

**An Exploration of the Relationship between International Students and Their Advisors in
U.S. Higher Education Institution**

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An Exploration of the Relationship between International Students and Their Advisors in U.S.
Higher Education Institution
Shreya Mitra
Abstract (Professional)

A large number of students are coming to the U.S. for a quality education. However, a large number of them are facing barriers while completing their academic pursuits, which affects academic progress. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to determine the factors that encourage or thwart the relationship between advisors and their international graduate students. The Organismic Socio-Behavioral Perspective (OSBP) (Anderson II, Woods-Wells, Amal, & Bass, 2016) was used as a conceptual framework to explore the impact of identity on the interaction with the environment. More specifically, what factors, cultural or cognitive are more salient in defining the advising relationship, and how are coping behaviors being employed and by whom when differences between the working pair exists? The target population was full-time international graduate students having at least one year of graduate school experience in U.S. academic settings and faculty advisors who had experience in advising international graduate students. A total of 20 international students participated. All the participants completed the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI) as a measure of problem-solving style. Of the 20 that completed the inventory, 14 participants from 10 different countries agreed to participate in a semi-structure interview. Additionally, five faculty advisors completed the KAI inventory and three faculty advisors participated in an interview. Findings of the study are: 1) a link exists between participants' problem-solving styles and their expectations for the advising relationship; 2) cultural difference outside academia had no impact on academic progress of international students; 3) acculturation into American academic culture seemed essential for academic success of international students in U.S academic settings; 4) international students wanted their home country culture to be acknowledged in a multicultural settings; 5) success of advising relationship seemed to be dependent upon how much the advisor and the advisee exhibited coping behavior; 6) acknowledging the differences and accepting a person in a holistic manner as a separate identity worked best in a multicultural settings; and 7) developing a human connect between the advisor and advisee seemed to be vital for a successful and academically productive advising relationship.

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Abstract (Public)

International students in U.S. academic settings are facing barriers in the path of their academic accomplishments. In higher educational institutions, students work very closely with their academic advisors to solve a definite problem. Dependence on the academic advisor is much more when the advisee is international. Keeping these points in mind, one of the factors that might impact academic environment for an international student is the bonding that they share with their advisor. This research study determines the factors that encourage or discourage the relationship between the advisor and international advisee. More specifically, what factors, cultural or cognitive are more salient in defining the advising relationship, and how are coping behaviors being employed and by whom when differences between the working pair exists? Full-time international graduate students having at least one year of graduate school experience in U.S. academic settings and faculty advisors who had experience in advising international graduate students participated in this study. A total of 20 international students participated. All the participants completed the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI) as a measure of problem-solving style. Of the 20 that completed the inventory, 14 participants from 10 different countries agreed to participate in a semi-structure interview. Additionally, five faculty advisors completed the KAI inventory and three faculty advisors participated in an interview. Findings of the study are: 1) a link exists between participants' problem-solving styles and their expectations for the advising relationship; 2) cultural difference outside academia had no impact on academic progress of international students; 3) acculturation into American academic culture seemed essential for academic success of international students in U.S academic settings; 4) international students wanted their home country culture to be acknowledged in a multicultural settings; 5) success of advising relationship seemed to be dependent upon how much the advisor and the advisee exhibited coping behavior; 6) acknowledging the differences and accepting a person in a holistic manner as a separate identity worked best in a multicultural settings; and 7) developing a human connect between the advisor and advisee seemed to be vital for a successful and academically productive advising relationship.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the reader to background information about the research work. Namely, the condition of international students in US academia and information about different dimensions of personality, the statement of the problem, purpose, objectives, and significance of this research study.

Background and Settings

There are numerous young minds coming from all over the world in search of quality education in the US and the number is increasing every year (Lee & Rice, 2007). Where education has become a global business (Evans et al., 2009), USA tops the list by recruiting over half of the 3.3 million international students from all over the world studying abroad (Brown & Stephan, 2013). For any business to grow, stakeholder satisfaction is vital. In this case, the stakeholders of focus are the international students.

There are many international students who are struggling in US academic settings (Brown & Holloway, 2008). International students have to face language barriers, accent issues, changed academic culture, and changed living conditions in terms of food habits, climate, social norms to name a few (Berry, 2006). Often times, issues faced by international students are only termed as “cultural.” Although cultural diversity may be a major contributor to academic and social experience for the international student, it is only one complexity of human nature and thus may not tell the complete story of what is needed to address the issues facing international students during their pursuit of a quality education.

A Different Dimension of Personality

Every person has his or her own style of learning and problem solving (Kirton, 2011). It is a personality characteristic with which he/she is born. This trait in one’s character is very rigid

to any external changes (Kirton, 2011). According to Kirton's Adaption-Innovation (A-I) Theory, this dimension of personality consists of two preferences along a continuum (Kirton, 2011). One preference for problem solving is a more adaptive approach, while the other preference is a more innovative approach. People who fall on the adaptive side of the continuum prefer to stay within a set structure when problem solving and prefer to implement solutions that make the system better (Kirton, 2011). On the other hand, people on the more innovative side prefer to transcend conventional boundaries and prefer to implement solutions, which replace the current system (Kirton, 2011). A person's preference for problem solving is different from their mental capacity to solve problems (Kirton, 2011). Additionally, there is a high probability that people with a large gap between their preferred styles for problem solving may experience unease and maybe conflict when paired together to solve a problem. Ideally, the focus should be on the given tasks associated with the problem, which Kirton terms Problem A (Kirton, 2011). However, when this gap does exist, the focus may move to managing interpersonal differences, which distract from solving Problem A, known as Problem B (Kirton, 2011). The result is that the efficiency of the pair to solve Problem A is inhibited.

Statement of the Problem

The advisor and student relationship is a vital component of productivity in institutions of higher education. Therefore, understanding the factors that encourage successful mentoring relationships is paramount. The current literature on advising provides strong support for the argument that interpersonal connections between the advisor and the international advisee is the dominant contributing factor to the success or failure of the dyad. However, further investigation of the interpersonal connections needed leads to an exploration of cultural variations between the two. Factors that are apparently visible such as appearance, their accent while talking in English,

or interpersonal interactions may influence the advisor's overall perception towards that person, but does not take into account dimensions of personality related to problem solving. However, since this pairing is based on problem solving, attention to the impact of problem-solving styles warrants attention. Could some of the barriers to a strong advising relationship that may initially be contributed to cultural differences actually be because of cognitive style differences?

Additionally, how does the similarities or differences in cognitive style impact the satisfaction level of this dyad?

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that encourage or thwart the relationship between advisors and their international graduate students. More specifically, are cultural or cognitive differences toward problem solving present, which differences are more salient in defining the advising relationship, and are coping behaviors being employed and by whom?

Project Objective

The research objectives related to this study are as follows:

1. To describe characteristics of the advisor pertinent to the framework (ex. educational and professional background, intercultural competence, and A-I score).
2. To describe characteristics of the student pertinent to the framework (ex. educational and professional background, intercultural competence, and A-I score).
3. To identify themes consistent with positive versus challenged advisor-student relationships from the viewpoint of international students.
4. To identify themes consistent with positive versus challenged advisor-student relationships from the viewpoint of advisors of international students.

Significance of the Problem

The researcher aimed to understand the mechanism for improving academic environment for international students, particularly in US institutions of higher educational, by strengthening the advisor-advisee relationship. With an expanded range of interpersonal factors, mainly cognitive problem-solving style between the advisor and advisee, potential strategies can be developed to improve the working environment for the dyad. It is assumed that by being aware of different cognitive styles, faculty advisors and international student participants will better understand, trust, and bond in their advising relationships. It will also make them aware of an alternative factor beyond culture, race, and color to look at when working through Problem B so that they can be more efficient and productive when addressing Problem A. If international students are satisfied with US academia, it will improve the reputation of US universities on a global stage, thus increasing the number of high-quality international students seeking an education and training at these institutions. Furthermore, the mentoring potential between the advisor and advisee will be realized, thus preparing future leaders to go back to their prospective countries with a quality education and the skills needed to impact society.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

This chapter outlines topics that are relevant to the study. At first, there is an exploration of issues faced by international students in US academia, followed by an overview of good mentoring strategies. Since the study analyzes various problem-solving styles of individuals, a brief introduction of the Kirton's Adaption Innovation (A-I) Theory and its practical implication is provided. Working style of adaptors and innovators is also highlighted. In order to highlight the significance of the study, the implications of Problem A and Problem B and strategies to cope with situation are discussed as well. The chapter concludes by introducing the conceptual framework that guided this study.

International students play a huge role in the economic development of an educational institution (Evans et al., 2009). This makes the recruitment process of international students in various higher education institutions very competitive. The US, followed by the UK, tops the list by recruiting over half of the 3.3 million international students from all over the world studying abroad (Brown & Stephan, 2013). Unfortunately, numerous studies found that international students face challenging situations while they stay in foreign countries, which acts as a barrier in the path of their academic accomplishments (Brown & Holloway, 2008).

One such challenge is the strained relationship between the international student and their academic advisors. Even if the international mentee gives high value to the relationship with their academic mentors (Rose, 2005), there exist a lot of instances where a state of inconsistency in this relationship is observed in various U.S. institutions of higher education (Andrade, 2006). It cannot be ignored that support of the academic advisor is a vital necessity for student success (Ku, Lahman, Yeh, & Cheng, 2008). When it comes to mentorship between people of two different races, there are chances of trust related problems to crop up if there are any negative

preconceived notions exist related to the race in question (Merriweather & Morgan, 2013). On one hand, mentors need to take the challenge of ignoring cultural differences and prejudices that hinders effective communication and, on the other hand, have to be sensitive to the beliefs, norms and emotions attached to the mentees culture (Bennett, 2011).

Problems Faced by International Students

It is politically challenging and culturally stressful for international students to relocate themselves in a foreign country to complete their studies (Berry, 2006). It was reported by international students that the most important aspect of getting adjusted to life in the U.S. was to overcome challenges in the academic settings (Curtin, Stewart and Ostrove, 2013). Furthermore, reports state that international students are often marginalized and lack sufficient support from American educational institutions (Lee, 2005; Lee & Rice, 2007). Often academic advisors are either ignorant of or have a completely different perception about the challenges facing international students, which sometimes stands in the way of inclusion (Andrade, 2006). Sometimes there exist a mismatch between their pre-conceived notions and the actual situation (Durkin, 2008). This contradictory situation stresses the need of establishing a strong bonding between international students and their academic advisors (Rose, 2005).

Coping Strategies

Initially foreign students tend to react in a survival mode while coping with the new set of conditions. Many students readily seek advice from their confidants as to how to deal with the unknown situations that come in their way (Kuo, Roysircar, & Newby-Clark, 2006). Having said that, few Asian students, are hesitant about asking for suggestions from others. The hesitation may arise from the fact that Asian culture advocates emotional control of oneself (Kim, Li, & Ng, 2005). Seeking help from others may reflect failure to practice self-control (Wei et al., 2007;

2008). Another observation about international students from Asian decent is that they are very diligent about carrying out social responsibilities (Zane & Yeh, 2002), which is expected from them. But, these efforts sometime have negative implications. Mak, Chen, Lam, & Yiu, (2009) reported that Asian students avoid voicing their opinions in public in fear of making mistakes. At times they even avoid asking questions in class or in some group activities with the notion that others may assume that they are not well informed or under prepared for the class. Since culturally, these students prefer to keep to themselves, it becomes very difficult for them at times when they need to promote themselves as the career demands (Hong & Ham, 2001). These notions make them very self-conscious and hinder their progress in American systems.

Discrimination

Discrimination as described by Booysen, Hannum, and McFeeters (2010) is a way to treat minority group differently based on cultural, social and racial matters. International students from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East report cases of discrimination inside academic settings (Hanassab, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). Such prominent lack of inclusivity creates an aversion in the mind of international students towards the host culture, thus hindering engagement (Wei et al., 2007; Jung et al., 2007). One such act of discrimination was seen post 9/11 when Asian international students felt secluded due to xenophobia. The condition was so adverse that it also impacted U.S. born individuals of Asian descent (Lee, Wong, & Alvarez, 2009).

