participants in the current study expressed similar experiences, and also pointed to other dissonance between the US and home country systems, such as the lack of an established system of support for their work with at-risk clients or vulnerable populations in China; this rendered their knowledge of the U.S. mental health system inapplicable and left them struggling on their own to meet the legal and ethical duties they had been trained to perform in the U.S. Overall, these results confirmed with practical examples the concerns expressed by scholars about the context-specific, culture-specific, and language-specific nature of counseling, as well as the dangers of unexamined transplanting of U.S. counseling (Cho, 2019; Ng & Noon, 2012).

The theme of actively reaching for internal and external resources to adapt also shared similarities and differences with extant research. Taephant et al. (2015) is the only study found in the extant literature on ICGs that addresses internal resources. It provided an in-depth description

of how Western-trained Asian group leaders utilized their experiences in the West, understanding of native cultures, personal characteristics, and beliefs about group work as inner resources to help them face the challenge of leading groups in Asia. The participants in the current study also reported drawing inspiration, information, and support from their knowledge of the native culture, personal experiences living and studying abroad, and learning from their U.S. counseling training. A few participants mentioned personal characteristics similar to those shared in Taephant et al. (2015)'s study, such as compassion for and commitment to clients, but overall the participants didn't highlight personal characteristics and beliefs about counseling as key internal resources. It is possible that as most of Taephant et al.'s study participants held doctoral degrees in counseling and psychology, taught at the university level, and served as leaders and advocates for group work, they were personally and professionally more identified with counseling and group work, and showed a deeper belief in and connection with their profession. The participants in the current study, on the other hand, held Master's level degrees and were at a relatively early stage of practicing counseling.

In terms of external support, the participants in this study were highly motivated and active in seeking knowledge, information, and support through individual supervision, peer supervision, and additional training to aid in their adaptation efforts. While extant literature addressed the importance of support networks or professional networks for ICGs, none went beyond that to richly describe the other sources of support, such as supervision and training (Duenyas et al., 2021; Jung et al., 2013; Lauw, 2017). And none addressed the dual needs of ICGs to stay connected with both their counseling training in the West and their current environment of practice. The fact that the participants in the current study developed creative ways of obtaining support from both Western-trained and locally-trained counselors, often

through a combination of individual and peer supervision and additional support networks, can provide inspiration for other ICGs who desire support and community.

The theme of taking deliberate actions as adaptation strategies covers a wide range of participants' adaptation strategies. For ease of explanation, these strategies can be divided into three major approaches. The first is accepting reality as it is and working with what one has. Compared with extant literature, the current study provided a more multilayered and nuanced description of this approach, sharing ICG experiences ranging along a spectrum from a feeling of unhappy resignation that one must simply accept the imperfect and immutable reality of the home country's existing counseling practice; to earnestly believing that working within the parameters of local rules and expectations is the right way to do counseling; to taking positive action to adapt counseling styles to meet clients where they are; to really taking the native perspective by seeing the world from their clients' viewpoints and understanding that their clients' decisions (whether adaptive or maladaptive) are informed by the sociocultural contexts in which they function. The various aspects covered in this approach shared some similarities with existing studies on ICGs. For example, June et al. (2013) described "accepting reality, having patience, not being in a hurry to change quickly, and trying to do the best in any given situation" as a coping strategy for Korean reentry counseling professionals. Lauw (2017) summarized "being flexible and adapting to meet the requirements of the working environment" and "making culturally appropriate adaptations" as key coping strategies for internationally-trained returning Singaporan music therapists. And Duan et al. (2011) discussed modifying methods and techniques of existing counseling theories to fit local cultures, as well as changing counselors' roles and approaches to meet local clients' needs.

The existing literature has less to say about the other two adaptation approaches identified by participants in the current study: changing the environment and finding best fit by choosing and forming new environments. One of the very few studies that described ICGs' active efforts to change their environment is Lauw (2017), which reported participants using advocacy to promote awareness of music therapy and to fight workplaces' unreasonable expectations. The participants in the current study focused their battles on related but distinct grounds: to promote the way to do counseling that they believed to be right or ethical. In counseling sessions they proactively defined and implemented rules, roles, and norms about counseling with their clients. At workplaces, they fought against role confusion and negotiated firmer boundaries over their roles and responsibilities to protect counselor-client relationships. They reached out to workplace management, parents, and social agencies to find ways to protect abused children. At times, they resigned from employment to protest unethical practices in work settings. These efforts reflected the participants' self-definition of their roles and responsibilities as counselors based on their U.S. training and their need to "stay true to one's professional beliefs" (Lauw, 2017, p. 244). These efforts to stay true to one's counseling training and existing professional identity often clash with the new work culture and practice environment in the home country. The participants' deliberate decisions to fight to change objectionable aspects of the work environment, to compromise with them, or to leave to seek out or create a new work environment reflect both key adaptation strategies and an ongoing struggle to negotiate between their counseling training culture and home culture.

The last theme addresses the impact of this ongoing struggle. The participants have faced multilayered challenges to adapt to "this familiar but foreign environment" (Lauw, 2017, p. 244), reached within and outward for support and resources, and experimented with a wide range of

adaptive strategies. In this process, they tried to balance previously held professional beliefs and identities based on their U.S. counseling training and the needs of their local Chinese clients in the Chinese context. What has emerged from these efforts and struggles are changes to their personal and professional identities. Participants initially reported feeling challenged and alone in this endeavor, a sense of "on my own" or "one person fighting against the system." Some used the term "in the middle" to describe the experience of not fully belonging to either the US counseling training side or the Chinese side. These experiences echo the "where do I fit" theme in Duenyas et al. (2021). Later, participants reported increased flexibility, acceptance, and self-reliance, growth shared by other studies of ICGs (Jung et al., 2013; Lauw, 2017; Taephant et al., 2015).

The participants' sharing, however, adds novel descriptions of their personal and professional changes, in that the participants reported a new recognition of their Chinese clients' individuality and began to question stereotypical thinking about their home clients and culture embedded in their U.S. counseling training. They also found their own styles and paths in the ongoing effort to "transfer or translate what they had learned to their home context in a workable way" (Taephant et al., 2015, p. 90). These paths vary from aligning with the norms and expectations of the Chinese context, to applying U.S. counseling principles and perspectives to the Chinese context, to becoming fully bilingual and bicultural and being able to shift between, to developing a "third point perspective," a new perspective that goes beyond both U.S. counseling culture and Chinese culture. This incorporation of an individualized approach that transcends stereotyped thinking about the home culture and clients, together with the employment of strategies adapting Western counseling training to the home context, seem to

mark the development of a new generation of international counselors who are culturally aware, context-aware, and self-aware.

Implications

There are multiple implications identified in this study for counselor educators, international counseling students and graduates, as well as for future research on internationalization of counseling. Counselor educators could utilize the results and descriptions to develop their own awareness of the applicability and limitations of U.S. counseling training in a non-U.S. context. They could also utilize the information to adjust their teaching practices to better meet the needs of diverse student populations. For example, they might utilize the study descriptions to deepen their understanding of the multisystemic challenges facing international counseling graduates who return to their home country to practice. When teaching international students who plan to return to their home country to practice, they should call students' attention to these potential multilayered challenges and help them to develop resources and coping strategies during their counseling training. Some key resources suggested by participants in this study are professional networks with counselors in their home countries or alumni who have returned to their home countries to practice. Counselor educators should encourage their international counseling students to seek such professional networks and should consider assisting their counseling training programs to develop international alumni networks. Counseling training programs could further involve their international graduate alumni in training of current international students, inviting them to provide feedback sessions, host workshops, and serve as multicultural supervisors for international students.

As many of the participants experienced language challenges translating or explaining English "therapyspeak" into their home language, counselor educators should encourage

international students to develop language skills and appropriate vocabulary for practicing in their home culture. International students could obtain such language skills through learning from their home country peers, mentors, and counseling publications or counseling training conducted in their native language. Going beyond language, counselor educators should recommend culturally specific training to familiarize international counseling students with the sociocultural framework of their future practice.

International counseling students often have unique perspectives, experiences, and needs that are different from those of U.S. counseling students. In order to effectively serve international students, counselor educators should listen to their concerns, validate their experiences, and try to see their world from their perspectives. Participants in this study highly appreciated counselor educators who involved them in curriculum design and sought their feedback on a regular basis. When students make mistakes due to lack of cultural understanding of the U.S. context, counselor educators should consider the cultural value differences between the students' home cultures and the U.S. counseling culture and use these mistakes as an educational opportunity, rather than applying only punitive measures. When appropriate, counselor educators can turn mistakes into a cross-cultural dialogue.

For international counseling students and graduates, this study provides rich descriptions that might help them to develop skills, resources, and mindsets in preparation for practicing in their home country. They might become aware of the potential sociocultural and systemic differences between their home culture and their U.S. counseling training, actively seek information and support from home country sources, and develop counseling-related language competency in their native language for practicing with native clients. They might also appreciate the importance of support networks and continuing education as key survival

mechanisms for practicing in the home country. This study provides culture- and system-specific information on practicing in China, but its implications go far beyond China to many non-U.S. contexts.

This study is one of the first to explore the lived experiences of U.S.-trained international counseling graduates (ICGs) adapting U.S. counseling training to a non-U.S. context. The ICGs' unique bicultural/multicultural positions and the paucity of extant studies on ICGs' experiences applying U.S. or Western counseling concepts and practices in various non-Western contexts might recommend this population for more intense future studies. For example, studies on ICGs' adaptation experiences in various international settings could shed light on the validity and feasibility of applying U.S. counseling models not only to a specific sociocultural context, but also to international communities as a whole. Cross-cultural comparisons of such counselors' experiences can yield valuable information on counseling approaches or principles that go beyond localized contexts and specific content to address more universal human needs. The current studies highlighted the potential cross-cultural applications of humanistic and multicultural/diversity approaches. Future studies might further explore these approaches' value in different sociocultural contexts or pinpoint other counseling approaches that have cross-cultural applications.

Future research might also explore, compare, and contrast the lived experiences of counselors providing counseling to the same cultural group in the U.S. as compared to in their home culture. For example, studies exploring the experiences of Chinese counselors providing counseling to clients of Chinese descent in the U.S. can be compared to the experiences of Chinese counselors providing counseling to Chinese clients in China. Comparing these study

findings could shed light on the impact of immigration and acculturation processes on clients' mental health needs and cultural values.

Over half of the participants in this study worked in a school setting upon returning to China, even though none of them were trained as school counselors. The rapidly growing field of school counseling in China means more ICGs might work at schools in the future. This has wide implications for counselor educators training international counseling students from China and for the students who receive this training. School counselors perform a variety of roles that often differ from those of counselors in mental health agency settings or private practice, and as a result require specific training and licensure. International counseling graduates who were not adequately prepared to work in schools might encounter an additional layer of challenges as they adapt their clinical mental health counseling training to not only a different sociocultural context in China but also a different professional setting. Future counseling students from China might consider school counseling as their specialty during counselor training. Counselor educators could also utilize the study's findings to educator Chinese students about career opportunities and desired preparation for potential school counselors.

Limitations

This study contained limitations specifically with regard to participant population, transferability, and language differences. All but one participant had practiced counseling fewer than five years post-graduation, and thus participants are still at a relatively early stage of professional development. Further, the present tenure of their practice after returning to China is also short, on average slightly over two years. Their experiences and understanding thus might be different from counselors who have been practicing counseling in general, or specifically practicing in China, for a longer period of time. A related factor is the participants' age. Six out

of the eight participants are younger than 32, belonging to the "born after '90" generation in China. Thus the study results tended to reflect the experiences and perceptions of a specific generation who were trained in the U.S. relatively recently and in practice for a relatively short amount of time. These participant factors, however, are reflective of the recent introduction of professional counseling in China, which is unique in its own right.

The participants also work with a relatively narrow client population in China. Their clients are students and parents in highly expensive private schools and international schools, or clients who can pay the high cost of counseling out of pocket. As one participant explained, a counseling session costs between 4% and 6% of the average monthly income in a metropolitan region in China, meaning that the people who can afford counseling are not representative of the Chinese population. Thus the participants' experiences working with this client population may not be generalizable to the Chinese population as a whole.

Transferability of these results to other contexts might thus be limited by the unique makeup of the participants, their clients, and the developmental stage of mental health counseling in China. As one participant observed in the member checking session, with more and more U.S. or Western trained counselors returning to China each year, they felt that they belong to a growing community. The sense of loneliness and "on my own" shared by the present participants, in the early stage of working in China, might not hold true in the future. This is just one example of the unique context from which participants drew their experiences. To help counteract the potential limitations, this study's results are presented with thick description of participants' experiences, and their contexts are also provided so readers can make their own decisions about these results' applicability and relevance to their own contexts.

Language differences also contributed to the limitations of this study. Seven participants were interviewed in English. Since neither the researcher nor the participants are native English speakers, sometimes participants explained highly culturally specific concepts in Chinese, which were then translated into English by the researcher. One participant felt more comfortable speaking Chinese during most of the interview, so the researcher translated their interview into English and checked with the participant to confirm the accuracy of the translated data during member checking.

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Making Sense of U.S. Counseling Training in Relation to Practicing Counseling in the Chinese Context:

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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Abstract

The global mental health crisis calls for promotion of counseling worldwide. However, the current U.S. counseling model is culture-, language-, and context-specific, and may not meet the needs of the global population. The U.S. counselor training system reflects this counseling model and often fails to prepare international counseling students to work with their home country clients. International counseling graduates (ICGs) often have to make creative adjustments to counseling approaches to ensure that counseling is relevant and useful to their home culture clients. This qualitative study explored how Chinese ICGs make sense of their U.S. counseling training in relation to practicing counseling in the Chinese context. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is the selected research method. Data analysis identified four themes: (a) U.S. counseling training as a cognitive and emotional experience; (b) Beyond the classroom: living experiences in the United States as essential to learning; (c) "A lot of questions can only be answered in the workplace": the Chinese workplace as a testing ground for U.S. counseling training; and (d) "A relearning and reorganization process of past training and experience": making sense of U.S. counseling training in relation to practicing counseling in China. Implications for counselor training programs, counselor educators, international counseling students, and future research are discussed.

Keywords: international counseling graduates, China, counseling training, qualitative

Making Sense of U.S. Counseling Training in Relation to Practicing Counseling in the Chinese Context: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

As the world contends with mounting challenges that now include sustained global conflicts, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for mental health care continues to rise. In fact, mental health disorders constitute the leading cause of disability worldwide. (Collin & Saxena, 2016; Kola, 2020). This situation has spurred intensive international efforts to develop, evaluate, and deliver effective mental health treatment over the years, especially with respect to low- and middle-income countries (Collin & Saxena, 2016). In the United States, the counseling profession has made efforts to promote counseling internationally, collaborate with mental health professionals worldwide, and train counselors to serve diverse populations both domestically and internationally (Interiano & Lim, 2018; McCarthy & Habedank, 2014; Smith et al., 2018).

Meanwhile, there has been an increasing number of international students seeking counseling training in the U.S. For example, from 2012 to 2017, Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) student demographics reports showed a 50% increase in the percentage of international counseling students enrolled in CACREP-accredited Master's programs and a 32% percentage increase in all students (CACREP, 2013, 2018). Many of the international counseling graduates returned to their home countries and became pioneers, leaders, and advocates for mental health post-graduation (Jung et al., 2013; Lau & Ng, 2012).

Scholars have long warned that counseling is not value-free (Marsella & Pedersen, 2004; Ng & Noonan, 2012). An increasing body of research provides empirical support for their argument by highlighting the context-specific, culture-specific, and language-specific nature of

counseling. Foreign-born doctoral students and counselors reported that the intense demand to adopt dominant cultural values based in Western philosophy and certain Euro-American values, such as individualism, could be "a non-negotiable prerequisite to their professional survival and success" in the counseling profession (Interiano & Lim, 2018, p. 318). These students and counselors feel that they have to conform to such cultural norms, which may not align fully with their own cultural values (Attia, 2021). Prior research suggests "knowledge and experience obtained in U.S. counselor education might not be globally relevant," as U.S.-based counselor educators have reported that appropriate knowledge and skills are relative to a specific location when working overseas (Smith et al., 2018, p. 9).

Regarding the language-specific aspect of counseling, Cho (2019) examined how multilingual clinicians work with non-English speaking clients, and discovered that languages embody their respective cultures, represent culturally unique ideologies, and are used in socially specific ways. Therapyspeak, the language of counseling, is a "a specific language system located in a specific historical, cultural, and social location" with its underlying Eurocentric values (p. 140). By being mindful of its usage, and translating it into or explaining it in clients' native languages, multilingual clinicians have come to understand that it is just "one of many systems of knowledge that the counselors then can access and utilize to understand a client's experiences and engage in creative and culturally-relevant problem solving" (Cho, 2019, p. 140).

Similar to the practice of counseling, counseling training in the U.S. reflects the sociopolitical and economic structures, cultural norms, and overarching concerns of U.S. society. In Interiano & Lim (2018)'s qualitative study of international students attending counselor training in the U.S., the participants viewed their training as "grounded in a Euro-American perspective, embracing certain values and professional dispositions that did not always transcend

to other cultures," and felt that they were forced to assimilate into the dominant culture even though it meant letting go some of their own cultural values (p. 317). Nearly all the studies conducted on international counseling students and graduates described the tension between U.S. counseling culture and their home cultures, and the extended and often stressful acculturation process for international students to fit into counseling training programs and the counseling culture in the U.S. The acculturation process in the U.S. is so profound that when international counseling graduates return to their home country, they experience reverse culture shock and have to readjust in order to fit back into their culture of origin (Dyenyas et al, 2020; Interiano & Lim, 2018; Jung et al., 2013; Li & Liu, 2020).