A study on wellbeing of international Muslim students by Richard et al. (2015) shows that Muslim international students hold the media responsible for misrepresentation of Islam in the mind of the general crowd. This makes them easy targets to verbal and physical abuse in a foreign land (Brown & Jones 2013). The impact was so largely felt that many reported the

inability to cope with daily nuances of life in addition to negatively impacted productivity at work (Brown & Brown, 2013).

Language Barrier

Brunton and Jeffrey (2014) reported that international students who are not proficient in the English language have to put in a lot of effort in order to understand content. As a result, learning becomes very time consuming and a strenuous task. This difficulty often has a negative reflection on their academic scores (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006). Due to lack of fluency in English language, international students face problems expressing themselves verbally, which affects their class participation and restricts them from socializing with their American friends (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). The speed at which the professors talk, which also includes their accents, makes things even worse. Some international students fail to follow the class lectures. On the other hand, it is seen that American students and professors have a hard time in trying to understand the international student's dialect. That makes communication challenging at times.

Visa Restrictions

International students because of their Visa status face lots of social and legal restrictions in the US, namely, many worthwhile positions or projects within the university that could be beneficial to the development of the international student, which require American citizenship. This often narrows their choices in academia (Cifici & Williams-Nickelson, 2008). Furthermore, studying in the U.S. is very expensive and very few international students are granted scholarships (Sheehy, 2013). Substantial numbers of international students depend on graduate assistantships (Obst & Forster, 2004) and the rest pay out of pocket. Those students that do not have the aforementioned options available to them might find low-paying wage positions inside the university to partially support their living. Due to federal regulations, foreign students are not

allowed to work outside the campus, thus making them more dependent on the resources of the host university. Therefore, financial barriers limit very talented international students from getting an education in the U.S. or may distract those who are enrolled as the availability of financial resources fluctuate. Therefore, support from university reduces psychological stress resulting in increase in academic satisfaction level of the international students (Cho & Yu, 2015).

Identity Crisis

International students have to leave their place of origin to which they are emotionally tied with and come to a country that may be vastly different from their own in terms of culture, food habit, language, and climate in order to meet their academic pursuit. This makes them loose their self-identity at times. Literature shows that a place of dwelling has an influence on social identity (Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010). A mismatch between an individual's living conditions back home and the demands of the new environment creates frustration within oneself, which distracts the individual's focus away from work (Evans, Carlin, & Potts, 2009). It has been reported that after trying to continuously cope with excessive uncertainty and pressure in the foreign land, international students seem to lack energy and interest in socializing with others. Stress adversely affects their motivation towards studies (Russell, Rosenthal, & Thomson, 2010). Advisors that have cultural intelligence can advocate for their international students and assist them when they are in cultural crises (Ng, Van Dyne, & Ang, 2009).

Good Mentoring

Considering the fact that this relationship is between two adults, an effective mentor is expected to provide the space for the mentee to express his or her viewpoints while holding a conversation (Chung, Bemak, & Talleyrand, 2007). A good mentor will treat the mentee as a

junior colleague to provide the student with confidence (Bieber & Worley, 2006; Bell- Ellison & Dedrick, 2008).

Intercultural competency involves knowledge of verbal and non-verbal gestures, which carry different meanings in different cultures. For example, understanding how different contexts impact the degree and intensity of eye contact, physical distance maintained while having a conversation, or different ways of physical touch (Matsumoto & Juang, 2012).

Acculturation makes people more flexible in terms of overcoming cultural differences and to have effective collaborative work in multicultural settings (Berry, 2005; Lee & Rice, 2007). Williams & Johnson (2011) stressed the fact that both the student and the teacher have to make an effort to leave beside their cultural apprehensions and keep an open mind set by respecting and accepting the cultural differences within them. They also pointed out the fact that cultural competency is highly dependent on the attitude of the dominant group.

The skill set of a person to adjust and coordinate with people from varied cultural backgrounds is also denoted as cultural intelligence (Ang, & Inkpen, 2008). It is highly recommended for the advisor to use his or her cultural intelligence to collaborate successfully with international students (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004). It will help the mentors create a sense of inclusion among the mentee, which will provide a comfort zone for international students (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008; Earley & Ang, 2003). Knowledge of dominate students' population in terms of culture and characteristic peculiarities of those cultures (Jacob & Gregg, 2001) will help the advisor get control over the situation. It will prepare the adviser in advance to trouble shoot certain problem which is typical to certain groups of culture.

Cognitive complexity is a very important skill, which makes a person tolerate ambiguity in a better way and simultaneously entertain a number of explanations (Arthur, 2004). An

advisor having cognitive complexity would be more tolerant towards cultural variability and would prevent them from drawing premature conclusions (Arthur, 2004). Cognitive cross-cultural intelligence will enable the advisor to help the international student to overcome frustrating situation and be inclusive in U.S. higher education (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2004; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). It has been reported that international students feel welcome and feel included when their advisor shows interest about their country (Bochner, Furnham, & Ward, 2008). Cognitive connection with the students help teacher identifies the cultural transition in educational settings, which they students are facing. Advisors should proceed with caution with international students when it comes to decision-making. It is very important to consider cultural factors while making some decisions (Arthur, 2004). Advisors should not impose their own values, but provide options and enforce professional standards that will allow the international student to make informed decisions that do not compromise their values or beliefs during the decision-making process.

Mentors, apart from being a formal guide in the academic settings and helping student to make a good career, are also expected to help the international student socialize in the department. They are expected to be a role model as times (Merriweather & Morgan, 2013). Researchers found that social support positively influences mental and emotional condition of international students (Ye, 2006). In accordance, Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, and Rosales (2005) reported that when African-American students where provided with social support in a foreign land, they performed better academically. As international students live away from their domestic support system and rarely have chance to visit them, friendly behavior and feelings of inclusion from the host society boosts their confidence level.

Lack of empathy and support for international graduate students is an additional barrier to inclusion (Yamashita & Schwartz, 2009). Therefore, a way to support intercultural competence is by exhibiting empathy. Mentors should encourage their students who are particularly from ethnic minority groups to take part in social and spiritual communities within the campus to increase their sense of belonging, which in turn will have a positive impact on the academic performance (Moores & Popadiuk, 2011; Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007). By exhibiting empathy, the advisor is focusing on the emotional wellbeing of the international student. This expressed concern fosters a sense of inclusion in various settings, which can be beneficial for international students (Arthur, 2004).

A healthy mentoring relationship helps international students focus on their work and prevents them from getting distraction (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009; Wheeler, Keller, & DuBois, 2010; Wilson, Brannan, & White, 2011). This positive guidance creates a social support system that is efficient and productive, which may help the international student complete the degree sooner (Heath, 2002). According to Ang et al. (2007) emotional intelligence is the willingness of the advisor to work closely with students irrespective of their culture and pay special attention to their emotional needs. Advisors with emotionally intelligent can provide a comfortable environment for international students and help them to overcome the emotional stress effectively by utilizing available supports to problem solve (Ang et al., 2007).

One need to consider that it is very difficult for the academic advisor to assist to certain sensitive issues in the academic settings because of packed schedules. Sensitive issues like culture can be better addressed in non-professional settings. The idea of “Host Family” should be put to practice in universities. This will give a chance to both the student and the advisor to know each other beyond the professional settings and develop trust between them.

Normally, universities have counseling centers for students to help them cope with mental stress situations. But, it has been reported that these counseling services are underutilized (Nilsson, Berkel, Flores, & Lucas, 2004). It may be because of the fact that international students are often found less informed about the services offered by their university as compared to the domestic students (Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008). Arguably, it has been stated that international students find lack of cultural intelligence among the councilors, which makes them ineffective to serve the international crowd (Ang & Liamputpong, 2008).

Considering the fact that international students are substantially dependent on their academic advisors, this study focuses on the issues faced between the international student and their main academic advisor in academic and non-academic settings. Often times an unsuccessful mentoring relationship involving an international student is only viewed as a cultural difference. But, this research attempts to delve into this matter in a scientific way in order to search for any other causal effect, which might be camouflaged by visual cultural differences. It has been reported that difference in problem-solving style of a person creates misunderstanding between them resulting in cognitive gap (Kirton, 2011).

Kirton's Adaption Innovation Theory

Kirton's Adaption –Innovation (A-I) theory is founded on the idea that each person is creative and solves problems using a preferred style (Kirton, 2011). He reported that one's preferred style is determined early in life and is highly resistance to change. It is to be noted that one's style of problem solving is independent of one's potential or level of intelligence (Kirton, 2011). Kirton categorizes people either as more adaptive or more innovative in their style of working. He described adaptors as individuals who prefer to improve the system by making it better or more efficient and innovators as people who prefer to replace the system or make the

system different. Kirton's Adoption Innovation Inventory is a psychometric instrument in determining a person's preference in problem solving style (Kirton, 2011). While the theoretical scores range from 160 to 32 with a population mean of 95, the majority (68%) of the population is reported to lie between 78 and 112 points and 95% of the population lie between 61 and 129 points (Kirton, 1999, see Figure 1).

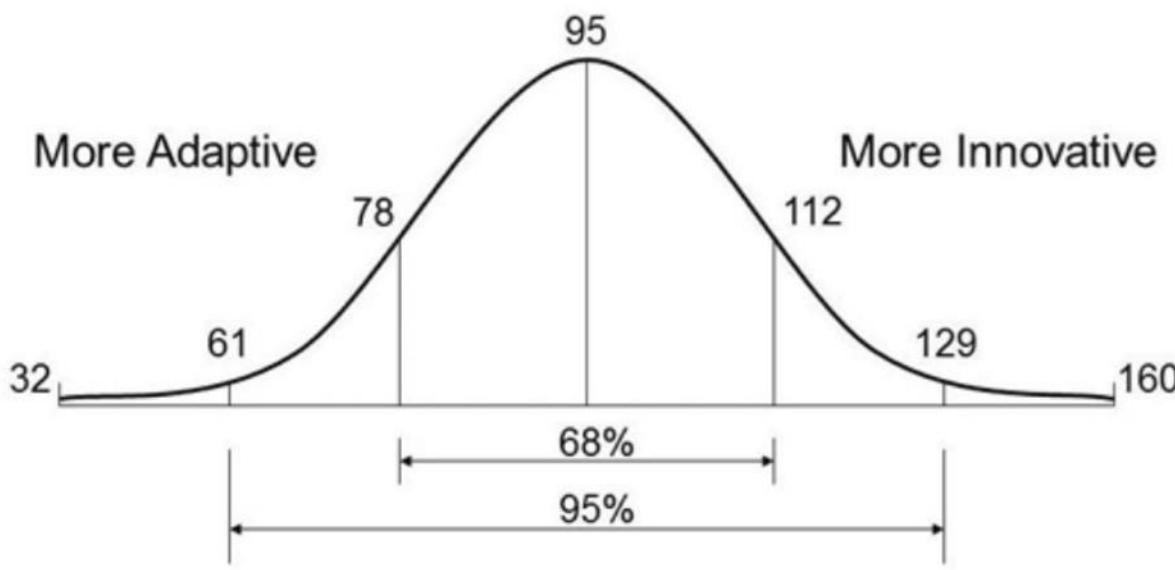


Figure 1. Scale describing percentage of adaptive and innovative people among general population.

Individuals having a KAI score less than 95 points fall under the adaptive range and those whose score is more than 95 points are more innovative by nature. It is worth mentioning that categorization of an individual's working style is a relative or comparative factor. The difference in problem solving style between two individuals typically are not noticed if their KAI scores are less than 10 points apart. Differences are likely to appear if the score difference is more than 10 points apart. A 20-point difference in KAI score is large enough to have interpersonal issues, hence employment of coping behavior is highly recommended to maintain good working relationship between the individuals. If the teacher and the student have different preferred styles

of problem solving, there exists a chance where both of them fail to satisfy each other's expectations. Often time's difference in cognitive style is incorrectly attributed to cognitive level (i.e., intelligence). This interpretation creates a misunderstanding and reduces the confidence of the student. A-I theory distinguishes between level and style, in that level and problem-solving style are independent variables of cognitive function. KAI is also independent from culture, which may be attributed incorrectly by students and faculty who are bridging between two cultures (Kirton, 2011).

Adaptive and innovative. The factors that determine whether a person is more on the adaptive side or on the innovative side of the continuum depends on their sufficiency of originality (SO), efficiency (E), and rule or group conformity (R). The KAI score of an individual is a summation of these three sub-scores. Sufficiency of originality signifies one's style of idea generation; whereas a more adaptive person will have comparatively fewer ideas which have been tried and tested in this particular sub category compared to a more innovative person who may be more comfortable in coming up with more ideas (Kirton, 2011).

Efficiency of an individual highlights an individual's methodology of solving problem (Kirton, 2011). A more adaptive individual recognizes the importance in maintaining the paradigm boundaries while finding a solution to make improvements to the paradigm. They pay more attention to details and work towards improving upon a given or set framework. They are often related as "safe hands" (Kirton, 2011) because they operate with set paradigm and take decisions based on general consensus of the group members. On the other hand, more innovative individuals' shows less importance towards existing paradigms and think more globally about altering the structure of the paradigm (Kirton, 2011).

Rule or group conformity reflects one's management of structure. A more adaptive individuals demonstrate natural inclinations toward sticking to rules that encompass norms or principles of an organization, society or culture. They are much comfortable to problem solve in a structured environment; whereas, a more innovative individual gives less priority to societal norms or regulations and tends to break or change a set rule (Kirton, 2011).

A student who is more on the innovative side might have greater comfortability in solving problems if given a proper working environment; that is with less structure. If a more innovative student is bound to solve a problem in his/her advisor's preferred way then that student may get frustrated and may exhibit coping behavior that in turn might affect their academic productivity.

Problem A and Problem B. According to A-I theory, when people try to solve a problem in a collaborative manner, they encounter two problems together namely, Problem A and Problem B (Kirton, 2011). Problem A is the priority or the task in hand that needs to be solved by the group and Problem B is the interpersonal issues (Kirton 2011). In ideal situation, more energy is spent on solving Problem A. However, a lack of management of diversity within the team results in transfer of focus and attention towards Problem B affecting Problem A (Kirton, 2011). Such situation requires an effort to bridge the cognitive gap by managing Problem B. Employment of coping behavior seemed to be the only option (Friedel, 2014).

Coping behavior. According to Kirton (2011), one's preferred problem-solving style is very deep seated and is highly resistance to change. Having said that, every individual has the ability to work outside their comfort zone for a least time period, which is known as coping (Kirton, 2011). A person needs to cope to bridge the gap caused due to the difference in cognitive style or level between two individuals. In other words, a person may need to cope due

to the nature of the problem or task given or due to the nature of the solution as desired by the authority (Kirton, 2011). There is an inverse relationship between time and intensity of coping which makes it emotionally and mentally taxing strategy that cannot be sustained over a long period of time (Kirton, 2011).

According to the A-I theory an individual is driven by some kind of motivation to cope in a particular situation (Kirton, 2011). Hence, sufficient amount of motivation and encouragement will provide a better “coping climate” (Kirton, 2011) and enable a person to cope for a longer period of time. According to Kirton (2011), a good leader is the one who expect least coping behavior from the group in normal conditions and maximum coping behavior in time of crisis. Considering that academic advisors lead advisee in academic settings, they should be able to acknowledge the differences and create a less stressful situation for the advisee to perform, which otherwise would have affected advisee’s academic productivity.

Application of Kirton’s Adaption Innovation Theory

The research team chose to apply the A-I theory to investigate causes behind interpersonal disconnect between advisor and international advisee. KAI is very effective in various settings (Buffington, Jablokow, & Martin, 2002; Carland, Carland, & Stewart, 2000; Jablokow & Booth, 2006) and it helps a person identify problem-solving style and potential separately.

If the teacher and the student are trained with the knowledge of A-I theory then it will help them to look into these intercultural issues in a completely scientific way, which will not only provide them with an unbiased approach but also help them find a desired solution. Understanding student’s cognitive style will help the advisor guide the student in a customized way (Talbert & Edwin, 2008) which otherwise could have created misunderstanding and

dissatisfaction in advising relationship. They will not only recognize adaptive and innovate students but will be well aware of their preferences in working style. They can provide structured instruction or guidance to more adaptive students and encourage innovative mentees to come up with new ideas. This student centric pedagogy or academic support will help the advisor provide comfortable and ideal situation for the advisee to work according to their preferred style. Such an approach from advisor's end might keep the advisee happy and contribute towards creating human connect with the advisor. It has been reported that, a healthy mentoring relationship helps international students focus on their work and prevent them from getting distracted (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009; Wheeler Keller & DuBois, 2010; Wilson et al., 2011).

In multi-cultural settings there can be instances where reason behind a particular action of the international student is not relatable to the advisor which might create disconnect. In such situation, the advisor's cognitive complexity might help him or her understand ambiguities and entertain various explanations (Arthur, 2004). Understanding cognitive complexity provides flexibility in terms of accepting variabilities and would prevent the advisor from drawing premature conclusions about the advisee's actions (Arthur & Stewart, 2011). Further, training of A-I theory will teach the advisor to strike the right balance of being sensitive towards certain cultural issues and overlooking cultural differences as situation calls for.

If students are trained with KAI then it will help them recognize their own preferred style, which will guide them to make judicious choices and decisions in life. Knowledge in KAI will prevent both the teacher and the student from passing judgments based on preconceived notion influenced by the social stigmas. Improving connection between people will help nurture organizational culture and cherish diversity.

Conceptual Framework

Bandura (1977) designed social learning theory as a framework for learning in a social environment. Later he redefined his previous theory by incorporating cognition as a personal factor for learning and named it as Socio Cognitive theory (1986). Bandura in his triadic model of socio-cognitive theory describes that learning happens when environment interact with the cognitive or personal factor. Interaction of these factors leads to certain behavioral change. Bandura stressed self-efficacy as a major personal factor; however, Deci and Ryan (2000) argued that self-efficacy does not encompass the complexity of motivation that drives a person to engage in an activity.

Considering an individual's desire to grow indicates the importance of environment (organization) round, Deci and Ryan, 2000 coined the term "organismic" that meant driving factors behind an individual's choice and action. Taking this argument and justification into consideration, Anderson (2007) used grounded theory to introduce the Organismic Social Cognitive Perspective (OSCP). Using Bandura's social cognitive theory as a foundation, replaced self-efficacy with a more complex theory of self-determination. Anderson (2007) asserted that looking at the various factors of intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivation would provide a more comprehensive look at the personal driving forces impacting engagement, thus allowing predication of one's behavior based on self-directed controls. Anderson, Woods-Wells, Amal, and Bass (2016) expanded on the original work of Anderson to look at the impact of identity as the personal factor in driving pro-social behaviors. This research study utilizes this recent work of the Organismic Socio-Behavioral Perspective (OSBP), a slightly different version of Organismic Socio-Cognitive Perspective. Whereas OSCP focused on the process of structured learning, the context in which OSBP is appropriate is broader and can be used to describe

motivation in a variety of situations, particularly as it relates to studying underrepresented or marginalized groups (Anderson et al., 2016).

Lawler, (2015) describes identity in two parts. One part is how the society draws an interpretation of who you are based on the roles you play and the other part is introspection of oneself that encompasses one's like, dislike, strength, weaknesses etc. Skitka (2003, 2002) further states that the process of self-actualization influences one's morals and judgment. At the same time, the judgment or choices a person makes in life defines their identity. This research studies individual's behavior and the perceptions the environment has about one's behavior through the multicultural lens of identity. With culture being a social construct, it has influence on the behavioral trait or identity of an individual (Kidd & Teagle, 2012). Therefore, since culture is all encompassing, OSBP helps to explain how cultural forces impact identity, environmental feedback, and subsequently, one's behavior.

The triadic reciprocal model for OSBP (see Figure 1) shows the interactions among personal, environmental and behavioral factors and explains the impact that cognitive processing has on engagement and prosocial behaviors (Anderson et al., 2016). More specifically, it describes the intra- and inter-personal communication of an individual in establishing a relationship with environment (Anderson et al., 2016). The three main functions of the perspective are *Expressed Identity*, *Observed Behavior* and *Environmental Feedback*. The arrows between the functions indicate a feedback loop that is occurring among the players involved, which often occur simultaneously (Anderson et al., 2016).

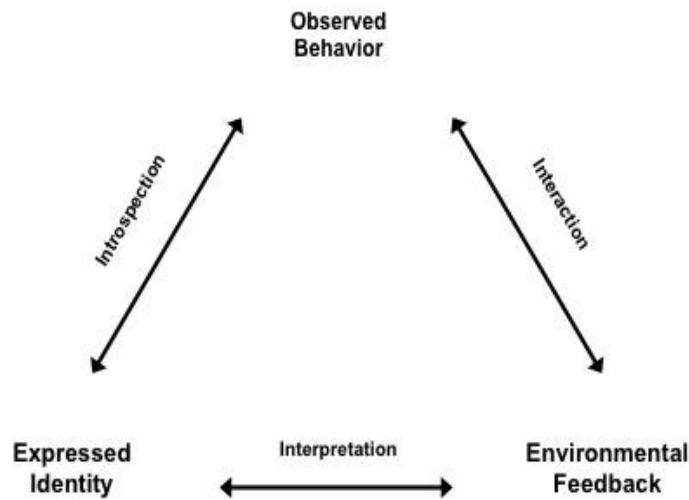


Figure 2. The Conceptual Model illustrating The Organismic Socio-Behavioral Perspective.

For this study, the conceptual framework is operationalized as follows. Descriptions of the international student as it relates to preferred problem solving style, values and beliefs, and demographic information represents expressed identity. The advisor is representative of the environmental feedback, although, as individuals, the student observes (as part of the environment) their expressed identity and behaviors as well. Finally, descriptions of the international student behavior, as reported by the student and the advisor, are representative of observed behavior. To this end, the key components of the perspective are explained I the follow manner.

Expressed Identity

Expressed identity is the “I am” aspect of an individual, which demonstrates one’s positionality in a given circumstance (Anderson et al. 2016). This cognitive function includes a

person's educational background, socioeconomic status, position holding in office, religion, nationality, culture, gender, etc. The term "expressed identity" indicates that the interpretation of one's positionality is based on parts of identity that one chooses to express (Anderson et al. 2016).

International students in U.S. academic settings bear lot of other identities besides being a graduate student. They are foreigners, they look different from native people, have different food habit, mother tongue, religion, culture, socio-economic background and have different sets of morals compared to American people. Also, since graduate students are mature individuals, they might be a parent or a spouse as well. All of these identities govern their thinking process, which in turn motivates them to act or behave in a certain way. Sometimes depending upon the situation, a student might prefer to give priority to other facets of his/her identity that might interfere in their academic life causing misunderstanding with one's advisor. Russell et al. (2010) pointed out the fact that continuous coping from only the student's side with excessive uncertainty and pressure in the foreign land results in lack of interest and energy to socialize. It also affects their motivation to act. To avoid disengagement, advisors should acknowledge the different identities of the international and understand the responsibilities that come along with it. Therefore, high cultural intelligence from the advisor may provide the needed support for the international student to help them to overcome from cultural crisis within the host society (Ng, Van Dyne, & Ang, 2009). An attempt from both advisor and student to visualize the problem from the other person's standpoint might provide clarity in terms of the other person's priority. Room for proper and open communication between the dyad is vital to avoid assumptions.