Research shows that the current U.S. counselor training model has been inadequate to meet the needs of non-U.S. populations. Counselors practicing in their home countries after obtaining counselor training in the U.S. report that their U.S.-based programs were "overly focused on western and exclusively American issues and not enough on international and non-American issues" (Lau & Ng, 2012, p. 94). Additionally, there is a mismatch between methods and culture, when some approaches that work well in the country of training fail to work in the home country (Lauw, 2017). Counselors are often left to their own devices to customize and explore how to apply and adapt their training to their home countries and cultures, by "improvising with the best intentions" (Cho, 2019), having to be "creative" in the theories and techniques they use and "making adjustments to therapeutic approaches to honor the cultural beliefs and practices of clients and families" (Kim-Goh, et al., 2015, p.73).

These concerns about the relevance of U.S. counseling training in a global context have highlighted the need to examine its inherent values, assumptions, and expectations, scrutinize its training models and practices, and explore new perspectives and approaches (Marsella &

Pedersen, 2004; Ng & Smith, 2009). This will allow the counselor education system to better meet the mental health needs of non-U.S. clients, as well as the training, professional, personal, and cultural needs of international students (Lau & Ng, 2012). International counseling graduates (ICGs) trained in a U.S. counseling program and practicing counseling in their home countries post-graduation can shed light on this daunting task. Familiar with both U.S. counseling culture and their native culture, the ICGs possesses the knowledge, languages, and cultural understanding to bridge the cultural gaps. As Cho (2019) argued, cultural issues within counseling are best known by those who are living and interacting in these dynamics every day. By observing the role of culture in their U.S.-based counselor training, and by implementing that training cross-culturally in their daily practice in their home countries, the ICGs are well positioned to evaluate the relevance and usefulness of the counseling theories and techniques taught in U.S. counseling training programs to the populations they serve in their home countries.

ICGs come from different cultural backgrounds and have considerable within-group variation. Prior studies report that students from non-Western countries experienced greater levels of cultural conflicts than those from European and Western countries (Interiano & Lim, 2018). ICGs from China serving clients from their native cultures potentially provide a valuable lens for this study. China has a cultural heritage that differs considerably from that of the U.S. (Wu et al., 2016). It has no historical roots for counseling or related mental health professions. Instead, counseling there emerged from non-existence a few decades ago to meeting increasing mental health needs in contemporary society (Duan et al., 2011). Chinese society has increasingly embraced counseling but is also acutely aware of the gap between Western counseling concepts and indigenous beliefs. This has led to a call for indigenization and ongoing

exploration to incorporate traditional values and practices into the practice of counseling (Duan et al., 2011; Wu et al., 2016). The different cultural heritage, recent adoption of counseling, and continuous tension between Western-based counseling models and the Chinese cultural context recommend Chinese ICGs for this qualitative study.

There is a dearth of research conducted on ICGs, and even less on their training experiences. Lau & Ng (2012) is the only (qualitative) study that can be located exploring the relevance and effectiveness of U.S. counseling training programs from the perspectives of ICGs. In this study, participants report that they are not well-prepared by their programs to apply their training to their home country context and have to "do much of their own customizing and exploring how to apply and adapt their training to their home countries and cultures" (p. 98). This echoes experiences shared not only by ICGs practicing in Asia (Taephant et al., 2015) but also by Asian mental health clinicians serving Asian clients in the U.S., who report having to improvise and make adjustments in counseling approaches on their own to make counseling relevant and useful to their clients (Cho, 2019; Kim-Goh, et al., 2015).

Extant literature seems to indicate that ICGs working with home culture clients need to adjust and adapt their counseling training to meet the needs of their home culture clients. What is missing from the literature, however, is an in-depth understanding of how ICGs make sense of their U.S. counseling training in relation to practicing in their home culture context. Do they find the training relevant in their home culture practice? How do they experience the tension between the U.S. counseling training and their home cultural context? If they have to make adjustments to meet the needs of local clients and context, how do they make that decision? What training, professional or personal experiences or other factors do they draw on to craft their "improvisations"? Is multicultural training and practice relevant to these ICGs' work with their

home country clients? This study aimed to answer some of these questions by exploring how Chinese ICGs make sense of their U.S. counseling training in relation to providing counseling to Chinese clients in the Chinese context. It hopes to contribute to the current dialogue in the counseling field about the relevance, applicability and limitations of U.S. counseling training in a global context and help counselor educators to design counseling training programs that better meet the needs of international students and counselors.

Method

This study adopted a qualitative approach to explore how Chinese ICGs make sense of their U.S. counseling training in relation to providing counseling in China. Qualitative approaches are valuable in providing "a complex, detailed understanding of the issue" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 45), especially when exploring areas not yet thoroughly understood (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Specifically, this study utilized interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as its qualitative research methodology. A relative newcomer to the field of qualitative research, IPA is designed to "understand people's lived experience and how they make sense of it in the context of their personal and social worlds" (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 3). IPA recognizes and works with several dialectical aspects of studying human experience. First, IPA is both idiographic and contextual, as it recognizes the uniqueness of "particular experiences of particular people in particular circumstances" (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 8). Second, it aims to "get as close as possible to the lived experiences of participants" (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 4), and at the same time acknowledges that such exploration is the researcher's effort to make sense of the participants' sense-making of their experiences and their world (Smith et al., 2009). By highlighting the complexity of human experiences and the manners in which these experiences

are explored, IPA provides a means to produce a nuanced, in-depth study of human experiences with their complexity, ambiguity, potentials, and limitations. These characteristics of IPA help to mine the wealth of the participants' knowledge and experiences situated in their unique contexts, considering both common experiences and individual differences.

This study is rooted in the Constructivism-Interpretivism research paradigm. Such a paradigm views reality as constructed in the mind of the participants and through the interactions between the participants and the researcher (Ponterotto, 2005). The goal of research is to understand "the lived experiences from the point of view of those who live it day to day" (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 129). This paradigm also embraces a hermeneutical stand, believing that meaning is often hidden from even the participants themselves, and so needs to be brought to the surface through deep reflection or exploration (Ponterotto, 2005; Smith & Nizza, 2022). IPA's theoretical underpinnings align closely with this paradigm.

Researcher Positionality and Research Assumptions

This researcher was born and raised in China and came to the United States as an international graduate student. When they attended a counseling program in the United States, they experienced both the support and warmth from the faculty members and the loneliness and social isolation shared by many international students. Because of the strong memories attached to their own counseling training, they did extensive self-reflection, consultation with their advisor, and a practice interview with a peer to understand and bracket their own emotions and assumptions towards U.S. counseling training.

Participants and Setting

A homogenous sample is recommended for the detailed exploration of a shared experience (Smith & Nizza, 2022). The following criteria were adopted to ensure that

participants selected are sufficiently homogenous and shared a meaningful experience (Smith et al., 2009): 1) self-identified as Chinese; 2) lived in China until completing high school; 3) graduated from a Master's level counseling program in the United States; and 4) work with Chinese clients in China after graduating from the counseling program.

This study utilized purposeful sampling to identify the desired homogenous sample, as is common in IPA (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022). This researcher reached out to a professional network of global Chinese mental health professionals and utilized referrals from contacts for further participant recruitment. In terms of sample size, IPA emphasizes "a concentrated focus on a small number of cases" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 51). Smith et al. (2009) recommends four to 10 interviews while Smith & Nizza (2022) aims for 10 to 12 participants. In the current study, the researcher recruited eight Chinese ICGs who work with Chinese clients in China as participants.

Six women and two men volunteered for this study. Seven out of eight of the participants are younger than 32, belonging to the "born after '90 generation in China. The remaining participant belongs to the "born after '80 generation, who are between 33 and 42. The participants all hold a Master's degree in counseling from the United States, with the majority specializing in Clinical Mental Health. They have on average practiced counseling for 3.5 years post-graduation. One exception is the participant who was still in the counseling program during recruitment but completed their counseling training during the data collection. This participant worked with Chinese clients in China via online platforms for the past two years during counseling training and had been actively examining the U.S. counseling training's applicability to the Chinese context with peers and professional contacts. Therefore, they were deemed qualified for this study.

On average, the participants have around 2 years' experience working with Chinese clients in the Chinese context. Seventy-five percent (six out of eight) of the participants live and work in China, in or around major metropolitan areas. Twenty-five percent currently reside outside China and provide online counseling for their Chinese clients; one of these two had previously returned to China before moving back to North America.

Table 1

Participants' Demographic Information

	Gender	Age/Generation	Practice Location	MS Counseling Speciality	Practice Setting (with Chinese clients)	Total Years in Practice	Total Years in Practice with Chinese clients
1	Female	<42	Central China	MFT	Chinese private school/private practice.	4	1
2	Female	<32	Southern China/ online	CMHC	international school/online private practice	4	2
3	Female	<32	Central China	CMHC	international school/private practice	5	3
4	Male	<32	Overseas/online	CMHC	private company/private practice	7	4
5	Female	<32	Southern China	CMHC	Chinese company/international school	5	3
6	Female	<32	Overseas/Online	CMHC	online platform	2 during training	2 during training
7	Female	<32	Central China	CMHC	Chinese company/private practice	5.5	7 months
8	Male	<32	Central China	CMHC	Chinese private school/online private practice	4	2.5

Data Collection

Semi-structured, one-to-one interviews are the preferred method for gathering data in IPA studies because it allows researchers to build rapport, encourage meaningful reflection from participants, and engage in in-depth conversations with the participants (Miller et al, 2018; Smith et al., 2009). In this study, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview with each participant lasting between one and 1.5 hours. This was followed by a 40-50 minute member-checking interview near the end of data analysis to get participants' feedback on the data analysis results and to clarify any remaining questions. Interviews were conducted via Zoom. With participants' consent, all interviews were recorded and later transcribed by the researcher.

The central research question guiding the proposed study is: **"**How do U.S.-trained Chinese counselors make sense of their training in relation to practicing counseling in the Chinese context"? Sub-questions are:

1. How do the counselors make sense of their U.S. counseling training experience?
2. How do the counselors make sense of the relevance of their U.S. counseling training in relation to practicing counseling in China?
3. Have the counselors experienced tension between their U.S. counseling training and their Chinese practice context? If so, how do they make sense of it?
4. Have the counselors experienced the need to make adjustments of their training in relation to practicing in China? If so, how do they make sense of it?
5. What has changed in the counselors' understanding of their training after they start practicing in China?

Smith et al. (2009) recommended IPA interview questions to be open and exploratory, focusing on how participants make sense of their lived experiences. Miller et al. (2018) further pointed out that compared with traditional phenomenological research questions, IPA questions

tend to be more concerned with "the *how* than the *what* of a given phenomenon (p. 244). Following these principles, the interview questions are:

1. How do you make sense of your U.S. training experience?
2. How do you make sense of the relevance of your U.S. counseling training in relation to practicing in China?
3. Have you experienced tension between the U.S. counseling training and the Chinese practice context? If so, how do you make sense of it?
4. Have you experienced the need to make adjustments of your training in relation to practicing in China? If so, how do you make sense of it?
5. What has changed about your understanding of the training after you started practicing in your home country?

In addition, the participants were asked the following questions prior to the interview:

1. Gender, nationality, age group, any identity characteristics that are relevant to the experiences being studied,
2. What is your training background?
3. Where do you work? What is your professional identity? Professional roles?
4. How many years have you been working as a mental health counselor?
5. How many years have you been working with clients in your home culture?

Data Analysis

Miller et al. (2018) summarized the following focuses for IPA data analysis: exploring how participants make meaning of their experiences within their unique contexts, examining each case thoroughly before moving on to the next, and paying attention to convergence and

divergence in data by illuminating the commonalities and differences in participants' experiences.

Following these focuses and the IPA data analysis procedure outlined by Smith & Nizza (2022), this study utilized a multi-step process in its data analysis. Step 1 focused on immersing in the transcript by carefully reading and relistening to the interview recording, and making "exploratory notes" (Smith & Nizza, 2022, p. 32). The exploratory notes included notes that described the content of participants' sharing, used language analysis to mark areas of significance, and recorded the researcher's reactions, comments, and exploratory questions. Steps 2 to 4 produced and organized experiential statements to arrive at a table of personal experiential themes, which summarized the key findings for this particular participant. Only after a thorough data analysis was done on one participant did the researcher move to the next one, following the same steps described above. After all participants' interviews were analyzed separately, the researcher examined common patterns and identified individual differences, leading to the creation of group experiential themes (GETs) which guided the writing of the study results.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the rigorousness of qualitative research (Morrow, 2005). Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified four criteria for qualitative research trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Together, they measure whether the research findings reflect the "true value" of the participants' experiences, allow readers to decide whether they can apply the finding to their own situations, remain consistent from time to time, researcher to researcher, and can be confirmed by "the confirmability audit" (p. 318). To meet

these criteria, this study utilized researcher reflexivity, peer debriefing, member checks, thick description, and an audit trail to ensure trustworthiness.

Researcher reflexivity has been emphasized by multiple scholars as a key strategy for achieving trustworthiness. They recommended reflection memoranda as a formal means to conduct and record self-reflection (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marrow, 2005; Smith and Nizza, 2022). In addition to maintaining memoranda throughout the research process, this researcher engaged in extensive reflective discussions with their advisor and an hour-long interview by a peer using the research questions presented above to identify assumptions and potential biases (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) called member checks "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). Accordingly, the researcher conducted member check interviews with all participants, during which they presented the study results, asked for participants' feedback, and verified the credibility of such results. To further ensure credibility, peer debriefing was conducted by a doctoral candidate trained in IPA, who examined the data, read through the manuscripts, probed potential research biases, and inquired into methodological issues (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Thick description has been identified as the essential tool to ensure transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This researcher provided detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences, perspectives, and contexts, and utilized extensive quotes from participants to provide details that should be sufficient enough to allow the reader to make their own judgment as to the applicability of the findings to their own situations. An audit trail is often utilized to meet the demands of the dependability and confirmability criteria for qualitative research

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study kept a record of all the raw data, reflexive notes, data analysis processes, and member check reports as part of the audit trail.

Results

Four themes emerged from data analysis of how participants make sense of their U.S. counseling training in relation to providing counseling in the Chinese context. First, the participants identified both cognitive and emotional aspects of their experiences during their U.S. counseling training as being significant later when providing counseling in the Chinese context. Second, the participants described the substantial role their lived experiences in the U.S. played in their overall learning experience as counselors. This lived experience was not part of the formal U.S. counseling training but complemented that training in laying the foundation for the participants' future experiences providing counseling in the Chinese context. Third, the participants reflected on both the applicability and limitations of their training when providing counseling in the Chinese context. Finally, the participants made sense of their training in relation to providing counseling in the Chinese context.

Theme 1: U.S. counseling training as a cognitive and emotional experience

The participants described experiences of their U.S. counseling training in relation to providing counseling in the Chinese context, highlighting aspects of the training that made a significant impact on their later practice in China. Participants emphasized different aspects of training, some focusing more on the cognitive side, others more on the emotional experiences. As a result, two sub-themes emerged from data analysis: (a) training as a cognitive experience and (b) training as an emotional experience.

Training as a Cognitive Experience

Participants highlighted three areas of cognitive learning during their U.S. counseling training that significantly impacted their counseling practice in the Chinese context: laying a foundation, instilling ethical principles, and providing new perspectives. They also addressed an aspect of training that was lacking: preparing them to work with non-US populations and environments.

Participants credited their U.S. counseling training as providing them with a foundation for their professional identity development and counseling practice. However, they differed as to the scope and impact of that foundation. For example, Participant 4 considered their training to have laid a "very good foundation on the essentials" and to have provided "all the tools" they needed for practice. But for Participant 1, "I think the training just lays the foundation. It is a starting point." For Participant 2, who didn't find their training highly applicable to their work in China, U.S. counseling training mainly provided ethical "principles":

> They prepared us in two biggest aspects. The first one is that they make us very principled. I feel like this is the most successful aspect of our training, … we put the benefits of our clients at the top.… And another thing is the ethics aspect. We strictly follow the ethics, or even if ethics does not cover this area, we still go back to client benefits as the top [priority]. Or we try. (2)

For some participants, the counseling training was valuable because it provided them with new lenses to view and understand the world. For Participant 4, U.S. counseling training gave them a unique perspective which then allowed them to perceive their culture of origin, the Chinese culture, with a new and deeper understanding. Furthermore, this exposure to two different cultures allowed them to develop a third perspective that goes beyond either culture:

> My training gives me a very specific perspective for understanding human emotions, and understandings. I do sort of use that perspective as to sort of see things the way it is.… When you go around, when you sort of set up your standpoint in a different culture, you start to look back… I guess it makes something you appreciate more and something you don't like more. Just personally it gives you a very third point perspective. You're not involved in [either] one of them. (4)

Other participants highlighted various cognitive aspects of training that significantly impacted them, such as humanistic perspective for Participant 8, multicultural/diversity perspective for Participant 7, and self-care, self-compassion, and self-awareness for Participant 6. These learnings not only provided guidance in these participants' counseling practice, but also anchored them through challenges in new environments when they started working with Chinese clients in the Chinese context. Participant 8's comments demonstrated the importance of the new perspective:

> I value [the training] very much and I think it gave me a lot of perspective.… The most part of value, this humanistic part or the person-centered part of it.… I think that's also the most needed part in China.… because I feel like counseling is not only about techniques and methods, it is more about … building up relationships and giving support or help as a person to another one. (8)

Training as an Emotional Experience

While multiple participants focused on the cognitive learning aspect of counseling training, some participants highlighted the emotional aspect as one of the key defining features of their counseling training experiences. Participant 5 found their training highly satisfying, not only because of the extensive clinical training and the opportunity to participate in research and

conference presentations, but also because of the emotional support they received during the counseling training:

> I think I definitely enjoyed a lot. I feel really appreciating, like what I've learned … because I definitely received a lot of support from my grad school program. All the professors were really, supporting and all my classmates were really supportive. (5)

Participant 6 also emphasized the emotional support they received during training, only this time the most significant support came from the training program's Chinese alumni network and fellow counselors-in-training. "I have to say like, I feel like one of the most important things I got from [university name] is it's the alumni network, the peer support for all my classmates."