Observed Behavior

Observed behavior is the "I want to" aspect of an individual (Anderson et al., 2016). An individual's action to fulfill a certain purpose is termed as an observed behavior because it is

only the behaviors that are seen and/or acknowledged that impact the expressed identity and the perceptions of the environment (Anderson et al., 2016). With respect to this study, it is the behavior of the student that is seen, which is subjected to judgment and interpretation by the advisor and academic environment. Additionally, the behavior that the international student chooses to acknowledge is governed by their identity and the desired outcome of said behaviors (Anderson et al., 2016).

The main purpose behind why international students come to the U.S. is for a quality education (Lee & Rice, 2007). However, the literature points out the fact that in order to survive in US academic settings international students face a lot of struggle (Brown & Holloway, 2008). Some of the barriers includes visa restrictions (Cifici & Williams-Nickelson, 2008), academic expense (Sheehy, 2013), lack of English language proficiency, changed academic culture, changed living condition including societal norms, food habits, climate to name a few (Berry, 2006). To overcome these barriers, international students act in survival mode. There are some who readily seek advice from their friends regarding dealing with an unknown situation and others who are hesitant to ask for help from others (Kuo et al., 2006). Differences in survival strategies are influenced by the cultural origin of an individual (Kim, Li, & Ng, 2005; Wei et al., 2007; 2008). Maintaining public decorum's like verbal and non-verbal gestures, intensity of eye contact, physical distance maintained while having a conversation, or different ways of physical touch (Matsumoto & Juang, 2012), voicing out opinions in public, or speaking in class, or promoting themselves according to job demand is also seen to be culturally influenced (Mak et al. 2009; Hong & Ham, 2001). When it comes to problem solving, every individual wants to solve problems based on their preferred working style (Kirton, 2011). Kirton (2011) categorized people as adaptive if they preferred to “do things better” and innovative if their preference is to

“do things in a different way”. However, native cultural norms may impact if the international student acts in his or her preferred style or if he or she chooses to enact coping behaviors in order to be consistent with native cultural norms.

Environmental Feedback

Environmental feedback refers to “how my action is perceived” by others (Anderson et al., 2016). With respect to the research study, environmental feedback is the perception of the advisor. Feedback of the advisor is dependent upon advisee’s observed behavior and their expressed identity (Anderson et al., 2016). Since, an advisee apart from being a student has other identities that have direct or indirect effect on their behavior besides acknowledging the complexities of the multicultural environment where his or her actions are judged, there exist a chance for misunderstandings. Often academic advisors are either ignorant of or have a completely different perception about the challenges facing international students, which sometimes stands in the way of inclusion (Andrade, 2006). To make sense of advisee’s expressed identity, the advisor should have a holistic knowledge about the advisee. This might also help to reason out certain action of the advisee as the actions are governed by the identity of the individual.

Feedback Loops

Connecting the aforementioned components are the reciprocal feedback loops that are termed *introspection*, *interaction* and *interpretation* (Anderson et al., 2016). It is an internal thought process by which the individual evaluates how self-acknowledged actions fulfilled desired pro-social goals (Anderson et al., 2016). Between expressed identity and environmental thought process termed as interpretation. The environment will interpret the value of the individual to accomplishing a desired goal based on one’s beliefs, values and perceptions about

the expressed identity (Anderson et al. 2016). In turn, the individual also evaluates how the environment values one's expressed identity based on environmental feedback he or she receives (Anderson et al., 2016). Finally, between the environmental feedback and an individual's observed behavior is a feedback loop called interaction. It explains how the individual engages with the environment and is the output of the cognitive processing (perceptions) of the players (Anderson et al., 2016). For example, the advisor will either engage or disengage with the international students based on his or her evaluation of the student's observed behavior. This positive or negative feedback from the advisor will in turn impact the way the student behaves going forward. The ultimate result is, either the environment or the individual will have to adjust in order to elicit pro-social behaviors from the student.

Conclusion

As explained by OSBP, an international student, driven by some purpose, behaves or acts in a certain way in front of his or her advisor. The advisor in turn reacts to the advisee's behavior. The feedback that the advisee receives from the advisor due to his or her behavior makes the advisee reflect on the action. Also, perception of advisor towards advisee's expressed identity affects advisee's action. Since this study involves different facets of one's identity that includes nationality, ethnicity, native language, etc., which at times are not relatable by individuals from a different background, this framework actually helps to figure out the reason behind such disconnect. Also, this very aspect of research work adds to complexities in terms of overlapping of different identities hence complex behavior and how environment reads such behaviors and identities.

For the study, student participants were asked to describe their perception about their advisor from academic and personal point of view. They were also asked to articulate their

expectation from their advisor, their preferred problem solving style, perception about host country and freedom to express ones culture. Similarly, faculty advisor participants had to respond to questions related to their perception of international advisee at personal and professional level, their perceptions about their advisees' cultural background, perception from standpoint of an advisor, and their personal stand point as well. Depending upon the interaction and interpretation between the advisor and the advisee, the researcher was able to identify the themes that worked positively and those that worked negatively towards building a healthy advisor-advisee relationship.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Design

This chapter describes different steps for conducting the research work. Demographic information of the participants is documented along with sampling procedure, data collection techniques, and various steps of quantitative data analysis. Reflexivity and research limitations are mentioned as an effort to check the biases of the researcher with regard to interpretation of data. Lastly, the researcher describes the anticipated outcome of this study.

The researcher carried out the evaluation of relationships between international student and their advisors by using an emergent research design (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker, 2013). More specifically, the data was collected in the form of semi-structured interviews and KAI scores of the participants. Due to exploratory nature of this line of inquiry, one can never be sure about what can be learned from engaging this potentially vulnerable population in a method that lends itself to self-expression. Therefore, the direction of data collection followed the flow of the participants and emerged as the study proceeded.

Participants

The subject pool consisted of full time international graduate students having at least one year of graduate school experience in U.S. academic settings and faculty advisors who had experience in advising international graduate students. Participants were from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, College of Natural Resources and Environmental Science, and College of Veterinary Medicine at Virginia Tech. Criteria for selecting student participants involved at least one year of graduate school experience in US academic settings besides being from a foreign country. Faculty advisors were selected based on their experience in advising international students. The subject pool was chosen while keeping in mind the university's

priority for diversity and inclusion by understanding how to better support international students while they study in United States of America. Out of 110 email invitations that were sent to various international graduate students, 20 of them gave positive response. All the participants took part in completing the KAI. Fourteen participants turned up for the interview. Five advisors completed the KAI and three faculty advisors agreed to participate in an interview. The researcher recorded their interview and took into account their KAI scores. To address researcher's bias the interviewer was not made aware of participants KAI score before the interview was conducted in order to avoid leading questions. The demographic information of the participants is listed in Table 1 and 2. Participants are represented by pseudonyms in order to establish an identity while protecting their personal information. When choosing pseudonym, the researcher kept in mind the gender and country of origin of the participants. Names were randomly chosen from an online free source.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Student Participants

| Participant Pseudonym | Nationality | Degree Program | Academic Year | Years in the U.S. | KAI Score |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| Bahati | Tanzania | Masters | 2 nd | 1.5+ | 104 |
| Andrea | Honduras | PhD | 3 rd | 7 | 65 |
| Jayden | South Sudan | PhD | 2 nd | 2+ | 75 |
| Kalino | Sudan | PhD | 4 th | 12 | 89 |
| Tanya | India | PhD | 5 th | 5 | 64 |
| Hwan | South Korea | PhD | 5 th | 4.5+ | 75 |
| Jabari | Nigeria | PhD | 2 nd | 1.5+ | 76 |
| Chen | China | PhD | 3 rd | 2.5+ | 85 |

| Participant Pseudonym | Nationality | Degree Program | Academic Year | Years in the U.S. | KAI Score |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| Hua | China | PhD | 2 nd | 1.5+ | 103 |
| Karan | India | PhD | 5 th | 5 | 68 |
| Eamon | Senegal | Masters | 2 nd | 3 | 83 |
| Vadik | Armenia | PhD | 3 rd | 3 | 103 |
| Walid | Senegal | Masters | 2 nd | 1.5+ | 90 |
| Ranbir | India | PhD | 6 th | 6 | 95 |

Table 2

Demographic Information of Faculty Advisor Participants

| Participant Pseudonym | Nationality | Years in Academia | Total Advisees | Total International advisee | KAI Score |
|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Dr. Thompson | American | 23 | 60+ | 20 | 124 |
| Dr. Brown | American | 8 | 12 | 2 | 127 |
| Dr. Smith | American | 3.5 | 5 | 2 | 107 |

Sampling Procedure

Since all the official information of international graduate students are protected under FERPA (Family Education Rights & Privacy Acts) regulation, convenience sampling was done to recruit the participants for the study using public information. The researcher could approach those international students whose name and contact information was present on the university website. Names of their main advisor were collected from the interested student participants as a part of demographic information. Those faulty advisors were approached via email to participate in the research study.

Data Collection

The researcher has collected both qualitative as well as quantitative data in this study.

The researcher invited probable participants by sending them personal invitation letter requesting them to participate in the study. The agreed student participants signed the online consent form by responding to survey.vt.edu website. The link was provided to the participants via email. Faculty participants gave verbal consent to be interviewed. After obtaining consent from the participants, they were assigned a study number. The researcher hence represented the participants with those numbers. Student participants were given the KAI inventory to be completed online. Participants were asked to provide their demographic information (see Table 1 and 2). This was followed by data collection interview to glean insights about the factors that impact mentoring relationship from the perspective of international students and faculty advisors. The faculty participants completed the KAI inventory via online administration, which was followed by a face-to-face interview. One of the faculty advisors was interviewed via WebEx due to being out of the country at the time of data collection. KAI scores of the participants were compared to their interview responses to see if at all there is any connection between their problem solving style and the nature of problem they are facing in mentoring relationship.

Instrumentation

The main objective of this qualitative inquiry is to capture the lived experiences of the participants relevant to the phenomenon of study (Ary et al., 2013). Since the method of collecting data was based on interviewing, human investigator is the instrument of this study. The idea of introducing humans as the instrument was introduced by Lincoln and Guba (1985). For the purpose of quantitative inquiry, KAI was used. KAI is a single page questionnaire consisting of 33 items in total. It takes around 10 to 15 minutes in an average for a person to

answer the questions according to what they prefer to do in life. The internal validity, which is represented by the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the instrument ranges from .84 to .89. KAI scale ranges from 32 to 160 points, with a mean of 95. KAI score of a person is highly resistant to change (Kirton, 2011).

Semi-Structured Interview

The procedure for data collection was through the semi-structured interview (Ary et al, 2013). At first, participants were given an introduction about the nature of the exploration and about the phenomenon of the study, which is to investigate the factors that affect the relationship between international student and their advisee in US academic settings. Then the researcher described the procedures, risks, and benefits attached with this research study. The researcher walked the participant through the terms and conditions of the consent form, and subsequently obtained participant's consent for the data collection interview. At first, basic demographic information of the participants was collected. The respondent's demographic information was not audio recorded but was kept into account. The demographic questions also served as a checkpoint to confirm that the participant met the specific selection criteria for recruitment in the study.

Since the study encompasses international graduate students and faculty advisors, different set of questions were prepared for both the groups. Demographic interview questions framed for international graduate students included their nationality, degree program that they are currently in, their academic year, the name of their college and years they have spent in the U.S. Similarly, faculty advisors were asked about their current position, nationality, years in the U.S. (if not born in US) and years spent as a professor.

After demographic information was gathered, participants were interviewed to gathering information on the advising phenomenon. Participants were called by pseudonym in order to maintain their confidentiality. This part of the interview helped the researcher capture the lived experiences of the participants about the phenomenon of study. Open-ended questions were framed to glean the perceptions and attitudes of international students and faculty advisors towards the mentoring relationships. Probes were used to help the participant elaborate on their lived experiences related to the study. The participant's response was audio recorded, transcribed, coded and analyzed. The interview questions were based on study objectives, the influencing factors and the framework of the study. International students and faculty advisors were asked different sets of questions.

Questions asked to the international students are as follows (see Appendix 1).