The strongest emotional experiences came from Participants 2 and 7: one found the training program professionally and personally validating and affirming, while the other found it demoralizing and disappointing. For Participant 7, the multicultural/diversity learning and work experience with diverse clients in the United States validated their previously held beliefs and provided a sense of belonging and "centeredness" that was previously lacking. This experience provided guidance and strength in their later practice in China:

> My U.S. experience gives me a sense of … this solid feeling. Because right now, if I encounter a situation like the one I encountered in undergrad, I wouldn't feel so conflicted. I would trust my own judgment. And that gut feeling, I would trust my own discomfort. … I think my training program [...] validated in so many ways about like advocacy or advocate for clients in integrated care setting. (7)

For Participant 2, however, there were elements of the training that seemed almost traumatic. They shared experiences of international students making mistakes due to lack of cultural attunement to the U.S. context and feeling that the training program was not on their

side. Confusion, disillusionment, and anger set in when training program faculty members took on an authority role and expected certain behaviors or thinking. These experiences inspired them to provide a totally different experience for their clients in China and to embrace the Chinese work setting and culture wholeheartedly:

> Because the program or teachers, lecturers in the program … definitely take a position that they know more about the professionals.… Sometimes they know more about what to do about the students, … a senior, more authoritative figure to the students than being equal to students.… What we train was that we need to take an equal position with a client. Right? But when we receive education, this is actually not the case. So I have to say, this will cause students some pressure, because … we were not treated as … we were trained in the program. (2)

In this theme, participants highlighted various aspects of their U.S. counseling training that had a significant impact on their later practice in the Chinese context. The next theme addresses another area important to their practice in China that was not covered by the formal counseling training: their lived experiences in the United States.

Theme 2: Beyond the Classroom: Lived Experience in the United States as Essential to Learning

This theme described the participants' experience of the importance of their lived experiences in the United States as contributing to their professional development. Such lived experiences are not part of counseling training or conscious learning. Rather, they are the by-product of training overseas. For some participants, however, these experiences constituted some of their most important learning experiences.

Some participants identified the exposure to a bigger, more diverse world through living and studying in the United States as one of their most significant learning experiences. Participant 7 described how this exposure expanded their perspectives and enlarged their world: "I think it's [specific U.S. location] and all the work settings I interned or worked in …. I think it's that exposure. It's that I think to see that there is world beyond your previous life experience." For Participant 1, the overseas experience provided a sense of clarity: "It makes me more clear about what I want."

Participant 8 also highlighted the importance of exposure to a bigger, more diverse world, attributing it to their development of confidence and skills in handling new and challenging situations:

> I feel like … the most important part [of learning is] not from training, but more from maybe the study abroad experience as a whole, for me to learn how to work or how to communicate with different people and how to see from their perspectives.… So working with different clients, I can try to like, see from their perspectives as well. So I wouldn't have too maybe strong emotional reactions. (8)

Half of the participants spent a key developmental stage (18-22+) in the United States pursuing undergraduate and graduate studies. This experience seemed to contribute to their development of distinct perspectives and identities that are different from their home culture. Here Participant 3 tried to make sense of this experience:

> Those of us who are trained in the U.S. and profoundly influenced by the Western counseling culture all share characters with Third Culture Kids. I view [specific US location] as an important part of my own identity. My life [there] influenced me positively when I was forming my own values and worldviews at age 19. (3)

For the participants discussed above, their lived experiences in the United States provided an essential supplement to their formal counseling training in forming their values, worldviews, and professional identities. They then returned to China to practice, where their learning from both training and lived experiences was tested in complex real-life situations. The following theme discusses how they further make sense of their counseling training through the vantage point of practicing in China with Chinese clients.

Theme 3: "A lot of questions can only be answered in the workplace": the Chinese workplace as a testing ground for training

The participants put their counseling training in the United States to the test when they started practicing in the Chinese context. This theme describes how they experienced and made sense of their training in that environment. Three sub-themes emerged from data analysis. The first describes participants' experience of their training in terms of goodness of fit with the Chinese context. The second is a specific focus on the participants' experiences and perceptions of the limitations of the training in relation to providing counseling in the Chinese context. The third describes participants' sense of necessity and urgency to pursue further training and support in order to meet the demands of the Chinese context.

Experiencing Various Levels of "Goodness of Fit" between Training and Practice

The participants' experiences and perceptions of the "goodness of fit" between their U.S. counseling training and the needs of their Chinese clients varies considerably. On one end of the spectrum is Participant 4, who described their experiences and faith in the applicability of counseling training concepts and skills across cultural contexts:

> The basics are the same. For example, I [am] still using the same exploring questions with the low level of readiness clients. I would do mostly reflective, it's again ow[ing] to my education and my trainings and my practicum. (4)

It should be noted that Participant 4 was also acutely aware of the cultural aspects of counseling and emphasized the importance of combining counseling training "basics" with cultural awareness to meet clients' needs. On the other end of the spectrum, Participant 2 emphasized a double dichotomy, noting that U.S. counseling training is rooted in a different cultural background and that counseling as taught in the classroom inevitably differs in some respects from on-the-job learning:

> I realized that counseling is a very culturally specific profession, that you work with a client, and clients are impacted by their cultural background and their family background all the time. So, I think if we receive counseling in another cultural background, there's definitely a need that we adapt what we learn to where we work.… I also realized that what we received in the classroom is probably different from what we received in our workplace, because classroom is, you know, classroom, a workplace is a professional place, then their needs are different. What they deal with are also different.… I really realized that there are lots of questions that cannot be answered in class but can be answered in the workplace. (2)

Other participants seem to fall somewhere in the middle. Some acknowledged the considerable cultural differences between U.S. counseling training and practicing in China, but also believed that they could rely on the humanistic or multicultural perspectives they gained in the training to guide their practice in China. Here Participant 7 explained how they applied the multicultural perspective to see Chinese clients' individuality and learn from them:

> So if you're in the US and say that diversity, cultural humility, understand people from other racial cultural background, and how is that transferred to now work in China? I am Chinese, everybody, we are also Chinese. But [we] are so different, people are so different. … I learned many things from my clients. (7)

Yet other participants observed that there is a better fit between the training and certain client populations. There seems to be a consensus that it takes less adaptation to work with children and youth in China than adults. Participant 1 observed that "there is not much in working with children, not too many differences between the two sides [U.S. and China] than I will think there are in working with adults." Participant 2 attributed this better fit to the fact that children and youth are more open and influenceable by their environment, which supports counseling:

> Those kids are pretty open. They're malleable, malleable, and if … school encourage[s] everyone to talk to counselors, time after time, then the kids really follow…. So the kids are really … open to advice and suggestions from the school and also they are happy to have someone who is willing to listen to them.

In contrast, several participants described experiencing bigger challenges working with Chinese adults. In the following sub-theme, cultural differences between U.S. counseling training and participants' practice in China were given as one of the factors limiting the effectiveness of counseling training if applied without adaptation in the Chinese context.

Experiencing Limitations of Training

Participants talked unanimously and extensively about the limitations of applying U.S. counseling training in their Chinese practice. These limitations are generally due to (a) cultural differences between the U.S. counseling training culture and Chinese culture, (b) the U.S. and

China's different mental health systems, (c) differences in the U.S. and Chinese professional counseling fields, and (d) lack of culturally specific training for working in China.

Limitations due to cultural differences. Many participants reported experiencing two different cultures in their training and practice: the "Western culture" in which their U.S. counseling training was rooted and the "Chinese culture" in their practice. These two cultures often have different values, norms, and overt and covert rules. Here Participant 4 described how the cultural differences caused challenges in practicing counseling with Chinese clients:

> I find myself adapting to that very hard, because like I said I was trained in a Western culture.… When I started working with people from Chinese background, people from Chinese culture, it occurs to me that this is a huge conflict between sort of Western culture and therapy rooted in Western culture and then there's the Chinese culture. (4)

Participants shared various aspects of the cultural differences, from value clashes to counselor's and client's different expectations and behaviors in counseling, to different workplace expectations and counselor role definitions. These differences often led to role and boundary confusion and frustration on the parts of both counselors and clients. Participant 1 shared their challenges in counseling sessions due to different expectations between clients and the counselor based on cultural differences:

> But in my work, the client is used to treating you as an authority figure, expecting that you can give very good solutions to their problems. But for me I am more inclined to have a collaborative relationship between us. This I feel is an adjustment, that is, the expectations of the client and what I am used [to] for my role as a counselor. (1)

Limitations due to System Differences. These limitations arise due to the vastly different mental health and social systems in China and those systems in the U.S., under which

many of the assumptions in counseling training were developed. For example, according to their U.S. training, counselors have a legal and ethical obligation to report child abuse. In China, however, there is no mandated reporting law of that kind. Participants who attempted to fulfill their ethical obligation for child protection tended to encounter many challenges. Often, they had to create a new system from scratch, as Participant 8 shared:

> For example, one of the students I've worked with … is receiving kind of domestic violence. And so but I cannot find a way to report that.… The United States, like it's easy, or it's more systematic, though, I know where to go. But in China, I have to first to have a research like where can I like reach out? And then I have to also ask the principals or the school management managers about whether it's okay, because at first like they think it's not that serious or is not worth reporting. So we have kind of a back and forth argument about that. (8)

This is true with many other systems that participants were trained to expect but found missing in China. In terms of the Levels of Care system for mental health, Participant 7 lamented that "Everything I know about America Levels of Care…, I don't have that system anymore." As for the lack of insurance coverage for mental health issues, several participants observed the impact on clients and themselves. Participant 4's quote reflects their dilemma. "I do not have the option to not take private pay. …I think that challenge is how to do that when your clients are paying you really out of pocket even though they can't afford it?" Participant 5 shared a sense of frustration when she compared her training and the reality of her practice in China:

> The challenge part is not about the training. It is about what resources we have in China, right now.… For people with some drug addict[ion]s, because in China is under the charge of the Public Security Bureau, so you have to report that. (5)

Limitations due to Professional Environment Differences. Multiple participants, especially those who returned to China without obtaining a license in the U.S., experienced the limitations of their U.S. training due to system differences in the professional counseling field. The U.S. training system for counselors–completing Master's level counseling training, obtaining supervised practice hours, getting a license–doesn't apply in China. Chinese counselors tend to use extensive training certificates to prove their qualifications and competency in the absence of an official licensure system. Participant 8's experiences reflected the pressure for participants to increase their competitiveness in this professional environment:

> It's like a rush, that I have to do a lot of trainings in order to increase my competitiveness or competence, like in the face value in order to let the client know that I am well trained or trustworthy. (8)

Limitations due to lack of culturally specific training. The participants acknowledged the cultural and system dissonance between U.S. counseling training and their Chinese practice context, and wished that their training programs could prepare them for these differences, or at least give them a sense of the clients and environment they will be working with:

> All my courses are based on like the American population. … like the example that they use in class or … the stats they used in class are … about the United States. And I felt like sometimes I want to know more about what things looks like in China and what [it is] … like working with like Chinese population (6)

Participant 2 described a scenario in which their professor couldn't answer a question about the ethics of encouraging clients to purchase a "package" of several sessions (a common counseling practice in Chinese agencies), and stated with a sense of frustration that "I think 99%

of the program prepares counselors to practice or be competent in the U.S. They don't necessarily know anything about the other country, even Canada."

As a result, the participants were left on their own dealing with culturally specific real-life challenges:

> The training program never taught me how to face students that do not want to come to school and study. The training program never told me you know if someone is addicted to their video games, what should I do with the students? And the training program has never taught me that people tend to think that you have some magic power to change all these students.… The training program taught me how to deal with suicidal ideations or self-harm behaviors, and I'm super good at it, but they never taught me how to do it in a school setting in China, like what the policy in China is. (5)

Limitation due to Language Differences. Closely related to cultural differences are language differences. The U.S. training programs use English to teach counseling, and the participants have to provide counseling in Chinese for their Chinese clients. Participant 5 described their experiences struggling with language issues practicing in China:

> For example, when I first came back because I got all my professional training in the U.S. in English, it was really hard for me to even like find the right word in Chinese to, you know, to just communicate, … I've definitely noticed that I pause a lot in therapy sessions. And at first I get frustrated by my pauses because I cannot find a word, the right word. And I judge myself immediately. (5)

Feeling the Pressure to Pursue Further Training

Given the limitations of U.S. counseling training in preparing the participants to work in China, they felt the need to pursue further learning to guide and support their work with clients. Many named clinical supervision as an essential source of learning and support:

> Even if you need to spend money on yourself, to support yourself to seek out a supervisor, that's still a big need, because you cannot function on your own or you need to seek someone who can provide supervision or provide some professional suggestion to you. (2)

Participants have different needs for supervision. For the majority of the participants, the supervisors ideally should on one hand be familiar with the participants' U.S. training background so they can understand where the participants come from, and on the other hand help them bridge cultural differences in serving their Chinese clients:

> It's hard to find a supervisor here and especially to find a supervisor that fits your training or knows your training background and can connect with that, in terms of the practicing here. (8)

As Participant 8 stated, it is often challenging to find such supervisors. The participants have to be proactive, persistent, or creative in meeting their needs. Several participants used a combination of individual and peer supervision with a mixture of overseas and China-trained counselors to make sure that they connected with both the U.S. counseling training and the Chinese practice sides.

Participant 2, however, felt strongly that it doesn't matter whether the supervisor has any overseas training background: "I have big feelings just like it doesn't matter." For them, the focus of learning was on Chinese clients in China, rather than connecting with their U.S. counseling training. "I don't think there are [cultural differences working with a China-trained

supervisor] because I deal with Chinese people. She'll deal with Chinese people. As long as the population is the same, we won't have … cultural differences."

Another source of learning is continuing education training. Here, individual differences also shine through. Some participants preferred U.S. or other Western trainers while others intentionally chose Chinese trainers to improve their cultural competency. What they seemed to share in common was the significance they attributed to continuing learning. Besides professional growth, the need for additional training is propelled by the demands of the current professional environment, whose lack of a widely-accepted official licensure system seems to make extensive training certificates essential in proving a counselor's qualifications:

> [I] keep trying to have … more education. It is unique [for China] … when I went back, especially when I started to create the job at (a Chinese online counseling site), I felt like a lot of other counselors have so many backgrounds with continued education and trainings. Yeah, it's kind of feel competitive…. It's like a rush, that I have to do a lot of trainings in order to increase my competitiveness or competence. Like in the face value in order to let the client know that I am well trained or trustworthy, something like that. (8)

In this theme, the participants shared a wide range of experiences and perceptions applying their U.S. counseling training to their practice in China. They also named multisystemic factors that limited the training's applicability. The next theme takes into account all of the experiential and contextual elements described in the previous themes to address how the participants make sense of their U.S. counseling training experiences in relation to their practice in China.

Theme 4: "A relearning and reorganization process of past training and experience": Making Sense of Past Learning and Future Paths

This theme describes the participants' sense making of their learning in the United States, from both formal counseling training and lived experiences, in relation to practicing in China. The participants came to a general consensus about what their U.S. training experiences meant to them, but with different understandings of where to go from there.

The participants all agreed that their U.S. training experience laid the foundation for their practice today. It informed their core beliefs in counseling and professional identity. They also agreed that their U.S. counseling training was far from enough to prepare them to work effectively with Chinese clients in China. The participants seemed to have identified two main reasons for the training's limitations: the vastly different sociocultural contexts between the United States and China, and the training programs' failure to prepare them for these differences, as covered in the last theme. Several participants also attributed the training's limitations to the nature of counseling learning. Participant 1 stated, for example, that "counseling is a continuous process of practice and learning." Participant 3 shared this perspective:

> I feel like my training propelled me to become a very, like I said, an entry level professional.… So the training is enough, but this just helps me to get in the door. Once you are inside, you need to learn many things on your own. (3)

The metaphor used in the above quote vividly captured many of the participants' sense of needing to find their own paths forward. However, the paths explored by the participants seem to differ, reflecting their individual history, core beliefs in counseling, and different training and work experiences. For Participant 1, it included further learning about the local environment:

> At that time [in the counseling program], we were talking, this is what you learned from school, but when you go to work, you need to first understand your agency and its

> policies. If I expand this, when you go to a new culture, a new society, you need to learn their requirements and expectations for counseling, rather than stubbornly insist. (1)

Participant 2 shared this stance and emphasized the importance of learning from work experience. “Maybe I used to think this training is not perfect. But then I felt like training is only training and what shaped you is professional experience.”

Participant 6 firmly believed in the significance of learning from both the U.S. and China sides. “I tend to get more knowledge from both sides. Like I definitely continue learning something in English but I tend to prefer … books or … trainings in Chinese, just trying to get familiar with different language system more.”

Other participants relied on their U.S. training-based tools and perspectives combined with their own cultural awareness and understanding to work with Chinese clients and environments. Participant 4, for example, talked about training giving them all the tools, but added that “it is the level of understanding, the cultural awareness [that] gives you a very important perspective of which tools should I use.” For Participant 4, this intentional selection of tools and perspectives propelled them to “merge” the two cultures to form an “enhanced” perspective:

> The therapy language we speak is English, so the therapy culture we understand, it’s very American, White based, Western based. It’s only after we started to go back to the Chinese culture we started … to merge two things: that therapy language we speak and the cultural language we speak. We’re starting to merge in our own way and form, I guess it’s not new but it is enhanced perspectives, some understanding of how to help our clients. (4)

In the process, the participants seemed to develop a shared sense of independence, self-reliance, centeredness, and confidence. Participant 8, for example, shared that despite all the environmental pressure for them to take more training to remain competitive in the workplace, they remained centered. "It is still more about enriching my experience.… just to do it in my pace…. It's still more about myself." Participant 1 shared this sense of knowing who they are and what they want, stating that the overseas and adaptation experience "makes me more clear about what I want."

Participants also shared an increased attitude of openness and flexibility, reflected in the acceptance of and rootedness in reality rather than an ideology. They recognized more of the individuality of their clients and became more patient and compassionate with themselves and others. Participant 1 observed that "I am getting more practical, paying more attention to what works with the client, rather than using a theory or intervention of my personal conviction to change or support them. I am more flexible to see the individual needs." Participant 2 extended this sense of openness to fellow counselors or people who want to become counselors: "Currently, I … no longer regard the diploma as … the credentials for their potential. I started to view people as more equal." Participant 3 added a personal piece, sharing that "after I started this job [in China], I became more peaceful, calm. Before, maybe I'm like, 'Oh, I want to be happy.' … But now I feel calm."

In the relearning and reorganization process during their practice in the Chinese context, the participants accepted the limitations of their U.S. counseling training and found their own unique paths to continue the learning journey to make counseling useful and relevant to their Chinese clients. They also grew professionally and personally with increased openness, flexibility, self-reliance, and centeredness.

Discussion

This study aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of how U.S.-trained Chinese counselors make sense of their counseling training in relation to providing counseling in China. It explored the lived experiences and perceptions of Master's level counselors who serve Chinese clients in the Chinese context after obtaining counseling training from a U.S. counseling program. This study represents an important step toward understanding how U.S.-trained international counseling graduates experience, understand, and make use of their counseling training in a non-Western context. No previous studies have specifically focused on these experiences and perspectives of U.S.-trained Master's level international counseling graduates. This research gives an important voice to counselors who navigate cultural differences in their everyday practice and has many implications for the future practice and research of counselor education.

One of the key features of this data is the diversity of experiences. The participants certainly shared common experiences, which included attending counseling training in the United States as international students and providing counseling to Chinese clients in the Chinese context. All but one returned to China to practice counseling there after obtaining counseling training in the United States, with the remaining participant seeing Chinese clients remotely from the U.S. On the other hand, the participants' individual circumstances, experiences, and viewpoints are vastly different. Thus, this study paid attention to both common patterns and idiosyncratic differences, and by doing so, hoped to show respect to the distinct experiences unique to each participant as well as their shared struggles, strategies, and triumphs.

With regard to how the participants make sense of their U.S. counseling training in relation to their current practice in the Chinese context, the participants shared a general sense of

their training as providing a foundation for their current practice and acknowledged that the training was far from enough to prepare them for providing counseling in the Chinese context. A major reason for the training's limitations in getting the participants ready for practice is the multilayered dissonance between the training and the Chinese practice context. For example, in counseling sessions, the participants experienced different client expectations about counseling and behaviors towards them than what they had been prepared for by their U.S. training. The sense that they were treated as an authority figure like a doctor or a teacher and were expected to provide education or quick fixes ran counter to the basic assumptions of counseling as taught and practiced in the United States. This culturally based attitude towards counseling and counselors was often reflected in their Chinese workplaces' expectations of participants, causing role and boundary confusions for the participants. System-based dissonance also caused great concerns for the participants. The lack of mental health and social systems in China that assist counselors in working with abused children, clients in mental health crises, low income clients, and other vulnerable populations challenged many of the assumptions and expectations in counseling instilled in the participants during their U.S. counseling training.

These lived experiences provide practical illustrations to the current dialogue over the context-specific and culture-specific nature of counseling (Cho, 2019). They tend to corroborate the experiences of U.S.-based counselor educators working overseas who questioned the relevance of the knowledge and experience obtained in U.S. counselor education in a global context (Smith et al., 2018). This study further illustrates the context-specific and culture-specific nature of U.S. counseling training. Existing studies on international students in U.S. counselor education programs reported participants' experiences of their training as reflecting a Euro-American perspective and embracing certain values and professional dispositions that may

not always translate to other cultures (Interiano & Lim, 2018). Findings from the current study confirm this and further highlight the system barriers that may pose obstacles to international counseling graduates practicing in vastly different mental health and social systems than those of the United States.

Another reason why U.S. counseling training failed to prepare participants for working in the Chinese context seems to be the training programs' emphasis on U.S. sociocultural and political concerns and inattention to cultural and practice issues in non-U.S. contexts. Most of the participants were not made aware of the sociocultural context in which they would be working in China, not to mention any preparation for it. In some instances, when students brought practice questions specific to working in China, their teacher didn't know how to answer them. This caused one participant to decide that "a lot of questions can only be answered in the workplace." These findings are similar to those of Lau and Ng (2012), whose participants raised concerns over the "American-centric training" that "overly focused on western and exclusively American issues and not enough on international and non-American issues" (p. 94). Lau and Ng (2012) encouraged international students to think of potential challenges that they may face upon graduating and returning home while in the training program. Based on the participants' experiences in the present study, this would be more likely to happen if students received focused advice and information geared to this topic during their training program. But it seems that ten years after Lau and Ng flagged this issue, there has not been much improvement in U.S. programs' focus on non-U.S. issues and preparation of international counseling students and graduates for working in a non-U.S. environment.

Given the cultural and systemic dissonance between U.S. counseling training and practice in China, as well as the training programs' emphasis on U.S.-specific context and content, how

relevant is the U.S. counseling training to practicing in China? This study's results show a wide range of experiences and perceptions by the participants. On one end of the spectrum is the view that the counseling training gives the counselor all the essential tools needed to provide counseling in the Chinese context, provided that the counselor knows which tools to use in what situations based on their cultural awareness. On the other end of the spectrum, U.S. counseling training is viewed as providing mainly ethical principles, leaving the counselor to find their own answers to practice questions from the workplace in China. Others fall in between, experiencing considerable cultural and system challenges in their practice, but feeling that they could rely on their understanding of Chinese culture and training-provided tools and perspectives to cope with them. Some of the tools and perspectives highlighted by participants are the person-centered/ humanistic approach, the multicultural/diversity perspective, relationship building with clients, and attending to clients' sociocultural contexts and unique needs. Several participants talked about modifying their existing approaches and taking on new approaches to meet clients where they are.

It seems safe to say that despite their different theoretical stands, participants resemble each other in using strategies that allow them to see from the clients' or the local environments' perspectives, build connections with clients, and meet clients where they are. This mindset and practice of increased openness and flexibility to meet clients and environments where they are share similarities with other studies on Western-trained mental health professionals who returned to their home country to practice (Jung et al., 2013; Lauw, 2017). Meanwhile, the participants' experiences adapting existing counseling styles and approaches informed by counselors' cultural awareness corroborate the experiences of Asian and Asian American mental health professionals working with Asian populations in Asia and the United States as reported in the literature. This

illustrates the necessity and value of meeting clients where they are through an accepting attitude, an open and flexible mentality, and an adaptive practice informed by cultural awareness when working with international or immigrant clients.

Even with an adaptation attitude and practice, the participants had varying levels of success in their practice. It seems that client populations and working environments significantly impacted the participants' experiences providing counseling in China. For example, participants reported less dissonance between their U.S. training and their practice in China when they worked with children and youth, who were reported to be more open towards counseling, and when they worked in settings that aligned with their training-informed values, counseling styles, and ethical standards. Half of the participants worked for Chinese mental health agencies or schools when they first returned to China, and they all resigned within fewer than two years due to clashes in values, ethics, or working styles. In the end, most of the participants chose to work in private practice, where they had more control over their work environments and working styles. Two participants are currently working for international schools run by foreign organizations with similar values and attitudes towards counseling as the participants' U.S. counseling training. This finding provides novel contributions to the current literature, as it demonstrates the real world "goodness of fit" challenges between U.S. counseling training and practice in China. As a result, U.S.-trained international counseling graduates like the participants occupy a unique professional niche that is not yet fully incorporated into the Chinese practice environment. The fact that this study produced such a finding could be due to China's unique sociocultural context, the current developmental stage of China's counseling profession, or the fact that this is one of the very few studies on Master's level counselors practicing in a non-Western context. The majority of the existing studies on Western-trained reentry mental

health professionals focused on doctoral level participants, who tended to take on more teaching and research roles in their home country rather than working full time as clinicians.

The participants' unique position in the Chinese counseling profession intensified their common sensation of being on their own without adequate support or preparation. Education-wise, they were not well prepared by their U.S. counseling training or work experience to practice in China, as discussed earlier and supported by existing studies (e.g., Lau & Ng, 2012). Culturally, as many existing studies point out, international counseling students often have to go through an acculturation process to fit into the U.S. counseling field. When international counseling graduates return to their home country, they often have to go through another acculturation process, a "reverse cultural shock" (Attia, 2021; Interiano & Lim, 2018; Lauw, 2017). System-wise, many of the support systems they were trained to use and rely on do not exist in the Chinese context. Work setting-wise, there are very few existing workplaces in China that fully align with their U.S. training-based values and working styles in counseling. It is no surprise that one participant described their work experience as "one person fighting against the universe." Lau & Ng (2012) discussed how the training left the participants "to do much of their own customizing and exploring how to apply and adapt their training to their home countries and cultures" (p. 98). This study contributes to the scholarship by highlighting the contextual factors facing international counseling graduates, as well as the multilayered challenges of adapting U.S. counseling training in a global context.

The participants in this study actively sought supervision and continuing education as they searched for ways to adapt counseling to the Chinese environment. The intentionality and intensity of their support and knowledge seeking was not previously addressed in extant literature, as most of the existing studies focused mainly on networking as a common coping

strategy for international counseling graduates working in home countries (Duenyas et al., 2021; Jung et al., 2013; Lauw, 2017). In addition, the participants intentionally and painstakingly included learning sources from both the U.S. and China, often through a combination of individual and peer supervision as well as professional networks to achieve this goal. Because of their proactivity in seeking support and continued learning, the participants are well on their way to finding their own paths for further learning. From learning more local rules and norms, to studying to be fully bilingual and bicultural, to implementing their internalized training models in the Chinese context, to finding their own way by reaching beyond the confines of the counseling field or the confines of a specific culture, the participants showed creativity, resourcefulness, dedication, and self-reliance in blazing their own professional paths. These aspects of participant experiences as active learning agents and path blazers haven't been given enough attention in the extant literature, so it is hoped that these findings will provide resources and inspirations for international students and counselors who often feel that they are fighting their own, lonely battles in adapting counseling training to their home cultures.

Implications

The descriptions and results of this study could be beneficial to counselor educators and international counseling students and graduates, as well as for identifying fruitful future research in the application of U.S. counseling training in a global context.

Counselor educators might utilize the descriptions in this study to gain awareness of the possible dissonance between U.S. counseling training and the practice environment of a non-U.S. context. They might also examine the unspoken values, assumptions, and norms embedded in counseling as taught and practiced in the United States. In teaching, they might use the study's descriptions to demonstrate counseling's inherent values and assumptions and how different

values and assumptions between counselors and clients can lead to intense clashes in counseling sessions. They could also alert students to the potential contextual limitations of their counseling training and assist students to develop the independent thinking and flexibility essential to their role as counselors. McAuliffe (2010) argues that counselor educators need to prepare students as well as themselves for the complexity of the work by developing a way of knowing that emphasizes flexibility, openness, cultural relativity, and reliance on internal rather than external guidance. The descriptions and findings of this study provide real life examples demonstrating both the importance of such skills and practical methods of obtaining them.

Beyond awareness, knowledge, and skills, counselor educators might be inspired by the research findings to more actively diversify their teaching methods. They could expand their teaching content by incorporating different perspectives or counseling practices from non-U.S., non-Western cultures. They might reach out to diverse students from the United States or to international students in the training program to listen to their voices and needs and adjust curricula or teaching strategies to meet these needs. They could engage their students in dialogues on counseling's applicability in different sociocultural contexts. They could demonstrate cultural humility by acknowledging the limits of their expertise, and by actively reaching out to seek additional resources and training.

U.S. counselor educators working with international students should call to the students' attention potential dissonance between U.S. counseling training and their home cultural context. They should help these students make plans in preparation for the potential challenges they may face upon returning to practice in their home countries. They should encourage these students to seek additional support and resources to improve their cultural and language competency working with home country or culture clients.

U.S. counselor educators might utilize the training experiences shared by the participants to gain further understanding of international counseling students' unique perspectives, needs, and challenges. They should make sure that international counseling students' voices are heard in curriculum design, classroom discussion, and disciplinary actions when mistakes are made.

International counseling students and graduates might benefit from the study results in a variety of ways. They might gain insight into U.S. training programs, the additional learning that results from lived experiences, the many layers of potential challenges upon returning to their home country to practice, strategies to cope with training's limitations, the potential language barriers explaining counseling concepts to clients in their native language, and the importance of learning from both U.S. training culture and their home culture.

Future research could further explore the applicability of U.S. counseling training in other international sociocultural contexts. A collection of rich data from various cultures/countries could shed light on the validity and feasibility of applying U.S. counseling training worldwide. Qualitative research methodologies such as IPA could be highly useful in these pioneering studies.

Currently, extensive research has been conducted on international counseling students. This study highlighted both the value of and the need for further exploring the experiences of international counseling graduates, since studies of this population add additional layers of cultural translation and adjustment to real world practice and context as compared to international students. Research can explore the experiences of international counseling graduates in different U.S. and non-U.S. cultural contexts and within different specializations. Studies comparing the experiences of international counseling graduates working with clients from their home culture in the United States versus in the setting of their home countries might

produce meaningful insights both into multicultural learning in the United States and into internationalization of counseling in a non-U.S. context.

Limitations

This study contained several potential limitations related to language differences and transferability. With regard to language differences, the researcher and the participants are all native Chinese speakers using English to discuss counseling issues related to Chinese clients or the Chinese context. Sometimes the participants would speak Chinese to better explain a concept or phenomenon, and the researcher later translated this into English. The researcher checked in with the participants during member checking about the accuracy of the information being shared and translated.

Transferability of these results to other contexts may be limited due to several reasons. First, China has a unique sociocultural context that is rapidly changing. The data collected now might not reflect the Chinese counseling practice context a few years back or forward. Second, all but one participant have practiced counseling fewer than five years post-graduation, and thus are still at a relatively early stage of professional development. Their understanding of counseling training and their own professional trajectory might change as they deepen their practice. Third, the participants have only been practicing in China for an average of slightly over two years. Their experiences and understanding might be different from counselors who have been practicing counseling in China for a longer period of time. Fourth, due to the lack of insurance to cover mental health services in China, the participants in their private practices only work with private pay clients. Participants who work as school counselors work in very expensive international or private schools. As a result, their clients are not representative of the general Chinese population. Thick description of the research context has been utilized to

counteract these limitations, allowing readers to make their own decision as to how these results may apply to their context.

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Chapter 4: General Conclusion

General Conclusion

Chapter 4 summarizes and integrates the researcher's two dissertation research studies that explored the lived experiences of U.S.-trained Chinese counselors who provide counseling in the Chinese context. The two studies are companion analyses examining different aspects of the study participants' adaptation experiences. Both manuscripts utilize the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative methodology whose emphasis on examining human experiences closely in their unique contexts makes it highly applicable to this dissertation (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

One of the key features of the data is the participants' diversity of experiences despite their core common experience, returning to China to practice counseling after obtaining counseling training in the United States. Once there, however, their individual circumstances, experiences and viewpoints are vastly different. IPA allows the divergence to be acknowledged and the studies to pay respect to the distinct experiences unique to each participant, as well as their shared struggles, strategies, and triumphs.

This dissertation's focus reflects the researcher's long-held interest in whether and how counseling, as taught and practiced in the United States, can be applied to non-U.S. populations in non-U.S. contexts. As a clinician and supervisor who has been working with and training counselors to work with Asian immigrants, this researcher was constantly reminded of both the power of counseling and the limitations of its applications in cross-cultural settings. This researcher has also provided training and supervision to counselors in several Asian countries, but these training and supervision activities were guided by their own assessment of the clients' and trainees' clinical needs based on these individuals' input, rather than by established guidelines in the literature.

As many countries, especially countries in the developing world, have begun to embrace counseling and turn to counselors trained in the United States for information and support, the latter have an ethical responsibility to ensure that the information disseminated fits the local needs and does not cause unintentional harm through unexamined transplanting (Ng & Noon, 2012). Currently, the researcher is not aware of any established practical guidelines or framework on how to apply U.S. counseling to non-U.S. contexts in a culturally informed and responsible manner. In fact, the number of empirical studies that examine the actual processes and impact of applying U.S. counseling models to contexts vastly different from that of the United States is so limited that any such guidelines or framework would have to contend with the lack of a solid empirical grounding. This state of affairs prompted the researcher to examine the lived experiences of U.S.-trained international counseling graduates (from China for these two studies) who apply their U.S. counseling training to their home contexts, as their experiences shed light on the complex dynamics involved in such an application of their training.