- To describe characteristics of the student pertinent to the framework (ex. educational and professional background, intercultural competence, and A-I score), students were asked about their preferred working or problem solving style, their perception of the host country and their freedom to express their own culture in US.
- To identify themes consistent in positive versus challenged advisor-student relationships from the view point of the international advisee, international students were asked to describe their perceptions about their advisors at a personal and professional level.

Questions asked to the faculty advisors are as follows (see Appendix 2).

- To describe characteristics of the advisor pertinent to the framework (ex. educational and professional background, intercultural competence, and A-I score), advisors were asked questions related to mentoring strategies, cultural plurality and work ethics.

- To identify themes consistent in positive versus challenged advisor-student relationships from the viewpoint of the advisor of the international student, faculty advisors were asked to describe their perceptions about their international advisee at a personal and professional level.

Qualitative Data Analysis Process

The researcher used whole text data analysis method for this study. Sentence was considered the unit of analysis in this study. It is based on the analytic procedures developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Corbin and Strauss (2008). The process involved interpreting free flowing text. At first the investigator interviewed the participants. Participants' demographic information was noted, followed by data gathering interviews that were recorded with consent. The recorded interview was transcribed. While transcribing, special attention was paid towards the tone of the expression, emphasis on words and phrases, and pauses taken by the participant while responding to the data collecting questions. The researcher noted an overview of participants lived experience towards the phenomenon during the first reading of the transcript (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The researcher took notes about various biases all throughout the research process in order to acknowledge the biases towards the phenomenon of the study and at the same time stay neutral during the data collection and analysis process. While reading the transcript for the second time, the researcher made use of line-by-line approach to study the participant's relevance of response to the research questions. The next step was coding. Coding is a method of extraction of meaning with the help of words or short phrases. Codes formed captured the explicit and implicit meaning of the excerpt (Corbin & Strauss 2008). Some of the excerpts had more than one code. Few of the initial codes got modified. Re-coding was carried out to control

researcher's biases. The researcher then compared and contrasted different codes to identify the similarity and difference in them. Similar codes were clustered together to form categories, which captured meaning at the higher level of abstraction. Categories were assessed based on their internal and external homogeneity. For fine-grained analysis, subcategories were developed (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) as well. Next, all interviews and themes were discussed with an external rater versed in KAI theory and mentoring and final analyses were made according to this triangulation process. To address researcher's bias, the interviewer was not made aware of participants KAI score before the interview was conducted in order to avoid leading questions. Finally, the researcher drew an analysis of the data regarding the positive versus negative factors in advising relationship from perspective of an international student and faculty advisee based on interpretation of research study data. Relevant literatures were cited as a support of justification of the researcher.

Research Limitations

It is worth mentioning that some international student participant had issues communicating in English in which the interview was conducted. This might have restricted them from sharing their lived experience in a detailed manner. Since, a human being is used as the data collecting instrument, factors like the person's mood, memory, expressiveness, perspective, mental and emotional condition during the interview process were not the same and are strong enough to generate variation in response of a person. Convenient sampling process was utilized during participant selection because of which the findings of the study cannot be generalized. Since the faculty participants were interviewed by the researcher who was a graduate student, the faculty advisors' response might not have been as candid as with another faculty member.

Anticipated Outcome

The researcher expected that a huge number of international graduate students and faculty advisors would take part in the research study. The researcher assumed that the participants would share their perception about advising relationship and their lived experiences related to the phenomenon of study in an elaborative way. Regarding the finding of the research, the investigator presumed that one of the main reason behind disparity between the academic advisor and the international advisee could be due to a problem-solving style difference between the two individuals, which is often camouflaged by the visual cultural differences.

Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

This chapter addresses the four research questions by providing information about the characteristic of international graduate student and faculty advisor participants. It also highlights the factors that affect international advising relationship from viewpoint of international student and faculty advisors. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the factors that affect advising relationship between the international graduate student and their academic advisor in U.S. academic settings. More specifically, are cultural or cognitive differences toward problem solving present, which differences are more salient in defining the advising relationship, and are coping behaviors being employed and by whom? This research work addresses the gaps in the literature by answering the following research questions.

1. What are the characteristics of the advisor pertinent to the framework (ex. educational and professional background, intercultural competence, and A-I score)?
2. What are the characteristics of the student pertinent to the framework (ex. educational and professional background, intercultural competence, and A-I score)?
3. What are the themes consistent in positive versus challenged advisor-student relationships from the viewpoint of international students?
4. What are the themes consistent in positive versus challenged advisor-student relationships from the viewpoint of advisors of international students?

Research Question 1: Characteristic of International Student Participants

There were 18 international students who took part in the research study out of which 14 participated in the interview. Students were from 10 different countries. Eleven of them were in PhD programs and four students were pursuing master's degree. Most of the students belonged

to College of Agriculture and Life Science and few of them were from College of Natural Resources and Environment. Out of 14 students, six of them were in their 2nd year, three students were in their 3rd year, two students in their 4th year, and the final three students had five years or more in their academic program.

Research Question 2: Characteristic of Faculty Advisor Participants

Three faculty advisors (Dr. Thompson, Dr. Brown and Dr. Smith) participated in the research study. They were full-time faculty in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Virginia Tech. All of them were U.S. born; one of the faculty members (Dr. Smith) spent an extended amount of time living outside of the U.S. Each one of them had multiple experiences advising international students in U.S. academic settings. Dr. Thompson had 23 years of experience in academia where he had advised more than 60 students and 1/3rd of them were international. Dr. Brown had 8 years of experience, advised 10 to 12 graduate students out of which two were international. Dr. Smith had three and a half years of experience in academia and was advising 5 advisees as committee chair out of which 2 were international students. Three of them were strong advocates of diversity and visualized it as a strength in academia. They were comfortable in mixing with people from other nationalities and cultures and exhibited a strong desire to know more about foreign cultures.

Research Questions 3 & 4: Themes Affecting Advising Relationship from the Perspective of International Student and Faculty Advisors

The perceptions of the international student participants and faculty advisor participants toward advising relationships were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. International student participants were asked to describe their perception about their advisor at an academic and personal level. Also, they reflected upon their advisors' support inside and outside the academic

settings. They highlighted their problem-solving style as well. A few questions were asked to know their perception about host country and their freedom to express their own culture while their academic journey in the host country. Advisor participants reflected on their job responsibility, and their perception about international graduate student at personal and academic level, and from the viewpoint of an advisor. They were also asked to reflect on their personal standpoint with regard to advising international students. Responses of participants were coded and factors affecting the advising relationship were identified.

Table 3

Factors consistent with positive versus challenged advising relationship from the viewpoint of faculty advisor participants

| Positive Factors | Negative Factors |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Critical thinking ability | Mismatched work interest |
| Hard working | Lack of drive |
| Driven and Passionate | Lack of passion |
| Global perspective | Unable to generate ideas |
| Interest in same domain of work | Lack of dedication and hard work |
| Dedication | Lack of work ethics--punctuality |
| Coping | |
| Ability to generate new ideas | |
| Open mindset | |

Table 4

Factors consistent with positive versus challenged advising relationship from the viewpoint of international student participants

| Positive Factors | Negative Factors |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Feedback/ Constructive criticism | Mismatched work interest |
| Trust, Faith, confidence | Lack of proper communication |
| Flexibility | Language barrier |
| All-encompassing development | No constructive criticisms received |
| Interest in same domain of work | Lack of feedback |
| Respect—thought, culture, work judgment | Lack of independence in work |
| Proper communication | Ideas were not heard |
| Understanding each other's perspective | Lack of detailed guidance |
| Accommodative and coping nature | Cognitive misalignment |

These factors were grouped into themes. Positive and negative implications of certain factors (themes) are described underneath every theme. In general, international student participants faced certain difficulties and barriers while in the U.S. These factors directly or indirectly affect the advisor-student relationship. The common issues discussed were:

Theme 1: Language Barrier in U.S. Academic Settings

Most of the international student participant faced issues related to English language communication. Faulty participants were well aware of such issues and found this short coming very justifiable. It never was a factor for judging an international advisee's potential. In fact, faculty advisors acknowledged the fact that sometimes reading in English can be intimidating for an international student. One of the main reasons behind students not proficient in English was their lack of enough exposure to the language. Dr. Brown said, "...probably an international student is going to be more intimidated having to read and write in English language, which may be their second, third, fourth, or fifth language. I am always in envy and awe because of the fact that they know so many other languages than me." It is evident that the faculty advisor is very considerate about this issue and tries to visualize the problem from the perspective of an international student. Having said that, faculty participants expect their international advisee to work towards gaining command over the language while in U.S. They genuinely tried to help foreign students overcome the language barrier.

Participants who came from African countries explained that they had their earlier education in French and was only introduced to English for a very short period of time. Walid said, "I just study English 2 years...But I do my best. I have to work very hard. I face difficulty in reading. Reading is very, very complicated, very hard to understand. Sometime you see a word, which is complex. You try to find the meaning of that word. You will never find the meaning." Lack of language proficiency interfered with cognitive understanding of the subject matter.

Eamon reported similar issues. He stated, "The language. That is really hard. I spent like six months learning the language and that is a really short time. Six month is not enough time to

learn a language for me to enter and University...That is kind of crazy because I was coming from a French speaking country.” It was an issue for him to follow the dialogue of American people. He added, “I used to listen to people and try to understand what they're talking and figure out what they're speaking and these people talk really fast.” Lack of exposure to a language acted as a barrier for him to understand the meaning it carried.

International students carried heavy accent while they spoke in English, which made it difficult for Americans to understand what they were trying to say. Jayden pointed out that, “The language barrier is always there in the U.S. If you are a foreigner and when you talk, Americans will just look at you and will be like, “Are you talking in English? What are you saying? I don’t get it.” You have to sometimes repeat yourself.” Further he added that, “Some people do it deliberately. Even though they understood the thing, they just what to intimidate you to make you feel inferior.” Unable to communicate their thought process might have made them feel low and insulted sometimes. They felt intimidated and frustrated trying to explain themselves repeatedly. Attitude of people around them made them feel inferior about their shortcomings to communicate in English. Hwan shared a similar experience. He mentioned that, “English, I wish I could speak like all American colleagues. But I just can’t. Sometimes I have some ideas in my head but I just can’t speak it. If I have 100s of ideas in my head I can speak 10, where were I met my lab mate I think she had less than 10 ideas she had but she can just speak out what she had in her head. My language problem might make me look some kind of stupid or dumb.”

International student expressed frustration and fear of getting judged because of unable to communicate his thoughts and knowledge in professional settings due to lack of proficiency in English language. This might have a negative impact on their self-confidence level.

Poor communication skill makes it difficult for international students to enter the job market in U.S. Kalino shared his hurdles of getting a job. He said, “They have a position there and many times I have applied for that position. He would not hide; he would just tell me, ‘but I cannot hire you because you do not speak good English’.” Knowledge acquisition becomes meaningless if not communicated properly. Language proficiency falls under basic criteria to qualify for a position, one need to be proficient in English to get a job in the U.S.

Language barrier can also restrict international students from socializing. Hwan said, “So, there are two students. One is me and the other one is an American girl. We can’t speak English properly because it is not our mother tongue so I sometimes have problem communicating with her, I can’t discuss with her films or just chatting things. Sometimes I tell that.” Unable to hold a conversation with their American peers simply because of language barrier, restricts them from knowing about host country culture as well.

Participants who came from country where English is official language of communication or were exposed to this language from early childhood, had no issues with verbal communication. Andrea said, “I have always spoken pretty good English so I can get along with almost anybody here.” Proficiency in English language made the international student more compatible in U.S settings. But, some of these participants had other issue like understanding the dialect or writing in professional American English. Despite language proficiency, Tanya faced problem understand American’s dialect. She stated, “Problems related to the language is only if the person has an accent. So, if it is a mid-western or southern accent then I would not understand. First few years I could not understand a single thing. I still don’t. People with a very southern or Virginian accent I don’t understand that. Even though my English I would say is

pretty good.” English being a foreign language, different accents made it difficult for an international student to follow dialect of American people.

English communication skills include both understanding others dialect, and ability to communicate one’s thought process fluently. It seemed to be very difficult for international student because of lack of enough exposure and practice. Faculty advisor participants seemed to understand such situation and took certain steps to provide enough exposure to their international students.

Dr. Thompson and Dr. Brown took their international advisees to different places to let them know how people communicate in the host country. Dr. Thompson mentioned that, “I try to expose them two different places where they have to communicate with other graduate students and faculty members, taking them to different meetings. We take people to New England region. This time we took international graduate students along with us we have taken them to Florida to Ohio just to travel and go and see how the American fabric is like and practice those communication skills.”

Going to different places might have made the advisee’s of Dr. Thompson and Dr. Brown get acquainted with different accents. Interacting with people in professional and non-professional settings and at the same time experientially learning how people frame sentences and communicate their thought process helps international students gain command over English. Dr. Thompson also stressed on the fact that international students must read a lot of books in English which helps them to frame their patters of thought. He mentioned that, “There is no substitute and I always tell them to read a tremendous amount. They complain about it a lot, but you have to read to be able to communicate in the field and you have to read to understand what the current level of scholarship is in a field. Reading particularly helps International students

with verbal communication, it is because they can read and understand the patterns of thought and how people communicate.” It is to be noted that reading might not only help international students learn the language, it might also help students to gain knowledge and be up to date with the subject matter.

Hua completed her early education in English back home but still faces issue when it comes to professional writing in U.S academia. She said that, “In China they have like international schools, I went to the international school. That way there is not much difference.” But, when asked to reflect upon certain barriers faced in U.S. academia she explained, “The writing problem...That is the problem with me and my advisor. He always says, “No you are writing is not that professional. You must change it.” Further she pointed out the fact that professional American English is different from the English she learned. She mentioned that, “You know Americans have their own way to write, it is not the same from where we are from.” Jayden also shared similar experience in this regard. He said, “So the British educational system is completely different from the American educational system. The English is also different.”

Interestingly, Dr. Smith also pointed out the fact that some of the international advisee face issues in writing professional American English. He said, “There is an English issue and an academic English issue and there are different registers and different discourses. Even being successful in a higher education setting in another country and even if English is the dominant language for study in that country there still might be different academic discourses with respect to how to write about different subjects so that is one of the challenges academically.” It is evident from his words that he understands the reason behind issue and does not judge a student’s potential based on their English writing skill. Dr. Brown reported the fact that international students were very conscious about their weakness to write in English and

possessed a fear of getting judged for the very reason. This restricts them from submitting their work on time. She mentioned that, “Again there are something but they don't want to show me depending on how critical will I be. The hardest part is to get to do things on time.”

In order to make situation comfortable and relatable to the foreign advisee, Dr. Brown choose to share her own stories of insecurities and short comings in English with her international students. Creating a non-judgmental environment for students might provide a safe place for them to try out new things and learn from their mistakes. Dr. Thompson pointed out the fact that international students tend to make a lot of grammatical mistake in their writing. To solve such issue, he chose to establish connections between international students and various editors who help these students improve grammar in writing. To make students overcome their fear and insecurity of getting judged and to boost their confidence level seems to be the biggest challenge for the advisors.

There are some success stories that not only motivate faculty advisors to work towards this issue, but also set examples for other international students. Few of such success case was reported by Dr. Thompson. He said, “I have to admit that a lot of times my International students end up writing better than my Native American students.” Advisee’s inner drive to survive amongst challenges, hard work, perseverance and support from advisor might have helped these student gain command over a foreign language within a short period of time.

Theme 2: Cultural Differences In and Outside Academic Settings

International student participants seemed to face cultural difference in and outside academic settings while their stay in the U.S. Faculty advisor participants seems to acknowledge this fact and tried to be accommodative at times. The faculty participants reported positive perceptions about the influx of international students into US institutions. Dr. Brown stated, “I

am very fortunate that the work I do involves people from different places in the world all the time.” Faculty participants pointed out the fact that international students contributed towards diversity in academia and brought in global perspective in research work. In this context Dr. Smith said, “Simply growing up in a different country and in a different culture and going to another country for education, brings a diverse and rich prospective to the U.S. dominant status quo.” There was a genuine interest from the side of the advisor participant to know more about other culture through these students.

Dr. Thompson mentioned that, “I really love learning more about their culture. Clearly my International students help me in my personal professional growth more than my domestic students.” Learning about other cultures enriched them at a personal level and helped them develop a better understanding of a subject matter from a different perspective. On the other hand, student participants had a slightly different take on cultural mismatch. The perspectives and lived experiences of student participants in this context are discussed below under two separate subthemes.

Sub-Theme 2.1: Cultural Difference inside Academic Settings

Most of the international students’ experienced academic discourse in U. S academia. Difference in terms of teaching method, context of study, style of writing, way of professional communication, and certain professional ethics seemed to have an impact on their academic accomplishments. Participants candidly shared their likes and dislikes about such differences.

Student participants appreciated regular updating of course content in the academic settings. Ranbir said, “I think US academic system is more up to date. Especially, if you are in an advance degree program like Masters and PhD. … It depends on your field. If the field is changing so vastly and quickly, then yeah, I mean there are courses, which are completely based

on research papers, which I like a lot. I am not fed something, which somebody discovered 5 years ago. That's one of the major differences." Jayden shared a similar reaction when he said, "What I like about America is they keep on upgrading and changing the syllabus. Every year you get new things. Every year things change. Every time you get new things. This is what I like about America." Desire to learn new things and to be updated in their field in order to keep up with the demands of the job market might be one of the reasons behind such liking.

In class discussion seemed to be a new experience for international students. Jayden said that, "The teaching method is completely different. Here we have a group discussion, which we don't do in Africa. We use the lecture system." Some international student liked the fact that they can freely share their thoughts about a topic in the class compared to what they used to do in their home country. Hua said, "Chinese don't speak in class. In our lecture the professor says and we write down. When he asks a question we will put up our hand first and then he will say, "Yeah, you can answer this question." Here you are welcome to express your idea in class." International students seem to like the fact that their opinions are heard and valued while in class discussion. This in turn might have created a feeling of inclusiveness in their mind.

International student seems to dislike the un-inclusive nature of some of the classes with respect to the subject matter taught. Jabari mentioned that, "Other thing is when I am in class, Americans give example and I can't relate with it. Because we are not from this culture and we did not grow up in America so I feel like I am lost sometimes... everybody starts talking and I am lost. What are they talking about? That is a big challenge apart. Sometimes I am lost or may not be able to contribute or understand of what they are saying in class or trying to grasp lectures."

Jabari makes it evident that due to lack of enough know about U.S. history and society, international students fail to follow the context of certain class examples and references. Unable to relate to follow classmates and the instructor, makes them feel left out. In this context, Dr. Brown said, “Sometimes they need more direction technically compared to an American advisee because they don't know how extension work goes on in Virginia. They haven't lived here for a long time. They don't know how things work and they haven't had much time to learn about a particular thing that is just like embedded in our culture. So they just need a little more time and guidance to know something that they haven't experienced.”

Dr. Brown recognized the need for extra guidance in terms of helping foreign students gain knowledge about American society and certain cultural norms and more so if the subject matter of study is related to social science and extension that includes people. There is high chance of not being able to relate to a foreign culture and societal norms for a person who is coming from another nation with a completely different set of value system. So, the instructor of a class should be aware of such issues while designing a class and should take examples in such a way that everyone can understand and relate to. Also, Dr. Brown mentioned that along with exposure, an international student also needs time to understand how things work in America. Time requirement might be because of the fact that understanding a different culture involves making sense of their value system as well.

Interestingly, students from some countries in Africa found difference in the concept of punctuality, which did not match with their culture. Eamon explains that with an example. He said, “For example if you set a meeting in America at 1:30 so it's like you expect me to come at 1:30 but in my Country, if you were telling me to come at 1:30 at the back of your mind it should be like I will be coming at 2:30.” Worth mentioning, when Dr. Brown was asked the difficulties

that they are facing with international advisee, one of the participant pointed out the same issue. She said, "Several of my students never think that they should come to meeting with me in the scheduled time. Sometimes it is 45 minutes before or 45 minutes after what they say." Further she mentioned that, "I am a planner and my research isn't planning things, so when I planned something to be at 3 o'clock in my mind it shows up to be at 3 o'clock."

Punctuality seemed to be an issue with some international students. It may be specific to people from a definite continent based on Eamon's words. But, this cultural difference seemed to interfere with the professional ethics of a student. An American advisor might to be ready always to compromise with such issue. Trying to develop an understanding of American academic culture and attempt to adapt to that might help the advisee bridge such gaps. The necessity of getting acclimatized to American academic culture is also advocated by Dr. Smith. He mentioned that, "Since the part of our job is to help the advisee be successful in their career path, I would have the advisee to get acclimatized to academic culture in America." He was ready to help his foreign students get acquainted to American culture. In fact, he viewed it as one of his professional responsibilities as an advisor that would enable his advisee to sustain and survive in U.S. academia.

There are some students who exhibited coping tendency to adapt to the American way within academia. Jayden mentioned, "Sometime in some courses the intense home work we have to do over here. Now I am just use to it. Initially it was challenging but now it is ok." Foreign students seemed to come in terms with the new system of education along with time. The mentality to accept changes and move along with it might have helped the international student overcome hurdles.

Sub-Theme 2.2: Cultural Difference outside Academic Settings

When the international students were asked to describe the difference in their host country culture with American culture, responses like “No Comparison”; “Lots of difference”; “We are way different”; were pre-dominant. Needless to say that, differences pointed out were dependent upon personal experiences. International students found American culture different in terms of food habit, way of interacting, way of dressing, social norms, social gestures, to name a few. To some Americans appeared more cordial socially and to others they appeared very official.

While discussing about necessity of international student to get adapted to American culture, it is interesting to note that faculty advisors never expected their international advisee to completely adapt to the host country culture. In fact, they visualized international students as representatives of different culture and related culture to “identity” of an individual. Dr. Thompson said, “Well, I have a belief that they should be able to be who they are and people around them can learn a great deal from who they are.” Further he states that, “You are a Bengali woman I cannot make you anything except that who you are and you need to be that and feel safe. In a perfect world we are all learning from you while you were here. That is wonderful. So I don't believe that students have to be Americanized to stay in our country.”

Dr. Brown thought that cultural adaptation is a personal choice. She mentioned that, “I think that should be their choice. One of the opportunities of being an international student over here is to experience that the U.S. culture...” She pointed out the fact that getting exposed to a different culture is an added advantage for international graduate students that might provide them with exposure and perspective. But she does not stress over adapting to American culture. She says, “I don't think that they have to adapt to anything except that they need to be willing to

use our public transport system and use our language our public currency simply because that's how they have to function to be able to stay here."

It is clearly mentioned in Dr. Brown's comment that getting exposed to a new culture and having experienced some of the facets of it does not necessarily mean to adopt that culture. But she thought that adopting bear minimum things is necessary for a foreign person to survive in a new environment. Dr. Smith exhibited similar mentality. His take on cultural adaptation sounds contextual. He states that, "Part of the experience of being an international student should be acclimatization into American academic life and also American life more generally and that is one reason why we bring International students. It is for them to know more about and adapt some elements off American culture."

It seems like it is very important and sometimes vital (depending upon the context) for an international student to have an understanding of how the surrounding environment function and act accordingly to be apt with the societal system around. Dr. Smith puts stress on the need for international students to get adjusted to American academic culture in order to survive in U.S. academia. He visualizes cultural adaptation as an opportunity for the foreign student to get exposed to and gather knowledge about different culture, societal norms and value system. Besides stressing the need to adapt, he also mentions that it is important for any individual to respect their original culture. He said, "...if they gain some of that without diminishing their own culture that they came with then I think that's good." He believed that adapting to host country culture should be an "additive property" for international students.