Summary of Manuscript 1 Findings

Manuscript 1 explored the participants' lived experiences adapting counseling to the Chinese context. Four themes emerged from data analysis. The first theme described how participants experienced multisystemic dissonance (in counseling sessions, at work settings, in the mental health system, and in the larger cultural/social systems) between their U.S. counseling training and the Chinese practice context. This led them to question their professional roles and responsibilities, and often led to a feeling that they were on their own in their efforts to adapt counseling in the Chinese context.

The second theme explored how the participants reached both within themselves and outside for information, guidance, and support. Internal resources included their own cultural heritage as Chinese and cultural awareness about norms and expectations in Chinese culture, their lived experiences in the United States where they were exposed to a more diverse world, and their past counseling training. External resources included clinical supervision, peer supervision, professional networking, and additional training.

The third theme dealt with how the participants utilized a wide range of strategies and took deliberate actions to adapt counseling to the Chinese practice context. Such strategies ranged from accepting reality as it is, to meeting clients where they are, to taking the native perspective, to trying to change clients and the practice environments, to finding or building the practice environments that best fit their values and needs.

The last theme described the participants' professional and personal growth as a result of their adaptation efforts. Such growth tended to be clustered around increased flexibility, acceptance, self-reliance, and recognition of their clients' individuality. In addition, the participants seemed to be moving along their unique paths to further growth and adaptation.

Summary of Manuscript 2 Findings

Manuscript 2 explored how the participants made sense of their U.S. counseling training in relation to providing counseling in the Chinese context. Four themes also emerged from data analysis here. The first theme involved the participants' emphasis on specific facets of their U.S. counseling training as formative experiences. Some participants highlighted the cognitive aspect of training, such as being provided a theoretical foundation, ethical principles, or unique perspectives through their training. Others focused on the emotional aspects of the training, from feeling highly validated to highly invalidated by their training.

The second theme addressed how the lived experiences of participants during their time in the United States were perceived as essential to their overall growth as counselors. Specifically, some participants shared how the exposure to a bigger, more diverse environment expanded their perspectives, allowing them to see a world beyond their own. These insights served as part of their internal resources when dealing with adaptation challenges in China.

The third theme described how the Chinese practice context served as a testing ground for the participants' counseling learning. The participants experienced a wide range of "goodness of fit" with their work environment in China, but overall they reported experiencing their training's limitations due to cultural and system differences between their training and the practice environment. Many participants also reflected on how their U.S. counseling programs failed to address non-U.S. issues and thus failed to prepare them for the possible challenges they would encounter in China, which led to the pressure to pursue training and support on their own in China.

The final theme examined how the participants made sense of their U.S. counseling training in the context of practicing in China. The participants generally agreed that their training laid a foundation for their practice, but for many of them this foundation was only a beginning. The participants identified different paths to deepening their training to meet the needs of their Chinese clients and environment, while at the same time they broadly shared a sense of increased openness, flexibility, and independence.

Thematic Linkage Between the Two Manuscripts

The two manuscripts tell separate but related stories of U.S.-trained Chinese counselors who provide counseling services to Chinese clients in the Chinese context. One story is about how these counselors adapted their U.S. training to the Chinese context as they built up a body of

interactions with clients, employers, and the environment there. The other is about how these counselors made sense of their U.S. training experiences in relation to providing counseling in China: what, in reflecting on both their training and their lived experience in the United States, they identified as particularly formative, useful, or deficient in the course of their subsequent practice in China. These two aspects can be read as one coherent story, which is how U.S.-trained Chinese counselors tapped into internal and external resources to adapt their U.S. counseling training to the vastly different Chinese context. In this process, they reflected on their past training and experiences and realized that the training provided a foundation but was not enough to prepare them for practicing in China, and that they were blazing their own path in the adaptation effort, which both challenged them considerably and also prompted them to become more flexible, open, and self-reliant.

Limitations

The two manuscripts' Limitations sections focused on transferability limitations due to unique participant and Chinese contextual factors. Limitations due to language differences were also addressed in those sections. In addition, potential researcher biases must be further addressed.

As discussed in the manuscripts' Researcher Positionality and Research Assumptions sections, this researcher was themself an international student who upon graduation worked extensively with Asian populations in the United States. They have not practiced in China, but have visited China many times in the past twenty years, witnessing the rapid changes the country has gone through. They have also provided training in China. Their own lived experiences in training and work, even their own personality and work style, may potentially impact how they interacted with participants, how they analyzed data, and how they decided what to emphasize in

their presentation of data. IPA provides specific strategies to help researchers get close to the data, and this researcher has found them, particularly the linguistic tools, highly useful in allowing them to see the world from the participants' perspectives. Other qualitative research tools to bracket researcher bias, such as research reflexivity, regular checking in with one's advisor, peer review, and member checking are also utilized to improve trustworthiness.

Implications When Both Manuscripts Are Considered Jointly

The Implications sections in the two manuscripts focused on how counselor educators and international counseling students and graduates can utilize the studies' descriptions to inform their training and practice. They also highlighted the potential of international counseling graduates as an important yet understudied population for future research.

The two studies have implications in other areas of counselor training and practice as well. One such area highlighted by the studies' findings is the importance of participants' lived experiences in their overall development as a counselor. Extant studies on cross-cultural short term immersion experiences in the training of counselors and other mental health professionals have found that such experiences can enhance participants' training in cross-cultural competencies and cultural humility, leading to a level of learning that is not seen in other conventional courses (Gilin and Young, 2009). This illustrates the value of immersion experiences in counselor training and merits further research. At the same time, it is vital to understand that students' immersion experiences can be vastly different depending on the length and direction of the immersion. Studies such as Ranz et al. (2015) have delved into short-term cross-cultural immersion programs for students from developed countries such as North America who visited vastly different cultural contexts, often in developing countries. But these experiences are different from those of students coming from developing countries to study for

years in developed countries. While students traveling in either direction confirm an experience of cultural shock, studies of international counseling students report the pressure they feel to adopt U.S. counseling culture's assumptions and norms in order to fit in and survive (e.g., Interiano & Lim, 2018). The different immersion experiences and their impacts on students' professional and personal development need to be further explored and compared to better inform counselor training.

The current studies also provided practical illustrations of the importance of context in adapting counseling cross-culturally. For example, the goodness of fit between the participants' U.S. counseling training and their practice in the Chinese context depended in large part on their specific work settings and client populations. Likewise, recent scholarship has addressed the context-specific nature of counseling as a conceptual matter (Cho, 2019), but few empirical studies thus far have focused on the precise ways in which culturally-specific counseling contexts affect the practice of counseling, particularly in international settings.

Author's Research Agenda Emerging from the Dissertation Experience

This researcher was new to IPA prior to writing the dissertation, but is now convinced of its value and feasibility in cross-cultural studies. Future research ideas emerging from the dissertation experience include utilizing IPA to explore lived experiences of U.S.-trained counselors providing counseling in other non-U.S. contexts. Future studies can also further explore how counseling is utilized to serve the Chinese population. For example, a comparison of counselors' experiences providing U.S. counseling training to Chinese clients in China versus in the United States may yield valuable findings on how sociocultural factors interact with each other to inform counseling practice. Future research can also explore the experiences of China-trained counselors providing counseling to Chinese clients in China and how psychoanalysis, the

dominant theoretical framework practiced by China-trained counselors, has been adapted to fit the Chinese context.

This researcher is also interested in utilizing IPA to explore questions related to specialty-specific counselor training and practice. As a Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT), this researcher would like to explore how counselors apply systemic theory to diverse U.S. populations and international contexts, to contribute to deepening multiculturalism for marriage, couple, and family counseling.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Oregon State University Research Approval Notice

Oregon State University
Research Office

Human Research Protection Program
& Institutional Review Board
B308 Kerr Administration Bldg, Corvallis OR 97331
(541) 737-8008
IRB@oregonstate.edu
http://research.oregonstate.edu/irb

Date of Notification	March 24, 2022		
Notification Type	Determination of Exemption		
Submission Type	Initial Application	Study Number	IRB-2022-1383
Principal Investigator	Deborah J Rubel		
Study Team Members	Rubel, Deborah J; Shi, Yun; Tran, Thang S		
Study Title	A Phenomenological Study of U.S.-Trained East Asian Counselors' Experiences Practicing Counseling in Their Countries of Origin		
Review Level	Exempt		
Exempt Category	Category 2: Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: i. The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; ii. Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or iii. The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by .111(a)(7).		
Waiver(s)	N/A		
Risk Level for Adults	Minimal Risk		
Risk Level for Children	Study does not involve children		
Funding Source	None	Cayuse Number	N/A

DATE ACKNOWLEDGED: 03/24/2022 **EXPIRATION DATE:** 03/23/2027

A new application will be required in order to extend the study beyond this expiration date.

Appendix B

Participants Recruitment Email

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Yun Shi and I am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in Oregon, United States, as well as a doctoral candidate at Oregon State University. I am conducting a qualitative research study and invite you to review the following information:

TITLE OF STUDY: ***A Phenomenological Study of U.S.-Trained East Asian Counselors' Experiences Practicing Counseling in Their Countries of Origin***

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/DISSERTATION CHAIR: Dr. Deborah Rubel, Associate Professor, Oregon State University

QUALIFIED PARTICIPANTS: As a participant in this study, you must:

- Self-identify as East Asian (As defined by the United Nations geoscheme, East Asia includes six countries and regions: China, Japan, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, and Taiwan)
- Lived in an East Asian country and region at least through completion of high school
- Graduated from a Master's or doctoral level counseling program in the United States
- Worked with clients in your country of origin after graduating from the counseling program

PROCESS: Upon successful screening, participants will engage in one initial qualitative interview and one follow-up meeting, conducted via Zoom, geared toward gathering data regarding their personal experience practicing counseling in their country of origin and making use of their counselor training from the United States. The initial interview session will last approximately 60 minutes and the follow-up meeting will last around 30 minutes. Participant names, names of counseling programs, names of work settings, names of cities, and other identifying information will be kept confidential.

Please email shiyun@oregonstate.edu to receive a screening form and a copy of the informed consent. Potential participants are encouraged to use a personal email account for communication to further protect privacy.

Thank you for considering participating in this research opportunity!

Yun Shi, Student Investigator

Appendix C

Prescreen Google Form

SCREENING TOOL (Google Form)

See screen shots of Google Form below:

Did you live in East Asia at least through the completion of high school? *

- Yes
- No

Have you graduated from a counseling program (Master's or doctoral) in the United States? *

- Yes
- No

Have you provided counseling to clients in your home country or region after graduating from the counseling program? *

- Yes
- No

Are you willing to participate in a qualitative research study that involves an initial interview and a follow-up meeting? *

- Yes
- No

Appendix D

Explanation of Research for Participants—Consent Form

Project Title: Making Sense of Counseling and Counselor Training in an East Asian Context: Two Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of U.S.-Trained East Asian Counselors' Experiences Practicing in Their Countries of Origin
Principal Investigator: Deborah Rubel, Ph.D.
Study Team: Yun Shi
Peer Debriefers: Thang Tran
Version: Initial Submission 3/8/2022

We are inviting you to take part in a research study.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to offer insight into the experiences of U.S.-trained East Asian counselors as they practice counseling in East Asia and make sense of their U.S. counselor training in relation to providing counseling in the East Asian context.

We are asking you if you want to be in the study because you meet the following criteria:

- Self-identify as East Asian
- Lived in an East Asian country and region at least through completion of high school
- Graduated from a Master's or doctoral level counseling program in the United States
- Worked with clients in your country of origin after graduating from the counseling program

As defined by the United Nations geoscheme, East Asia includes China, Japan, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, and Taiwan.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide not to take part or to skip some of the questions, there will be no negative consequences. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

What we will ask you to do: There will be an initial interview and a follow-up member checking meeting with each participant in order to acquire adequate data. The first interview will take approximately 60 minutes. The follow-up meeting will take approximately 30 minutes. Interviews will be conducted via Zoom with audio and video recording. This study will take place over approximately a two- month period and your responses will be kept confidential.

Upon filling out the Google screening form, we will set up a time for an initial zoom meeting with you where we will review consent forms and answer any questions you may have regarding the research study. If you agree, the initial interview will take place the same day.

Risks and benefits: The aim of this research study is not to inflict discomfort; however, discussing your experience in practicing counseling and making sense of past training could result in emotional reactions or discomfort. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions: this is about your personal experience. You may choose to skip any question that you do not wish to answer. If you find the process of talking about your experience too difficult, we will stop the interview.

Oregon State University has no program to pay for research-related injuries. If at any time you feel you need emotional support, the researcher will work with you to help identify local clinical counseling referrals. If at any point in the research process you decide you do not want to continue participation in the study, you are free to cease participation immediately.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about how U.S.-trained East Asian counselors practice counseling in East Asia and make sense of their counselor training obtained in the United States. Although there is no guaranteed benefit to participants in the research study, the opportunity to speak about their experiences may prove to be fulfilling and empowering. Societal benefits of this study include contribution to the understanding of how East Asian counselors make sense of and adapt their counselor training in providing culturally responsive counseling to clients in East Asia. This knowledge can be beneficial to current counselors, counselors-in-training, supervisors, counselor educators, and U.S. counselor training programs.

Your answers will be confidential. All information obtained during this research study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. All research records will be stored securely and only the Principal Investigator, Dr. Deborah Rubel, Student Researcher, Yun Shi, and Peer Debriefer, Thang Tran will have access to records. Yun Shi is currently a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in Portland, OR. Federal regulatory agencies and the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (committee that reviews and approves research studies) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. Some of these records could contain information that personally identifies research participants.

There is a chance that we could accidentally disclose information that identifies you. Participant information collected as part of the research, even if identifiers are removed, will not be used, or distributed for future research studies. In any sort of report we make public or is published, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Results will be summarized and reported so that you cannot be identified.

Video/audio recordings are a requirement of this study to participate. Recordings will be retained until completion of research. Following completion of the research, the recordings will be destroyed. All other research related materials will be retained for a minimum of 3 years post study termination.

No identifying information regarding cities of practice, agencies and colleagues will be used. All names, or other identifying information will be removed from transcripts in order to protect participant confidentiality and identity. Participants will receive a letter code in lieu of a name. Participant contact information with the letter code will be kept in a separate, password protected file in OSU Box that is kept separate from transcripts. Transcripts will only have the letter code. To help ensure confidentiality, participants are asked not to reveal any of their identifying information, including the name of their agency or city, in the interviews or any identifying information of anyone else they mention including clients, colleagues, or supervisors during the interviews.

Oregon State University researchers are mandatory reporters. Researchers will be required to report any information disclosed pertaining to potential child abuse to proper authorities. Researchers will also report any threats of harm to self or others. In the event that details are disclosed by participants constituting potential child abuse, identifying information will need to be given to authorities, and/or Child Protective Services (CPS) and reported to the Oregon State University IRB within the required amount of time.

Compensation: There is no financial compensation for taking part of this study.

Study contacts: We would like you to ask us questions if there is anything about the study that you do not understand. The student researcher is Yun Shi and Principal Investigator is Dr. Deborah Rubel. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Ms. Shi via email at shiyun@oregonstate.edu or telephone at 510-220-5876. You can reach Dr. Deborah Rubel, Associate Professor at Oregon State University, at Deborah.rubel@oregonstate.edu or 541-737-5973.

You can also contact the Human Research Protection Program with any concerns that you have about your rights or welfare as a study participant. This office can be reached at (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study. (Verbal consent will be obtained when meeting with the researcher).

This consent form will be kept electronically by the principal investigator for at least three years beyond the end of the study.

Appendix E

Interview Schedule

SCREENING GUIDE QUESTIONS:

1. Does the potential participant self-identify as East Asian (As defined by the United Nations geoscheme, East Asia includes six countries and regions: China, Japan, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, and Taiwan)?
2. Did the potential participant live in East Asia at least through completion of high school?
3. Has the potential participant graduated from a counseling (Masters' or doctoral) program in the United States?
4. Has the potential participant provided counseling to clients in their country of origin?
5. Is the participant willing to participate in a qualitative research study that involves an initial interview and a follow-up meeting?

To qualify as a study participant, all questions must be answered "yes".

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. What is your age?
2. How do you identify in terms of gender?
3. What is your nationality?
4. Where do you work (school, university, medical facility, community mental health agency, private practice, government agency, etc.)? What is your role and responsibilities at work?
5. How many years have you worked as a counselor?
6. How many years have you provided counseling to clients in your home country?
7. Please tell me about your counseling training in the United States. Was it a Master's or doctoral level program? A CACREP program?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Manuscript 1:

1. What is your experience adapting counseling knowledge and techniques from your training in the U.S. counseling program to work with clients in China?
2. When did you first experience the need for adaptation?
3. Can you give me an example when you adapted counseling knowledge and techniques from your training to work with your client?
4. What factors influenced your adaptation experience?
5. Were there challenges about the adaptation experience? If so, what were they?
6. How has the adaptation experience evolved over time?
7. How has the adaptation experience impacted you personally and professionally?

Manuscript 2:

1. How do you make sense of your U.S. training experience?
2. How do you make sense of the relevance of your U.S. counseling training in relation to practicing in China?
3. Have you experienced tension between the U.S. counseling training and the Chinese practice context? If so, how do you make sense of it?
4. Have you experienced the need to make adjustments of your training in relation to practicing in China? If so, how do you make sense of it?
5. What has changed about your understanding of the training after you started practicing in your home country?