Lack of knowledge and exposure about American culture made majority of international students un-comfortable to hang out with American friends, which affected their social life in the U.S. This reason was more obvious with students who were new to America and were in their

initial years of graduation. Difference in outlook towards life, due to separate cultural norms and socio-economic background of a country might sometimes hindered easy mingling. Bahati said that, “I am comfortable with my American friends but I am more COMFORTABLE when I am with people especially from my continent...So, while discussing social issues, political issues is just like we are in the same boat. But, if are talking to Americans, American are like a hundred steps ahead from Africans. So, there are some differences in cultural ideas. For me as a Tanzanian, I feel that I am comfortable, but if I talk to an American they say, “No that is not the right thing to do. That is not a human right.” But, for me I feel that is my right. So that makes the difference. But, we usually don’t argue like arguing but it is just the discussion.” A difference in mentality is prominent that might have generated from difference in value system. Also, lack of exposure and open-mindedness is reflected that might have made things more uncomfortable between two individuals form different culture.

Another reason behind hesitation to socialize with American peers and colleagues might be because of not knowing how to hold a conversation in different cultural settings. They feel out of place. Hua said that, “I think now the problem lies how to talk in a party or in a social event. Sometimes Americans they can talk a lot but sometimes when you come to America you only introduce yourself, talk about your research, talk about your class and nothing else, and may be that is the problem. I still want to know how I can properly interact in social event.” Due to lack of exposure, the international student might not have observed how social interaction occurs in American society. But the positive point is, the foreign student expressed her desire to learn and know how social interaction happens in American society.

It is worth mentioning that differences in culture were never a barrier in the path of academic accomplishments of international students. They were mentally prepared to face such

differences before coming to U.S. They even expressed an open mind set towards other culture. Eamon stated, "I try to integrate in order to fit in well the system but not losing my values my own culture. I understand the plurality of culture." Bahati also exhibited same mentality. She said, "In general in every aspect there is a difference in culture. How people work is different, family issue is different, how we approach people or talk to people is different. Although, it's something you can learn and cope and live with it. If something is good you can change into it. But if something is bad you just decide to leave it." Students showed coping attitude in order to overcome the differences. There are certain factors that are closely related and have direct impact on the advising relationship. Those factors are grouped into themes and are listed below.

Theme 3: Effect of Building Inter-Personal Bonding on Advising Relationship

International students leave their family and other support system back home when they come to U.S. for higher education. They face a lot of issue trying to adjust to the cultural difference in America. Faculty participants not only acknowledged advisee's challenges but also made genuine and conscious effort to solve those issues. Dr. Brown said, "If I'm not willing to help them with all the things that are bothering them in the program or if I don't acknowledge those challenges, I feel like that's a lack of respect for them as a person." Mutual respect that includes respecting each other's religion, culture, belief, viewpoints, thoughts, actions, judgments, etc. seemed to be an important factor behind a good advisor-advisee relationship.

Most of the time the international advisee feels lonely and lack the presence of a confidant with whom they can share their difficult moments. Issues that they face in U.S may not be relatable to their family members back home. It is because of these reasons that most of the international students tend to expect emotional support from their advisor. Faculty advisors seemed to be well aware about such needs of their international advisees. Dr. Thompson said

that, “Another big insecurity is they are missing home and they are missing their family. We have parents who come to graduate school and have to leave their children at home.”

International students seemed to leave their family back in their country and come to U.S. to for higher education. They are all by themselves in the foreign nation and miss their family and support system. They feel lonely.

Dr. Smith highlighted other worries of international advisees. He said, “Challenges would include critical issues going around in their home country that could be affecting them either directly or sort of emotionally indirectly. It could be experiences from their past, which imposed challenges for them in different environments as they work through academic and personal lives. It could be challenges and writing academic English and using proper syntax and Grammar, citation style and all of that. It could be immigration or the concerns.”

Sometime political turmoil or war going on in student’s home country affects them emotionally because they are worried about the condition of their family back home due to the unrest. Also, lack of English communication skill is a thing of concern. Another important thing is their visa issue. Immigration rules being so stringent in United States worries them all the time and restricts them to certain choices inside academia. As an attempt to be beside international advisees as a support system, Dr. Brown stressed the need to build “confidence and trust” in advising relationship. Dr. Smith also bared similar views and said that, “First of all I like to develop a trusting relationship with them so that they know that they can share their insecurities or barriers or challenges with me.” Further he stated that. “Having a trusting relationship is operationalized by being friendly and being human with them.”

Words of Dr. Smith clarifies the fact that a friendly and welcoming attitude from advisor’s side makes the international advisee very comfortable and creates a trusting

environment for them to share their insecurities with their advisor. Response of one of the student participant (Bahati) supports this argument. Bahati who shared a very good advising relationship expressed her trust and faith in her advisor. She mentioned, “I feel comfortable. I feel like I am confident that he can lead me to the right direction. So I am safe with him like, he would not destroy my academic career, rather he will help me to build my academic career.” The advisee showed complete trust on her advisor in terms of guiding her career in the right direction. Trust and faith in advisor-advisee relationship seemed to be an important factor behind its success. The trusted relationship that she shared acted as a support system for her in time of distress.

International student participants seemed to like a friendly and welcoming personality of their advisor. They were very appreciative about advisors’ willingness to listen to their personal concerns. Although tendency to share personal concern with advisor partially depend on personality of the advisee, most of them seemed to appreciate advisors concern for them. Jabari reported that his advisor was genuinely concerned about his food and lodging when he first joined school. He said that, “When I came here in January he asked me about my housing, he was concerned that I have a place to sleep and to eat. I have shared concerns with him but not too personal but issues that affects academics. I let him know.” Jabari acknowledged advisor’s concern. Advisor’s friendly attitude might have created a comfortable environment for the advisee to share his personal issues that might overlap with his academic life.

Dr. Brown mentioned that her advisees tend to stop by and share their stories with her. She said, “Generally they want someone to listen to their issues really listen and have empathy.” It seems like international students wants to share some of their personal stories with their advisor and wants their advisor to be willing to listen to such stories. They are appreciative of the

fact that they can share their concern with their advisor besides being thankful towards advisor's understanding attitude. Also, sharing different stories of life help the advisor know the advisee in a holistic way which would prevent the advisor from being judgmental at times hence creating a safe environment for the advisee to learn.

In this regard, Bahati shared her experience with us. She mentioned that her advisor's support was extremely comforting to her in time of distress. She said, "One day I went to his office and just few days back my mum got car accident. I was sad. I talked to him and told him like my mum got car accident and she broke leg bones. He was so supportive. I was just crying and he mentioned, "Ok, don't worry, everything will be ok." Advisee found relief and mental peace to be able to share her personal issues with her advisor. Supportive nature of the advisor was highly appreciated by the advisee.

Jayden had similar experience with her advisor as Bahati. He said, "There was a time I was travelling to Africa. He gave me some money for air taxi from apartment to airport. I just called him and he just arrived. He told that when you will be coming back I will bring you from the airport. I had the money, but he actually wanted to make my life easy. I felt that he is really very close to me especially when I lost my brother." The advisee seemed to be overwhelmed with the fact that his advisor was there beside him and left no stone unturned to make situation comforting for him in his times of crisis. This genuine concern, mental support and physical help of the advisor towards the advisee, contributed towards trust building in their relationship. It created human connect.

International students seemed to appreciate their advisors interest in their culture besides being respectful towards their belief and practices. Participants were asked if their advisors gave them space in terms of cultural beliefs and practices. To this there were few participants who did

not possess personal experience but share positive secondary experiences about their advisors. Speaking about her advisor, Hua said, “I don’t believe that I had needs that were not met. But, I have seen that he would not, like for example there is an Irian student and he has never stopped her from praying. She does pray like five times a day and she would just go to quiet corners and do it.” It seemed like the advisor respect the international student’s religious belief and practices in the work place. People who did have direct experience concluded that their advisors took an interest in their culture and there was mutual respect that existed in this regard.

Bahati said, “Yes, he does. About cultural beliefs, we talk we discuss things and he is ok. He doesn’t offend me in anything regarding my culture. So, I did not experience anything that makes me unhappy. He never made fun of my culture. So, we just respect each other. We are good friends. We talk and we have that relationship.” It is quite evident that mutual respect for each other’s culture and belief system played an important role behind good advisor-advisee relationship. Also, providing a student with a non-judgmental environment for the student helps them feel safe for having an open discussion. A platform for an open discussion helps them understand each other in a better way.

Advisor participants’ seemed to be very respectful about other nation’s culture. To them, guiding international students was an opportunity to learn about other culture. Dr. Brown described how she made an effort to learn about her advisee’s culture. Her advisee happens to work with her remotely from Africa because of which she tries to abide by certain cultural norms of the host country of the advisee. She stated, “I just try to keep a track about other cultures holiday while setting up meetings and setting deadlines.” Advisors respect for advisee’s culture is expressed through her flexible and accommodative mind set.

It was observed that international advisee wanted to know their advisors at a personal level. Jabari said, “I expect him to relate to me at a personal level as a brother. Younger brother and not just official relation like a student.” Advisees enjoyed meeting their advisors in unofficial settings and expressed their desire to know them personally. Bahati felt important when her advisor invited her family at his house while their visit at the U.S. She mentioned, “He invited us to be there. He has been like advisor in one time but a family on another side. For me I feel very comfortable with him.” This extra effort from advisors to spend quality time outside of work, not only with the advisee, but also with her family, created an inclusive environment outside academia that strengthened the dyad bond.

Faculty advisor participant Dr. Brown seemed to take help of basic relationship building strategies in order to create human connect with their advisee. She stressed on finding common ground in order to makes things relatable. She said, “I talk about me and my stories and what is going on with me and what I think about different things when I'm trying to get them share those type of things with me. I never asked them to talk about something like their perspectives on some group. To talk about their anxiety about driving I will talk about my anxiety towards writing.” The advisor while she shares her weakness with the advisee wants to make the advisee realize that the advisee is trusted and will not be judged because of his/her weakness and is always welcome to share their concerns with the advisor. Making situation relatable is an attempt to connect to build human connect.

Advisor’s knowledge about advisee’s home country culture, festivals and traditions is highly appreciated. At many instances it is seen that advisor’s ability to speak and understand advisee’s native language creates an instant sense of connect between the two. Eamon shared his positive experience with his advisor. He mentioned, “He knows that I am an international

student, he knows that I don't speak very well English, he knows that I am a French speaker and because of that he is learning French now because sometimes it is really hard for me to interact about some subject in English." Further he stated that, "He speaks French! I would never like to leave a professor who know how to speak French!" It is evident for the participant's reaction that advisors approach and effort to learn advisee's native language creates a sense of connect in advisee's mind.

In general, international students appreciated flexibility in their advisor in terms of scheduling meetings, re-considering deadlines, determining work place, power sharing and at times compromising if situation demands. Flexible mind-set reflects the fact that the advisor respects advisee's concern and tries to adjust accordingly. Adjustable nature creates better understanding hence, create human connect.

Jayden shared one of the instances with his recent advisor where is draws a comparison with his previous advisor in terms of flexible and compromising attitude with regard to scheduling of meetings. Once he could not reach a scheduled meeting on time with his present advisor and had to request for a rescheduling. He stated, "Had he to be like my other advisor, he would have told me," See I have my schedules, I have given you time and you fail to honor it and that is it. You may come next week." But, he said, "No, he is ok. Ok you did not sleep and you just got up from sleep ok then why don't you come at 11.30 or at 1?"" Jayden's advisor showed a flexible and compromising attitude in terms of giving his advisee a second chance. At the same time the advisor was accommodative in rescheduling the meeting on the same day. Last but not the least, advisor's trust on advisee is also reflected.

Sometimes the advisor might not be punctual at the meeting because of some unplanned work that might have come into the way. In such cases advisee's understanding attitude and

accommodative nature is very much required. One of the international advisee participant said, “If I have a meeting with her, even if she is busy she sends me an email saying that, “I am busy and can we change the date?” But, she does not keep me waiting outside.” His experience with his advisor proves that his advisor respects his time. Advisee’s understanding and accommodative nature towards his advisor is also reflected.