Appendix F

Example of Data Analysis Steps 1 and 2 –Initial Noting, Analytic Memos, and Experiential Statements

Data for P1 Adaptation	INITIAL NOTING	DESCRIPTI	Emot/Versus	CONCEPT	ANALYTIC MEMOS	EXPERIENTIAL
I: What is your experience adapting counseling to work in China?						
P1: That is to say, there is not much in working with children, not too many differences between the two sides. Then I will think there are in working with adults. Because even though psychology, counseling is very popular in China now, the whole of China's counseling industry is characterized by coming originally from Europe, that is, having more psychoanalysis and psychodynamics in the field. For my training in the United States, my school has various counseling approaches, but I am person centered...I am using the integrated approach incorporating person centered, ACT, and mindfulness approaches. But in my work, the client is used to treating you as an authority figure, expecting that you can give very good solutions to their problems. But for me I am more inclined to have a collaborative relationship between us. This I feel is an adjustment, that is, the expectations of the client and what I am used for my role as a counselor.	"not much in working with children"--very similar when working with childrne in China and the US. Here "children" refer to K-12 students, who are 5-18, a big range. "there are in working with adults"--there are differences working with Chinese and US adults. "more psychanalysis..." in China vs "various counseling approaches" trained in the US--why does she mention China vs US trained counselors' theoretical orientation when talking about working with clients? "client is used to treating you as an authority, expecting that you can give very good solutions to their problems"--does Chinese psychodynamic counselors hold themselves as authority figures and give people solutions? "for me I am more inclined to have a collaborative rel"--it does imply that China trained vs US trained counselors/her personally have different power rel with clients. "expectation of the client" vs her prof identity--this is an area needing adjustmnent, the power rel and client expectations	Experiencing more adjustment needs working with adults who treat you as an authority figure and expect you to give solutions to their problems	challenged to adjust; VS: China vs her US counseling training/theoretical orientations; working with children vs adult; cl as an authority figure vs collaborator; equal power status vs equal collaboration; providing solutions vs collaborating; clients' expectations vs the counselor she is used to have	exp differences in different domains	There are a lot of rich data here, including several dichotomies: working with children vs adults, client expectation vs cl's role based on training and theoretical orientations, dominant orientation in China vs her orientation based on training; authority figure vs collaborator relationship in counselor. Several other partiipants talked about the clash between clients' expectations and their own stance of equal rel/not giving answers. However, she is the only one that links psychodynamic orientation popular in China with the power relationship/giving advice. I am surprised. Traditional psychodynamic counselors may hold somehow an authority figure position in counseling in the US, but they don't give advice. Does she indicate that Chinese psychodynamic counselors hold power position and give advice in China? Now I am curious how psychodynamic Chinese counselors work in China. Her exp working with children are similar yet different from other participants, who sees children as more "mellable" but also treating counselors as authroity figures.	Not experiencing much difference working with children in China and US; experiencing differences in counseling approach between those dominant in China and her approach based on US training; needing to adjust to client expectations which are different from her role and practice as a counselor
I: Exactly. How did you begin to experience the need for adaptation?						
P1: I think it is in my work and in the communication with local Chinese counselors that I feel that I see this difference, and then I think that maybe in this environment, I have some things that need to be adjusted.	"in my work" "communication wit local Chinese counselors"--how she experienced the need to adapt; "then I think that maybe in this environment"--her thinking process; digesting the feedback and realizing that she may "need to" adjust.	Based on feedback from work and Chinese peers, realizing that she needs to adjust in Chinese work environment.	more calming accepting it than angrily fighting it; VS: US vs China environment, her style vs dominant style	realizing differences and the need to adapt	So she sees the differences through communication with local Chinese counselor and in her work. Then she realizes that this is a new environment and she needs to adjust. This echoes her advice to training in the end of the interview. This shows her openness to learn from the new environment and feedback. Also her Chinese work environment and communication with Chinese colleagues help to see the reality. People working with only non Chinese colleagues in int schools may not have this feedback.	realizing the need to adjust to a new environment from Chinese work setting and feedback of Chinese counselors
I: Hmm. Was there cultural shock when you first returned to China? Any cultural						

Appendix G

Manuscript 1 Personal Experiential Themes (Data Analysis Steps 3 and 4)

P1 Adaptation PETs
Realizing the need to adapt to a new environemnt
Contextual factor: personal alignment and professonal differences
experiencing lack of openness and exposure to counseling
contextual challenges--lack of rsources and parents' unrealistic expectations
No personal adjustment needed because of familiarity with Chinese culture
Having to work with the current professional environment
Lack of a widely recognized licensure system causes practice challenges
realizing the need to adjust to a new environment from Chinese work setting and feedback of Chinese counselors
Challenge 1: double roles
Struggling with the counselor teacher role at school and trying to set boundary
Dual roles as a counselor teacher makes rel with clients complicated.
Being given teacher responsibilities as a counselor
Concerned about the counselor teacher role hurting client rapport
role definition as a school counselor biggest challenge
Challenge 2: different counseling style and client expectations
needing to adjust to client expectations which are different from her role and practice as a counselor
The big change is difference in working style
experiencing differences in counseling approach between those dominant in China and her approach based on US training;
experiencing drastically different counseling styles from China trained counselors which challenges her core beliefs in counseling
Support from worksetting and outside communities
appreciating the increased access to overseas trainings and online resources
Training matches relationship building and counselor role definition in the Chinese environment
Not experiencing much difference working with children in China and US
enjoying trust from parents as a school counselor
The school's unique environment contributes to parental proactiveness
developing and relying on a number of professional support groups
Finding a sense of community among returning counselors
Having both native and overseas trained counselors in her support system
Personal and professional growth
Increased practicality and flexibility to adapt to new environment
knowing the laws and mastering student engagement

acknowledging the need to adapt to new environement by learning its rules and expectations
acknowledging the importance of flexibility
Becoming more practical and flexible to meet clients needs
Noticing big differences among parents and families
recognizing students' ind differences and feeling confident in engaging students
Cognitive development
Growth in terms of deeper appreciation of child development and teachers' needs
Increaesd self-awareness
Self awareness and client relationship as focus of counseling
Bicultural exposure makes me more clear about what I want

P2 PET:
Unique training and practice context
A flood of negative experiences about US counseling training
Believing int sts make mistakes due to limited exp and lack of cultural knowledge of the US system
Training programs don't protect int sts when experiencing conflicts with client benefits but one can't blame the program
Unequal power status between program/faculty and int sts leads to disillusionment;
Resentment that program/faculty tried to shape how sts think or behave
Satisfying Workplace in China
Appreciating resources in worksetting
Appreciating the uniqueness of work setting in not only resources but also acceptance of counseling
Appreciating sts' openness to counseling
Appreciating most parents' openness to counseling
Perceiving increased acceptance of counseling in Chinese society
Feeling the public and the government's increased support of school counseling
Developing strong personal viewpoints about US counseling training and China based practice
Realizing the difference between classroom learning and professional exp. and the need to adapt classroom learning to practice.
Believing that training provides principles and prof. exp teaches one what to do
Believing that professional exp can answer questions training unable to address
Convinced that real life practice questions can only be addressed during practice in Chinese context
Convinced that vastly different social system in China necessities ongoing adjustment from training program learning
Coming to accept training's limitations and professional exp's significance in development as a counselor
Biggest professional change is realizing that counseling is not fit for everyone and cannot solve all issues
Devleoping a personal style of counseling and learning
realizing counseling is a very culturally specific profession and counselors trained in a different culture needs to adapt what they learn to where they work
believing that adaptation means seeing the interrelatedness of clients in China
Believing that adaptation means being more supportive, more gentle, more encouraging and more empowerment
Fighting the urge to take an authority figure role in order to provide calm reassurance

Convinced about the benefit and cultural appropriateness to provide reassurance to students even though it is different from her learning from the US training
convinced about the necessity and benefits to help sts understand their relational concerns
Responding to sts' needs for existential exploration
Existential exploration center on individuation vs conformity issue
Understanding adolescents referral as a family system rather than individual action
Seeking support for practice in China
Acknowledging both the essentiality of supervision and the difficulty of finding good supervision
Feeling strongly about how it does't matter whether the supervisor is trained in China or overseas
Appreciating the importance of supervisee freedom of choice when working with supervisors with a different orientation
Convinced that differences in theoretical orientations and training sources don't matter as long as they work with the same population
Satisfied with the China trained supervisor
Growth: increased flexibility, acceptance, compassion
Considerable change in the areas of understanding China's social system and understanding vast differences among individuals
Accepting people have different thoughts than hers
Developing more gratitude for own developmental exp and more empathy towards others
Beginning to see people as equal in stead of judging them by outside criteria
Finding out that "everyone" has the potential to become a counselor and deciding to help others to apply for counseling programs
Realizing that many people want to become counselors but don't have the resources

P3 Adaptation PET revised 060522
Experiencing adaptation as both an individual and system action
Experiencing adaptation as understanding clients and meeting them where they are
Coping with clients' expectations
meeting clients where they are: understanding Ct and meeting expectations
Meeting clients where they are: providing psychoeducation and building trusting relationship with parents
Meeting clients where they are: assessing needs and attitudes towards mh
Meeting clients where they are: understanding the wide variety of parents' attitudes towards mh
taking advantage of cultural social norm to engage students
Culture impact theory applications (ACT value questions)
Experiencing adaptation as understanding contextual factors and impacts
realizing the impact of cultural/social/politial contextual factors underlying clinical issues
recognizing economic/social context's impact on cts
Experiencing frustration and sometimes self-doubt
Being challenged by adult clients' counseling expectations
being challenging working with a deeply culturally based issue (setting boundary with FOO)
being challenged by lack of legal support (for child abuse)
being challenged by lack of resources (for suicide)
being challenged by lack of resources (for addiction)
being challenged by parent's lack of cooperation
being challenged by parents' lack of mh awareness, own mh challenge and educational system
Chinese understanding of counseling: education enhancement
being challenged by parents' expectations of counseling
being challenged by lack of resources (access to affordable counseling services)
Developing acceptance and "learning to compromise"
Turning to person-centered therapy and acceptance to cope with cultural/value clashes
"learning to compromise"
Finding own path
Deliberately and purposefully seek training and supervision
Self-motivated to seek continuing education
Taking the initiaitve to seek supervision
The mentality: Training gets you in the door, and you have to learn on your own once inside.
evaluating and selecting additional training
Developign own style
Developing a client-centered learning process

integrating counseling and psychology to adapt to the needs of unique clients
Growth
Considerable Personal growth with increased calmness and acceptance
Considerable professional growth

P4 PERSONAL EXPERIENTIAL STATEMENTS AND THEMES
Theme: Encountering initial and ongoing Challenges
Initial Challenges:
Overcoming language as a major barrier; Unprepare to do counseling in Chinese with an English education
Being struck by cultural differences -- Ct behavior
Ongoing challenges/Value Clash
adaptation is difficult when cultural differences are profound--xiaoshun
Core value conflict between Cl and C culture leads to challenge in adaptaiton
Feeling oblidated to comply with family/cultural norms
Cl's value aligns with counseling value which is in conflicts with Chinese cultureal value leading to adaptation challenge
Even a cultural insider has challenges since counseling is rooted in White male dominated culture which clashes with some unique Chinese cultural aspects.
emphasizing difficulty of cultural outsiders to understand the power and rigidity of certain cultural values
Theme: Drawing Inspirations from a variety of sources
Inspiration from cultural knowledge
drawing inpsiration from cultural background--"growing up in China' and language capacity
Drawing inspiration from cultural background --Understanding subtle unspoken cultural norms and client expectations through cultural knowledge and lived experiences
cultural exposure leads to understanding and adaptation. Cultural exposure comes from cl own exp, exposure to friends, and cl understanding of unspoken cultural rules and unexpressed feelings.
Being a cultural insider makes adaptation easier.
Informed by indepth understanding of cultural values
Inspiration from training
"The basics are the same"
Education gives cl all the tools and cultural awarenss allows cl to decide which ones to use.
Drawing inspiration from counseling basicsand belief in shared humanity
Inspiration from other factors
Inspiration--faith in shared humanity
Prepared to work with Chinese clients due to "culturally based counseling" exp. in the US
Receiving support from a consistent supervisory relationship and culturally sensitive supervisor
Receiving support from intensive ind and peer supervision.
Theme: Deliberate Action
cultural awareness and reflection lead to deliberte action
Working with what you have/meeting clients and culture where they are
Adaptation means working with Cts' different level of awareness (cultural awareness)
Dealing with different view of counselor professioanal idenity -- "let it go"
Accknowledging the rigidity and power of certain Chinese cultural values
Introducing new concepts, behaviors and relationship
Adaptation means "explaining" new perspectives
Finding solution by adopting a new mindset and behavior.
Setting the tone for counseing is like playing a cultural dance

Setting the tone by giving an impression of the ideal therapy
Finding your own way
cultural adaptation means: 1) utilize basic counseling skills; 2) understand cultural context; 3) keep Cl own value on hold and meet cts where they are; 4) intervention utilizing basic skills and cultural awareness meeting Cts where they are in their own cultural context.
Adaptation means finding own ways to overcome language barriers
Adaptation is to explain concepts not available in the culture in a way that is understandable by native populations.
Finding new ways to do counseling when clients have little experience and different understanding of counseling
Taking into account other factors at play in counseling
Client factor also determines how counsleing is done.
Counselor factors influences choosing tools and understanding clinical situations.
In Sessoin factors means making "right there" decision about ambivalous situation
Theme: Personal and professional Growth
the new mindset is a significant achievement
Expanding perspective from the vintage of "a third point perspective" leads to deeper understanding of cultural values.
Expanding perspectives by seeing things from both cultures' point of view and seeing the gray areas (not good vs bad).

P5 EXPERIENTIAL STATEMENTS
Context: Training in the US, returning to China, first experiences in China
Enjoying a highly satisfying counseling training in the US
Enjoyed successful and high quality training in the US
Training was personally enjoyable and satisfying;
Giving up a job to return to China to be with family
Experiencing a wide range of challenges upon working in the Chinese context
Social/cultural challenges
Experiencing challenges as a counselor due to China's changing licensure requirements
Practical challenge for counselor: not being able to prove her skills in the Chinese environment
Facing a wide range of challenges due to China's unique cultural, social, legal context alone
challenge working in the Chinese context: lack of specific training certificates
Appreciating all the positive aspects of US counseling training while realzing the lost career opportunity as a result of being training in the US
Personal challenges and value clash
First job in a Chinese mh agency disappointing and traumatizing
Enjoying working with clients with shared background while struggling with clients with different backgrounds
Frustrated with tremendous lanauge challenge and overcoming self-criticism to reach acceptance.
Struggling between fitting in and being true to self
Having a clear sense of value clash between who she is and the Chinese workplace culture
Struggles in the counseling session
Experiencing ready acceptance from students but resistance from adult client relating to setting roles and rules of counseling
Feeling challenged by client's difficulty expressing emotions
Feeling the need to explain the roles and rules in counseling
Dealing with resistance to enforce counseling roles and rules
Feeling shocked when challenged by clients over her age and attempting to address it appropriately
Experiencing Ct's resistance to counseling
Adaptation is expanding both internal and external resources and both identifying with TCK communities and fitting in with the Chinese environment
Realizng the need for adaptation
Suddenly realizing that diversity is not just a US issue, that China has its own diversity issue, and that US diversity training may not apply to Chinese situations.
Feeling the need to get serious and get ready to work in the unique Chinese context
Adapting by translating
Recognizing that everyone is different and findng a way to work with diversity, i.e. translating own experience into Chinese culture
Finding translated counseling books highly helpful
Translation from one culture (counseling/English) to Chinese culture and language as the preferred way of adaptation
Adapting by accepting the reality and trying to fit in

Having to change counseling style to adapt to clients who are not on the same page with Cl's counseling
Adapting by trying to obtain a Chinese certificate to prove her credibility
Acknlowledign the absurdity and accepting the reality of unrealistic expectation
Forcing herself to reach out to Chinese peers for information and reality check
Adapting by bonding with other TCKs
Identifying with the workplace--a "British school" in China
Identifying with the workplace that matches her TCK background
Relying on supervision to getting adjusted to working in the Chinese culture
Connecting deeply with the sueprvisor with shared background
Adapting by relying on your own
Accepting the limitation of US training to prepare her for working in China means being on your own to learn how to adapt
Dealing with challenges on "only my own"
Enjoying expanding openness, flexibity, self-reliance, and confidence
Adaptation as a parallel process: both Cl and Cts need to embrace new conceps and approaches but progress can be made
Expanding self's level of tolerance and flexibility when expanding those of sts
Adaptation means more space and time for sts
Adaptation means opening to change, increased flexibilty and hope
Realizing the significance of the relational dynamic between cl and ct
Sensing the similariries and differences of working with US and Chinese clients: both are rooted in the same emotional understanding but one requires more psychoeducation than discussing
Still trying but making progress
Enjoying the personal transformation towards expanded flexibility
Adapting well and feeling confident to handle work challenges
Experiencing increased flexibility and self-reliance

PET--P6 Adaptation
Feeling surprised and challenged working with Chinese clients
Surprised and challenged by Chinese clients' expectations and behaviors in session
Experiencing some Chinese clients as less open to talk and needing more encouragements from cls
Surprised by Chinese clients' as focusing on how their family impact their development and on treating counseling as an academic subject.
Challenged by Chinese clients expecting a chosen theoretical orientation and the US training program which doesn't provide one;
Experiencing stress and anxiety due to the difference between Chinese clients' expectations and US training model regarding theoretical orientation.
Being challenged by clients' difficulty ending session on time
Feeling puzzled over Chinese clients' difficulty understanding counseling boundary such as ending on time
Feeling pressured by clients asking about counseling terms and concepts cl is not familiar with
Surprised and challenged by limitations in training and language and cultural differneces in Chinese vs US training models
Lack of information and guidance in working with the Chinese population as a major challenge.
Surprised by language challenges esp in translating counseling terms into Chinese;
Surprised by the difference between advice given by Chinese counselors and training model in the US
Feeling the difference between Chinese and US trained counselors in perspective, terminology, and theoretical orientations;
Acknowledging skills, strengths and areas of growth in working with Chinese clients
Skills and interventions that worked
Using education to help clients understand a new set of rules and roles concerning counseling
Perceiving clients as being open to learning the new set of rules of counseling
Perceiving the need to provide psychoeducation on the rules and roles of counseling
Experiencing personal growth
Experiencing confidence in developing healthier rel with parents
Appreciating learning to take care of self as a major aspect of self growth
Greatly improved relationship with parents as a major aspect of personal growth
Practicing setting boundaries with parents with greatly improved communication and relationship
Acknowledging professional strengths
Realizing strengths and areas of growth in working with Chinese clients
Learning how to do counseling in both English and Chinese and working with Chinese clients from year 1 in training means no major adaptation issues working with Chinese clients.
Areas for future growth
Seeing the important in being fully bilingual in doing counseling
Valuing counseling knowledge from both US and Chinese sides and proactively preparing for working in China in the future
Feeling the need to work on skills on setting boundaries

Acknowledging challenges in helping Chinese clients to work with FOO
Forming a community of support and learning
Actively seeking and receiving support and resources
Receiving supervision support from both US trained Chinese counselors and US supervisors
Appreciating Chinese alumni network and peer support as strong support throughout the learning process
Seeking support and resources from additional training
Seeking support and resources from Chinese colleagues
seeking support and resources from active Chinese online counseling communities
Sharing similar exp. with classmates who are also Chinese CITs in US

P7 Adaptation PET: The multicultural warrier
Identifying with the US counseling training experience, esp. regarding multicultural/diversity
Appreciating US counseing training for introducing multiculturalism and advocacy to her
Feeling validated and strengthened by multicultural/diversity training
Learning a more diverse way of "how things are" through experiencing a more liberal environment
Experiencing "a world beyond your previous life experiene" through exposure of living in the US
Grateful for training program to provide diversity exp and validate her "in so many ways"
US training program focuses on integrated care in a larger system serving vulnerable populations
Had professional success & 5 years of clinical exp. in the US and only 6 months in China
Both strongly identitying with community mental health work in the US and feeling ready to move on
Encountering many "differences" upon returning to China
Being challenged by vastly different systems
Struggling to start a practice in China: failed attempt at a Chinese agency and piecing together jobs from 4 settings
Experiencing profound differences in work environment upon returning to China
Being challenged to work with private pay clients only due to loss of system support
Facing challenging clients and realizing the vast differences among them
Acknowledging clinical challenges with Chinese pp clients
Experiencing challenge with certain type of Chinese clients
Struck by the vast differences among client groups
Experiencing vast diversity among Chinese clients
Committed to multiculturalism/Diversity/Advocacy (M/D/A) in a different cultural context
Commitment to multiculturalism/diversity/advocacy leads to a sense of alienation among peers
Feeling isolated among peers, Chinese counselors trained overseas, over their attitudes towards Chinese clients
Feeling distant from a Western trained peer who views Chinese as "one population"
Felt isolated and self-doubting when Chinese faculty and peers had no concept of M/D
Feeling "in the middle"-- "not that adapted" in personal life and "adequately adapted" professionally in the US
Relying on multicultural/diversity skills to connect with Chinese clients and adapt to the Chinese context
Applying M/D lens in China: awareness and belief in Ct's differences and individuality
Applying MCC in China: putting assumptions aside to learn from Cts
Learning to see clients as agents making the best of their situation rather than helpless stereotypes
Having a breakthrough in truly understanding the client's situation and breaking down stereotypical thinking
Feeling more connection and more shared background information with Chinese clients as compared to US clients
Using a systemic and M/D approach to understand clients: refusing to stereotype

Seeing the lack of exposure to mh issues in China as underlying some clients' lack of psychological awareness
Seeing the lack of environmental exposure as underlying clients' challenge in expressing thoughts.
Find it difficult to compare US and Chinese clients
Having strong feeings against stereotyping Chinese as "less than"
Learning to trust oneself and stay true to one's values
Gaining confident to trust own judgment
Finding own way and becoming self-reliant, confident, centered and solid
Working with clients on identifying and expressing thoughts resembles a socialization process
Relying on own resources to cope with the tremendous differences
Managing well by being deliberate in choosing work setting and clientile

P8 PET
A wide range of adaptation challenges: personally, as a counselor and as a school counselor
Personal adjustment challenge
reverse cultural shock and needing to get used to many things as an adult working in China
One person fighting against the universe as a school counselor
experiencing role confusion, boundary violation and value clash with school admin working as a school counselor
feeling pressued, not having a choice and can't do what is right in the school system and had to leave
being viewed as an expert when still a new counselor
Having to deal with challenging situations all on one's own with limited resources
Instead of relying on existing system and having agreed upon protocols, having to create intervention all on his own against resistance of school admin for an abused child/ to meet US ethical standard
Facing other clinical and professional challenges
Pushed out of trained counseling approach to provide more education than counseling
Difficulty finding a supervisor who can connect with training in the US and practice in China
Difficulty finding an ideal supervisor that meets training, practice, and pragmatic needs
Strong need to develop skills to be competitive
Uncomfortable with the priviledge and underprivilege of being a male counselor in China
questioning and exploring professional identity in a different practice environment;
A wide range of adaptation strategies
Adjusting as a process of relearning/reorganizing training and experiences to meet Chinese clients' needs;
Seeking emotional support by connecting with peers who share similar exp as a key adaptation strategy
Using good feedback from clients as encouragement for meaning in work
Finding creative ways to seek supervisors
Responding to the pressure to seek more trainings with cognitive reframing and centeredness
Utilizing social, cognitive, behavioral, and theoretical resources in working with clients
Learning from both internal and external sources to adjust to working in China.
Strategically balancing self-image and social expectations as a professional
A humanistic counselor experienced with different populations
Humanistic counseling approach at the core of training and practice
Lived experience of understanding and working with different people as a foundation to adaptation
Seeing the commonality and rationale of providing more education on counseling than doing counseling
Seeing clients' perspective preferring psychoeducation to counseling (reduce stigma)
Seeing clients' and organizations' perspective preferring psychoeducation to counseling (easier, safer, promoting)
Understanding and acceptance of Chinese clients' different interactions with counseling
acceptance and understanding for clients' and counseling's limitations

Appendix H

Manuscript 1 Emerging Themes and Patterns Across Cases (Data Analysis Step 5)

Group Personal Themes
RQ: What are the experiences of US trained Chinese counselors practicing in China adapting counseling training to serve their clients in China?
Theme 1: Multi-systemic dissonance leading to realizing that one is "on my own"
Subtheme: multi systemic dissonance
In counseling sessions: unrealistic expectations, expecting advice, lack of cooperation by parents, education-focused, client behavior, understanding what counseling is, role and boundary, emotional expression, resistance to counseling (everyone has some exp but different interpretations)
From MH system (or lack of): e.g. lack of resources, safety network, insurance, vastly different systems (all)
From worksetting: conflicts roles, value clash with agency admin/culture (1, 5, 7, 8 working in Chinese setting vs 2, 3, 5 IS setting; 4, 6 N/A)
from the profession: lack of licensure system (1, 5), different theoretical orientations and work style (1, 6), difficulty proving skills in this environment (1, 5, 8), lost career opportunities through connections (5), difficult/traumatic first jobs (5, 7, 8)
From cultural environment: lack of openness and exposure to counseling; deeply culturally rooted issues, value clash, unspoken cultural norms
From personal adjustment issues: language, reverse cultural shock, fitting in vs true to self (4, 5, 6, 8 major challenge in lang vs 1, 2, 3, 7 no mention; 5, 8 revserse cultural shock vs 1, 2, 3, 7 none)
Subtheme: "Training doesn't entirely prepare you"
Traing just lays the foundation and is "a beginning" and "Counseling is a continuous process of practice and learning" (1)
Realizing the difference between classroom learning and professional exp. and the need to adapt classroom learning to practice (2)
Believing that training provides principles and prof. exp teaches one what to do (2)
Believing that professional exp can answer questions training unable to address (2)
Convinced that real life practice questions can only be addressed during practice in Chinese context (2)
The mentality: Training gets you in the door, and you have to learn on your own once inside (3)
"Training doesn't entirely prepare you" (4 with a whole session)
Accepting the limitation of US training to prepare her for working in China means being on your own to learn how to adapt & Dealing with challenges on "only my own" (5)
Feeling the need to get serious and get ready to work in the unique Chinese context (5)
Experiencing stress and anxiety due to the difference between Chinese clients' expectations and US training model regarding theoretical orientation and begin learning on her own (6)
"In the middle" and Relying on own resources to cope with the tremendous differences (7)
One person fighting against the universe as a school counselor (8)
Subtheme: "In the middle"/"on my own"
Theme 2: Actively reaching for internal and external resources to adapt
Subtheme: Actively seeking training and support
seeking supervisors (US vs China trained)
Utilizing peer support (local and/vs returning counselors)
Additional training (US/English vs Chinese vs bilingual)

Online communities
Subtheme: Drawing from internal resources/Drawing inspiration from personal experiences and identities
e.g. know what you want (1), develop own learning style--integration, learning process (3), own understanding of cross cultural counseling (6)
e.g. learn from past exp. (2--what not to do, 4-what to do)
e.g. own cultural identity and background, language ability, cultural understanding as Chinese
e.g. exposure to different cultures and learning how to adap (4, 8)
e.g. persoanally influential part of training (,person-centered for 3, multicultural/diversity for 7, humanistic for 8)
Theme 3: Adopting a wide range of adaptation strategies
Subtheme: Accepting the environment in the effort to adapt (tension beween trying to fit in and staying true to oneself)
e.g. client-centered: meeting clients' needs and meeting them where they are
e.g. professional environment
e.g. Learning new skills: learning how to do counseling bilingually/new theoretical approach
e.g. learning local laws and rules (1's metaphor)
Subtheme: Shifting the environment (changing, finding, forming)
Influencing the clients and environments via education, fighting with the system. quitting, etc.
"deliberate action" combining two cultures
bounding with/forming own community with people with similar backgrounds
e.g. workplace, peer group, supervisors, clients...
Theme 4: Experiencing professional and personal growth connected to adaptation
Subtheme: professional and personal growth
Increased openness, flexibility, and acceptance (1-practicality and flexibility, 2-ind differences, 3-calmness and acceptance, 4-acceptance and flexibility, 5-flexiblity and acceptance, 6-appreciating mother, 7-major learning, 8--accpetance)
Increaaesd compassion, respect for others, and respect for individual differences (2,
Increased confidence and self-reliance (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7--trusting oneself and judgment, 8-working in new sitatuations, "made me more clear about what I want" (1)
Subtheme: Forming new professional identity
"Third culture kids" (3)/"Third point perspective" (4)/"fully bilingual" (6)/multicultural commitment (7)/Humanistic with diversity mindset (8)
View of counseling: e.g. "counseling is a continous process of practice and learning"(1)/humanistic counseling as most needed in China (8)

Appendix I

Manuscript 2 Personal Experiential Themes (Data Analysis Steps 3 and 4)

P1 Training PET
Experiencing training in the US
US training experience: mostly classroom learning
encountering few challenges during training
Deeply involved in native (Chinese) culture when attending training
Smooth transition from a related healthcare field to counseling
Attending training in a very small localized college as a mature older professional connected with a large immigrant community in the region;
limited contact with classmates
Attending training while caring for young children
Training exp limited to classroom learning
US training experience: closer contact with local environment
more communication with classmates during practicum
Experiencing barriers as a nonnative student
Challenge getting practicum site due to cultural differences with client population
Training encountering practice in China
Commonalities and successes
Similar experience working with children in China and the US
Work setting and parent populatin more aligning with training background in terms of resources and educational philosohpy than other schools
being able to successfully engage students despite cultural differneces
Clashes and differences
training clashes with dominant theoretical orientation in China and clients' expectations
challenged by difference between training and practice in China
Set boundary at work to protect rapport with client
believing training principle was right: dual role hurt rapport
cultural differences experienced as lack of openness and exposure to counseling
less societal system-wide support in practice than in training
similar exp working with children but having view clash with parents
Emphasizing the role difference working as a school counselor in China as compared to training
orientation differences with China trained colleagues
Enjoying work most when it allows her to build trusting relationships with clients and least when it hurts the relationship
experiencing drastically different counseling styles from China trained counselors which challenges her core beliefs in counseling
Reflecting on training from the perpective of practice

training as a foundaton and a beginning
Training is applicable in relationship building and counselor role definition in the Chinese environment
Self awareness and client relationship as focus of counseling
grateful for the systematic training and humble and objective feeling it causes
Training well recognized and accepted in China
To CE progmas: acknowledging the need to adapt to new environement by learning its rules and expectations
Growth
Cognitive growth in the past year in terms of deeper understanding of children and teachers
Learning evolves from relying on theories for understanding to focusing on what is happening in each session and connecting practice to theories
Becoming more practical and flexible to meet clients needs/growing into one's own
Bicultural exposure makes me more clear about what I want
acknowledging the importance of flexibility
Continued learning and support
developing and relying on a number of professional groups for support
Feeling less lonely with more returning counselors in China
Having both native and overseas trained counselors in her support system
appreciating the increased access to overseas trainings and online resources

P2 PET: Rising from disappointments
Two dichotomies that inform perspective and practice
Convinced about the culturally specific nature of counseling and the need for adaptation.
Realizing that classroom learning is different from what you learn on the job and needs to be adapted.
US counseling training: Functions, limitations, and strong emotions
Training prepares sts to be ethical and to put clients' benefit first
training provides a general principles but can't tell you what to do
We always know that she (training program faculty) doesn't know what situation is like in China
A flood of negative emotions and warnings about US counseling programs training international students
Warning the inherent danger of training international students. (This is so hard; They don't necessarily know anthing abou the other country;
Convinced that students will make mistakes and program should be prepared to deal with it.
Lamenting that int sts' interests are not often protected
Disillusioned about program and faculty take on authority role despite training sts to share power;
Uncomfortable with program/teachers trying to shape how sts behave or think
Warning the danger of training culturally diverse sts
Practice in China: Where things really happen
Workplace really shape us
Convinced lots of questions can't be answered in class but can be answered in the workplace.
Convinced that one has to find answers during practice in China
Getting essential support from supervision
Relying on workplace supervisor to guide practice
You can't funtion on your own (in China without a supportive supervisor)
Pushed to take the efforts and resources to find external supervisors
Enjoying good supervision with a highly experienced and ethical China trained supervisor
Satisfied with supervision despite differences due to the freedom of choice given by supervisor
Developing own style informed by training and practice
Professional style
Motivated to offer more support, encouragement and empowerment in practice since these are lacking in training or counseling in the US

Motivated not to take on an authority role and offer reassurance to students by the lack of it in training
Coming to see clients as part of an interrected system compared to the focus on individualism in training
Believing providing reassurance to clients to be beneficial and a cultural practice
Feeling strongly that whether a supervisor is trained in China or overseas doesn't matter
As long as the pop is the same, we won't have cultural differences
Increased openess, flexibility and compassion
Inspired by training program to see people's potential in becoming counselors
Taking deliberate action to help people with less resources to apply for counseling programs
Coming to understand and accept the limitation of counseling
Accepting the limitation of training and significance of on the job learning

P3 Experiental Statements: The Hero's Journey
Theme 1. Mixed emotions about US counseling training: seeing values and limitations
Subtheme 1. Valuing US counseling training/Identifying with US-based counseling training
Being able to apply counseling training in daily work.
Preferring US-based training to Chinese traing for continuing education
Satisfied with counseling training but experiencing contextual restrains
Subtheme 2. Experiencing the need to go beyond the US counsleing training
The training prepares her to become an "entry level professional"
Training gets you in the door. Once you are inside, you need to learn on your own.
The uniqueness of her work means no training can prepare her for it.
Theme 2. An adventure: Encountering tests and seeking allies
Subtheme 1. Tests
Experiencing application challenge due to social context
Experiencing application challenge due to legal context
Experiencing application challenge due cultural value clash
Siding with counseling's perspective leads to frustration and self-doubt in counseling
Subtheme 2. Allies
Selectively and purposefully choosing supervisor
Additional training as a necessity and a deliberate decision
making deliberate and determined efforts to pursue additional training
Subtheme 3. Inspirations
Students as the inspiration and center of learning efforts
Theme 3. A lone hero: special knoweldge and a lonely journey
Subtheme 1. Gaining a deepened/unique understanding the Chinese perspectives
Recognizing impact of uniquely Chinese cultural/social factors on counseling through post grad training
Developing own lens to understand Chinese clients' challenge with emotion expression
Subtheme 2. Devleop evaluations of the US counseling training
realizing own cultural gap with counseling
Recognizing the limitation of US training on working with diversity populations
Subtheme 3. "My own understanding about the world dnhuman relationships"
Transformation: personal growth in increased calmness and acceptance;
Learning by oneself: self-reliance, independence and loneliness
Propelled by unique work situation to find own way--synthesizing counseling and psychology
Professional growth: "learned a lot"

P4 Training EXPERIENTIAL STATEMENTS
Training provides the "basics" in counseling, a unique perspective, and an opportunity to go beyond one's own culture
Training lays the ground and provides the "basics"
Training provides the basics even in different cultural context
In practice, training provides structure, understanding of human psychology/emotions, and guidance on how to do counseling
Training provides a unique perspective
Training provides a specific perspective to understand human conditions, which has cross-cultural applications, even though certain terms might be missing in Chinese culture.
Training enables the counselor to go beyond one's own culture
Training enables him to develop enhanced perspectives on the Chinese culture and also "a third point perspective" that goes beyond the perspectives of both cultures.
"Training doesn't entirely prepare you"
Counseling is rooted in White male dominated culture and wouldn't work well with unique Chinese cultural aspects.
Training teaches a language and culture that is Western;
Experiencing value clash between trainng and Chinese culture
Training provides a "good foundation on the essentials" which is not enough for effective counseling.
Unprepared by training - understanding what counseling is
Unprepared by training -- Ct behavior
Unprepare by training -- Ct expectations/Professional Identity
Unprepare by training -- the language challenge
"Training doesn't entirely prepare you" about unspoken cultural norms and client expectations.
"training prepares you to be open minded, but doesn't give you preparetion to understand" the nuances of a different culture.
Counseling education provides limited training on working with diverse populations
What else prepares the counselor to work with Chinese clients?
being a native Chinese speaker and years of practice to develop language competency
counselor's understanding uniquely Chinese cultural values by being a member of that culture
work exp. and supervision helps to work with Chinese clients
Exposed to Chinese clients in culturally based counseling agency
culturally aware supervisor who is supportive
Using intense supervision with peers with similar backgrounds
Synthesizing training and cultural understanding
Applying the training requires being aware of language, cultural and relational barriers, making deliberate decision, and taking actions to set the rules, roles, and relationship parameters of counseling.
Adopting training as new concepts
Acknowledging the importance of understanding unique cultural values
Education gives cl all the tools and cultural awarenss allows cl to decide which ones to use.
Education gives cl all the tools and who they are as a counselor and how they make decisions in session determines application.

Combining training with cultural awareness to meet clients where they are
Understanding important Chinese cultural principles means not directly applying counseling values and interventions
Complexity of real life situation makes tool application complicated.
Learning to merge two culures during practice.
Bridging the huge gap between counseling concepts and Western trained counselors and Chinese clients
Underlying application of training is cl's faith in shared humanity.
Growth in flexibility, openenss, and confidence
Educating non-Chinese supervisor
growing independence and making own calls with supervision
Work experience in a different mh system provides new perspectives and increased flexibility.
Training enables him to develop enhanced perspectives on the Chinese culture and also "a third point perspective" that goes beyond the perspectives of both cultures.

P5 Training EXPERIENTIAL STATEMENTS
Mixed feelings about US counseling training: appreciation and regrets
Appreciation
Experiencing extensive and satisfying counseling training
Training was personally enjoyable and satisfying
Using supervision to get into and get use to working in Chinese culture
Regrets
Adjustment challenging: not being able to prove her skills in the Chinese environment
Regretting not getting license or certification from training in the US
US training has not prepared her for Chinese client and system issues;
Coming to peace with both aspects
Appreciating all the positive aspects of US counseling training while realzing the lost career opportunity as a result of being training in the US
Accepting training's limitations because of lack of Chinese students in the program
Appreciating training but also having regrets (specific training)
Feeling the pressue for active learning to adjust to working in Chinese context
Experiencing the multicultural supervisor as a major support
Supervisor shares her multicultural background
Forcing herself to reach out to Chinese peers for information and reality check
Adjusting by trying to obtain a Chinese certificate to prove her credibility
Experiencing increased flexibility and self-reliance
Experiencing increased flexibility and self-reliance
Feeling confident to handle work challenges
Enjoying the personal transformation towards expanded flexibility
Self-reliance in coping with challenges

P6 Training PET: "Learning from both sides"
Becoming aware of limitation of the US training program
Surprised and challenged by the US training program's lack of focus on theoretical orientaion
Feeling the need to understand translated terminology from different theories
Recognizing lang and client challenges in working with Chinese clients
Feeling the US centric nature of training program and wanting to learn more about working with Chinese clients.
Recognizing Chinese and US training model differences.
Appreciating the strengths of US training program
"Grow a lot" professionally due to training program
Supervision is an important aspects of training, but just one component in her professional growth
Learning in English and cultural competency learning hard but necessary.
Appreciating the unique strengths of own training program
Learning counseling in both English and Chinese from year one leads to nuanced understanding of language issue and connection and comfort working with Chinese clients
Strong Chinese alumni network and peer support very helpful as "one of the most important things I got from the program"
Engaging in vigorous intellectual discussions with peers, many of who are Chinese CITs, on culturally responsive counseling issues are important
Having Chinese sts involved in program and class design are valuable
Feeling listened to and empowered by faculty seeking Chinese CITs' feedback
Personal and professional growth as a result of the training program
Personal growth resulting from the training program: self care and self compassion
Important lessons from the training program: reflection and self-awareness
Professioal and personal growth by applying counseling training to set healthier boundary with parents.
Professional and personal growth demonstrated by learning how to have a healther relationship with mother
Learning from both sides: The necessity and practice of learning from both US and Chinese sources
Recognizing the necessity to "learn from both sides"
Feeling propelled by clients' needs to learn from both sides
Convinced in the necessity of learning from both US and Chinese sides, about language as well as cultural practices, through own reading and outside training from Chinese sources
Realizing attending the training program "is not enough" and the need to have conversations with Chinese colleagues on her own.
Going beyond US training program: Seeking additional learning and resources
Gong beyond training program to seek additional learning: forming consultation group with Chinese colleagues
Going beyond training program: joining Chinese counselors' online learning communities
Going beyond the training program: outside training

P7 PET - Training: The Multicultural Advocate Coming to Age
US training program has a unique focus on larger system and serving vulnerable populations
Training program focuses on working in a larger system serving vulnerable populations.
Work experience In the US in community mental health setting
US training and work exp are all in different community mental health settings.
"I love it and I hate it"-- having passion for cmh work and vulnerable populations but also feeling the burnout and exhaustion
Valuing and validating the training exp for personal and professional growth even though it didn't prepare her for working in China.
The m/d learning validated and strengthened her own progressive values when her previous training progam in China clashed with her value system
Feeling appreciative of the training exp. which introduced to her the m/advocacy concepts and lens
The counseling training exp. not only taught her the m lens, but also shows her a different way of "how things are" experientially
Exposure to diversity in the US allows her to see "there is world beyond your previous life experience"
Training program faculty really modeled the m/d mindset rather than paying lip service
Training lays the foundation to her m/d growth and validated her in so many ways
Adapting training to the Chinese context means using multicultural lens to work with clients
The m/d learning allows her to adapt to Chinese clients by seeing them as different individuals rather than stereotypes
Using the m/d lens to work with Chinese clients means multicultural awareness, learning from clients, and not assuming
The personal and professional growth of a multicultural advocate
Doubting self and feeling alienated from others in the Chinese undergrad training progam due to value clash
Feeling independent, confident and able to trust own judgment as a result of training and work exp. in the US
The US training exp is a story of gaining a sense of "solid feeling", of believing in herself and trusing her own judgement
Having now a sense of support and centeredness in seeing humanity in clients

P8 Training PETs
Training vs practice: dichotomy of two systems
training vs practice: fighting alone for abused children without system support or shared understanding
Training vs practice: understanding clients preference of learning rather than doing counseling
Training vs practice: learning preferred over doing counseling makes sense in Chinese context
Training vs practice: difficulty finding a supervisor steeped in both
Training vs practice: doing vs learning about counseling to avoid stigma
Training vs practice: theoretical orientation differences between US vs China trained counselors
Drawing inspiration from training and personal experiences
Learning from training
Valuing humanistic approach learning from US training as the very basis for counseling and most needed for working in China
US training taught me to reach out for support
Learning from personal experiences
Most imporant part of learning is how to work with different people through lived exp and being able to see from their perspectives
Learning from own lived exp and cultural identity;
Learning from colleagues and supervisors
Learning to finding a supervisor the native way
Learning from colleagues, local counselors, and supervisors to meet clients' needs;
Adaptation as a relearning and reorganization process of past training and experience;
Learning new approach that better meet clietns' needs;
Adjusting existing approach to meet clients' needs
Understanding clients' different needs in China and holding ground about how counseling should work.
Understanding clients and developing compassion;
Educating clients on how counseling works;
"Accept that I cannot change them"
Motivated to "relearn about my culture and people;
Ongoing challenges and plan for future learning
Overwhelmed by many choices and lack of a formal system to find qualified supervisors
Need to develop skills and competitiveness
Pressured to have more training to prove own competency
question and redefining counselor identity
Commitment to understand and help clients despite barriers;

Appendix J

Manuscript 2 Emerging Themes and Patterns Across Cases (Data Analysis Step 5)

Theme 1: The US counseling training as a cognitive and emotional experience
This theme describes the participants' experiences of their US counseling training as they look back after years of practice. Different aspects of the training stood up for different participants. While some focused on the cognitive experiences, others highlighted more emotional exeperiences. Multiple particpants described multicultural learning as an important aspect of their training experience but reported divergent experiences and impacts. Three sub theme emerged from data analysis:
Subtheme: Training as a Cognitive Experience
P1: mainly cognitive; slightly comprehensive
P4: Training gives cl all the tools
P6: appreciating cultural competency, (mc) self-care, and reflection aspects of training; surprised adn challenged by theoretical orientations and language
P8: US training taught me to reach out for support; humanistic approach as a guiding principle
P3: realizing cultural gap between self and counseling culture (mc)
P6: wanting more diversity outside US
P7: multicultural lens (mc)
Training as an Emotional Experience - 5, 6, 2, 7 supportive, validating, traumatizing
P2: Highly negative
P5: Appricating; satisfacotry
P6: support from peers and alumni; listened to and empowered by faculty
P7: Validating
Theme 2: Beyond classroom: Lived experience in the United States as essential to learning
This theme described how the participants make sense of the role played by their lived experiences in the United States towards their overall training experience. Such lived experiences are not part of the counseling training or conscious leaning. Rather they are the by-product of training overseas. But for some partiticipants, these experiences consituttes some of their most important learning experiences.
Subtheme: exposure to a bigger more diverse world
Subtheme: Key developmental stage
Theme 3: "A lot of questions can only be answered in the work place": Chinese work place as the testing ground for training
The participants put their counseling training in the United States to test when they started working with Chinese clients in the Chinese context. This theme describes how they experienced their training from that vintage point. The subthemes emerged from data analysis. The first one described areas where particpants perceived their training to be applicable and helpful in the Chinese context. The second one described the limitations of the training in the Chinese context due to contextual restrains and the US counseling training's failure to address cultural specific issues in non-US settings. The third one described the sense of necessity experienced by participants to pursue further training and support in order to serve their clients effectively.

Subtheme: Where Training Applied/Experiencing the Goodness of Fit between Training and Practice
P1: Training is applicable in relationship building and counselor role definition (easier with children and youth)
P3: Being able to apply counseling training in daily work (easier with children and youth)
P4: "go back to the basics"
P6: boundary setting with family helpful and successful
P7: the m/d learning allows her to have deeper understanding and empathy with Chinese clients
P8: humanistic approach as a guiding principle
Subtheme: Experiencing Limitations of Training
Cultural clash - Western language and culture vs Chinese culture 4, 1, 5, 8 in counseling sessions and work settings--(1-dual role, work style, all education focused)
System differences - e.g. child protection, addiction treatment--leadign to application challenges social, legal, and cultural contexts for working with clients
Professional field differences -- training model differences, lost opportunities for connection, licensure and certification differences
Lack of China specific information and knowledge - US centric, teachers don't know, and can't inform what to do in specific situations
Subtheme: Transforming Training by both reaching out and within / Feeling the Pressure for further learning
P2: "Workplace really shape you"--more support, encouragement and empowerment, more on clients' side, reassurance, interconnecte system--culturally affirming
P3: developing own understanding of the Chinese perspectives (social cultural context; emotional expression)
Theme 4: "A relearning and reorganization process of past training and experience": Reflecting on US counseling Training in the Context of Practicing in China and Finding Own Path
This theme described the participants' sense making of their US counseling training in the context of practicing in China. Here they went beyond reflecting on what fit and didn't fit to focus on the overall meaning of the training, its impact on them, and where to do from here.
Subtheme: Making Sense of Training
Training as a foundation and a beginning--1 & 3, 2 and 4 but one needs to go beyond training
Training as a new lens to view and understand the world - 4, 8
Subtheme: Reflections about Training
P1: the need to adapt to new environment by adapting its rules and expectations
P2: accepting the limitations of training and signifcance of on the job training; Finding fit between training and practice: using training as principles and workplace provide the answers.
P3: "So the training is enough, but this just helps me to get in the door. Once you are inside, you need to learn many things on your own. ”
P4: Training provides the "basics," a unique perspective, and an opportunity to go beyond one's own culture
P5: appreciating training but also having regrets
P6: recognize the necessity of "learning from both sides"

P7: having a sense of support and centeredness in seeing humanity in clients--developing a guiding principle
Subtheme: Where to Go from Here: Finding Own Path
P1: more practical and flexible/ rooted in reality (acknowledging the need to adapt to new environment by learning its rules and expectations; focusing more on application than on theories)
P2: More flexibility? coming to understand the limitation of counseling
P3: own way of learning by synthesizing and a learning process with feedback; Learning by oneself: self-reliance, independence and loneliness
P3: self-reliance, independence and loneliness
P4: A third point persepctive; learning to merge two cultures and bridging the gap
P5: increased flexibility and self-liance
P6: Actively learning from Chinese training, books, online groups and colleague to improve language and culture competency
P7: having a sense of support and centeredness in seeing humanity in clients--developing a guiding principle
P8: facing many tasks (training, prof identity) but humanistic approach and lived exp keep him centered, help him to connect with clients and local ennvironent,and give him perspectives

Appendix K

Member Checks Feedback

P1

- Agreed with the themes overall. Added that as more and more counselors return to China after their counseling training in the US, there is less sense of loneliness. Has online groups with such counselors and felt the sense of community. Estimated that 50-100 counselors return to China each year. So the "on my own" sense may soon become something of the past.
- Emphasized counseling is a life long learning process, believing that two years of training is not going to be enough to prepare counselors for practice. Besides, counselors need to catch up with the ever-changing environment and contexts, so have to continue learning. Didn't agree with the "my training gave me all the tools" statement from another participant.
- Talked about the environment in China when counselors continue to seek supervision and training no matter how many years they have been practicing. The goal is to seek a sense of belonging. This is connected to the fact that counselors tend to stay within their own theoretical schools, so Manuchin school disciples seek supervision and training within that school, rather than branching out.

P2

- Agreed with all the results, stating that they align with their experiences and understanding. The only piece they didn't experience themselves was the "on my own" part because they had a team and a good supervisor at work. "I realized that I am privileged," they said, "and didn't have to work in the bad environments."
- Thought that the counseling profession in China is getting better regulated, with increasing oversight. Is optimistic about the future of counseling practice in China.
- Seemed a little troubled by the mentioning of unethical practices in China, and emphasized that the field is improving and "China is changing."

P3

- Agreed with findings. Can identify with counselors who work for Chinese agencies and have to face many challenges including different roles and responsibilities. Counselors as "general practitioners."
- Asked whether counselors in the US experience the "on my own" feelings. Agreed that counselors in China have to be more independent, choosing their own supervisors and training. Took some CBT and DBT training recently and found some parts applicable while others not due to contextual restraints.
- Was initially surprised that counselors were more "confident," because this is not a very Chinese thing to say. However, after our discussion, agreed that even though counselors don't actually say the word "confident," they are "confident," they "do feel pretty okay handling different workplace challenges."

P4

- Agreed with the themes and findings
- Learned from the research results and appreciated the solid research

P5

- Agreed with the themes and description–surprised but not surprised
- Filled with emotions—feeling not so lonely as a result.
- Send an email later stating:

"Thank you Yun! These results are truly meaningful to me. I am still looking for the most accurate words to describe my feelings, but it seems that I got a trustworthy answer to some questions that I have been wondering about for a long time. When I listened to other participants' struggles, their stories, I remembered my own struggles. However, I also feel that the fact that a big group of people are struggling over the same experiences for the same goals is something amazing, wonderful, and moving…"

P6

- Agreed with the findings. Expressed anxiety over working in Chinese mental health agencies, as have heard cautionary stories from peers.
- Struck by the increased sense of openness shared by all participants

P7

- Agree with findings.
- Was particularly interested in the "Taking the Native Perspective" theme and "The third point" perspective–feels that she can relate to these at the current developmental level.
- Feeling finally getting used to practicing in the Chinese context and now wants to connect more with the U.S. training side. Feels "bored" and feels that she needs to counterbalance the native language use with more diversity/social justice informed languages from the U.S. training.

P8

- Most valuable: feeling validated and less lonely
- agreed with all the points, glad to be part of the research, which is connecting him back with his counseling training, not surprised but learned a lot, esp. about the different adaptation strategies and the "third point" perspective. Felt exposed to a new perspective and direction for further exploration.
- Adaptation in China and the US has their unique challenges. It is hard, but also feel the process is meaningful, to pioneer in something new.

Appendix L

Peer Debriefer Note

Tran, Thang S 12:55 PM (3 hours ago)

to me

Yun,
Here is my peer reviewer note:

I have reviewed your findings and did not experience bias in your discussion of the themes and sub-themes. Your themes seem to be fully supported by the direct quotes from the transcripts and demonstrate the experience of U.S.-trained Chinese international counseling graduates as they attempted to make sense of counseling training while adapting mental health counseling to a Chinese context.

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