Hwan appreciated his advisor’s flexibility in terms of choosing work place. He mentions that his advisor understood his personal issues and is considerate of him working from home. Also, advisee seems to like the fact that he can meet his advisor whenever he wants to. He said, “She is really supporting me well. She really like to teach me and whenever I have trouble I can go and meet her, she really understands my situations. She understood that I have two kids and a wife at home. So basically I have to work at home.”

Hwan seemed to face problem balancing his work life and family life. This is one of the instances where he describes how his family life interferes with his work life. The advisee being and international student and lacking any support system back home had to sometimes work from home to balance both the sides. His advisor seemed to acknowledge advisee’s responsibility as a father and as a husband and shows accommodative nature by allowing him to work from home. This empathetic nature of the advisor acts as a support system for the advisee.

Analyzing the problem faced by an individual from their perspective helps an individual get a better understanding of the other individual and makes situations relatable. In this respect, Jabari pointed out the fact that his advisor tries to visualize the student’s problem from their perspective to make it more relatable. He says, “I think it is his nature, he relates to all the students that’s the way he does. He is relating to all the circumstances from the stand point of being a grad student few years back.” Flexible mind-set of an advisor reflects the fact that he

gives enough value to advisee's issues and puts in effort to think from the advisee's point of view to come up with an effective solution. This effort and genuine eagerness to solve advisee's issues is recognized by the advisee because of which a trust and confidence is created in the relationship.

One of the participants shared his experience with his advisor regarding extending deadlines. Jabari said that, "He is very flexible. He is very understanding... 1 or 2 times I told him that I am not able to meet his deadline and asked him to give me 1 more week. But, at the same time I don't stretch that work too much. But, I think he is very understanding. He is not hell bent on, 'Oh, you must submit this, you must meet deadlines.' As long as you give him good reason he is very understanding." The advisee appreciated advisor's understanding nature of considering genuine request. Advisor's faith and trust on the advisee's integrity at work is also prominent through is considerate and flexible attitude, which might have contributed towards creating human connect.

Theme 4: Influence of Constructive Guidance on the Advisor-Advisee Relationship

Guidance is an integral part of advisor-advisee relationship. Every expectation that the advisor and the advisee have from each other is primarily related to guidance in academic settings. Proper guidance in higher educational institution encompasses several factors. It is noted that international graduate student appreciates their advisor's approach of working towards advisee's overall professional development.

While explaining advisor's support inside academia, Hua says, "He takes me to conferences even if I am not a presenter, he takes me to the conference. He said I must meet other in my research area. He gives a lot of support." Further she added by saying, "He told me you should not speak Chinese with your Chinese friend because you must improve your English.

There was a time when I spoke Chinese with my Chinese friend. He was angry, not angry but just like a joke and said, “Do you remember what I said.” So we started speaking in English.”

Advisors concern and interest in helping the international student acclimatize in American academic culture creates a positive impression in advisee’s mind. Response of Dr. Smith seems appropriate in this regard. From an advisor’s standpoint he believed that it is vital for international student to adapt the host country academic culture. He justified his duty as an advisor in helping his international advisees get acquainted to the norms of U.S. academia. While trying to describe his responsibilities in this context, he said, “...asking them not to be too formal in emails talking about how to address people all talking about how to sort of behave in the meetings and present one’s work.” He seemed to provide an all-encompassing academic and professional guidance to his advisee in order to make them appropriate in American context within academia.

Advisor’s involvement in advisee’s research work seemed to be an important factor behind success of advising relationship. Worth mentioning that concept of involvement varies from person to person depending upon their needs and expectations. Involvement can be signified as one to one time spent in discussing about the research, providing timely feedback, suggestions for improvements for the research, motivating student to perform better and also identifying student specific needs relevant to the research work.

Kalino explains how involve his advisor is in his research and he highlights several factor like timely feedback, suggestions, guidelines, and grammar corrections. He stated, “Dr. Y whenever I right and turn my word to him he will look it over end he would first look at the ideas what I’m talking and if the flow of ideas are together. If my ideas are haphazard then he will tell me this should go here that should go there. So these are the things that he looks at. Sometimes

he looks at the grammar. He would look at it and give me comment on grammar but very rarely. He basically looks at the structure of work.” Feedback seemed to be one of the most important criteria behind the success and failure of an advising relationship. It is because feedback is the way of getting involved in research and to make progress.

In general, international students gave utmost importance to advisor’s feedback because they were learning and executing a lot of new things and ways inside academia at the same time and they wanted to know if they were progressing in the right direction. One of the participants shared his dissatisfaction towards his advisor for not giving him timely feedback. Even though he liked his professor as a person but still he wanted to change his advisor. He mentioned that, “When you are submitting something to her it’s difficult to get feedback. I think it is not good for the student to not have feedback.” Kalino shared similar experience and reported that he changed his advisor just because he never received any feedback from him. He said, “My previous advisor was Dr. X and for the whole year I never go the feedback. Every time when I turned in my assignment he would say he is busy. When I go to his office I cannot schedule a meeting time. He is also busy. My experience with him was really horrible.”

It is quite evident from his words that one of the main reason behind changing his previous advisor was because of the fact that the advisee could not make much progress academically due to lack of feedback from his advisor. Also, what is prominent is a sense of disconnect between the two because of which the advisor could not understand or advocate his advisee’s needs. There have been instances where it is seen that the lack of involvement of the advisor in advisee’s research work makes advisee to question advisor’s involvement and expertise in the research topic.

Motivation proved to be another important factor behind successful advising relationship.

It is observed that most international graduate students wanted to solve research problem independently before taking help from their advisors. They also showed tendency to take certain decisions related to research on their own. In such cases, their advisor's supportive nature and trust on the advisee's potential and judgments acted as a motivating factor for the advisee in pursuit of being an independent researcher. Ranbir, while talking about his advisor said, "He is extremely cooperative. He is open to all kind of ideas and research. Even to the point, 90% of my PhD work, I have worked by myself and he was absolutely fine with that. He did not have any problems like I am taking lead in this. He actually appreciated that when I was designing or taking initiative."

It is prominent for Ranbir's response that the advisor shows confidence in advisee potential, vision and judgment with respect to the research work. The advisee was satisfied with his advisor's support and appreciated the fact that his advisor gives him enough space where can work independently towards his research. The support of the advisor aligned with advisee's academic demand and expectation acted as a motivation for the advisee.

At times the advisee seemed to lose interest or feel demotivated to work for several reasons. In such situation, advisors' motivation and encouragement helps the advisee regain the moment of work. In this regard, Jabari explained how helpful it was to be triggered by his advisor to overcome from his laidback attitude. He stated, "He don't give me deadlines but motivates me to work. I think he has realized the kind of person I am and he has done pretty much well to give me deadlines. He has been supportive." Further he states that, "...if he would have not been pushing me I would not have made significant progress in my research. I am very

satisfied with the time he gives to me. If he would not have given me that time, then maybe I would have been laidback.”

There seemed to be a sense of connection between the two because the advisor understood the advisee’s need to be motivated. The involvement of the advisor in the advisee’s research work in terms of pushing him for publication and supporting him in research motivates the advisee to work better. Although it is the professional responsibility of the advisor to supervise advisee’s academic responsibilities and research work, a certain amount of motivation from advisee’s side can make their work a joy.

Worth mentioning, factors for motivation depended from person to person. Sometimes advisee’s enthusiasm, inner drive to accomplish results and success, hard work, critical thinking ability, and originality of thought process were the key factors, where as in certain cases overlapping research interest became the deciding factor. In this regard, faculty Dr. Thompson said, “I appreciate the drive and motivation that my international students have. When they come here they are committed, and I have never had one that really let me down at the motivation side of things. They really want to achieve, that is pretty cool! I mean as a faculty member it makes your job a joy.”

It is evident from Dr. Thompson’s words that international students are motivated from the beginning to achieve their targets, which acts in favor of the advising relationship. For Dr. Smith, advisee’s critical thinking ability was the driving force. He said, “At the early stage of advising relationship, I would like to see potential for publication in them which would mean can the person write well? Can the person think well? It is the thinking skill that is more important.” Although professional writing ability is an important component for success in academia, the advisor stresses more on the critical thinking ability of the advisee. Both Dr. Thompson and Dr.

Smith never mentioned about over lapping research interest which was one of the key factor that drove Dr. Brown to select potential graduate students. She said, “Your content area is what interests me. And you have something to contribute to the work I am doing.” An inclination towards finding a common area of interest is observed.

Every international student participant preferred one to one meetings with their advisor. They felt that it created a human connection. Advisees who had good relationship with their advisors pointed out the fact that their advisors were available to meet whenever they required them. Some of them had weekly scheduled meeting and others met their advisors if and when required.

One participant who had an unsuccessful relationship with his first advisor and subsequently changed to another pointed out that his previous advisor was too busy to meet him. He said, “When I used to go to his office, I cannot schedule a meeting time because he is busy. My experience with him was really horrible.” Even though the advisee wanted to meet his advisor, the advisor did not meet him. There was a huge disconnect between the two because of lack of communication. But this same advisee was very happy with his second advisor who prioritized the advisee’s need. He had proper communication with his second advisor and made it clear that he needed his advisor to guide him step-by-step. He told his advisor that, “Maybe you will blame it on me, but I cannot work by myself, my advisor has to work with me so that I can move to from one step to another.” His second advisor acted according to his needs. He further stated that, “After that since June, we started meeting weekly if he has time sometimes twice weekly. So now everything is going ok.”

One-on-one communication with the advisor helped the advisee to gain clarity about his work. It also gave chance to the advisor to understand the advisee’s academic requirements and

difficulties and he was able to tailor his guidelines accordingly. The advisor seemed to prioritize student's need, which ultimately resulted in a productive advising relationship. Proper communication about research progress gives both the advisor and advisee a chance to know about each other's perspective towards the research problem and move forward as a team. Besides, it also makes room for the advisee to clear their doubts about research work and stay on the right track. Advisor utilizes this kind of opportunity to stay up to date with advisee's research and provide timely guidance and suggestions if required. It helps to create a transparency of expectations on both the ends.

Theme 5: Congruency of Working Style

Participants' style of working was compared to their KAI scores. A link between participants' cognitive styles and their expectations for the advising relationship was observed. Student participants' scores ranged from slightly innovative to more adaptive. There scores were presented into two broad categories namely mid rangers (Individual KAI scores: 80, 83, 85, 86, 87, 89, 90, 95, 97, 103, 104, 107) and more adaptive ones (Individual KAI scores: 64, 65, 68, 75, 75, 76). Faculty participants' score ranged from mid ranger (Individual KAI score: 107) to highly innovative (Individual KAI score: 124 and 127).

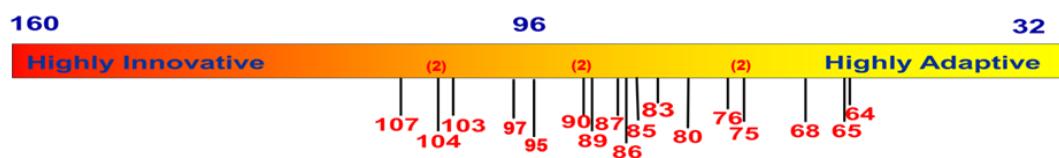


Figure 3: KAI score of international student participants

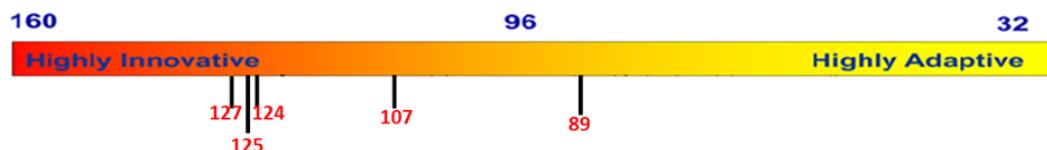


Figure 4: KAI score of faculty advisor participants

During the personal interview session, participants were asked about their expectation from advising relationship and their preference in working style. In responses participants shared their lived experiences, which was analyzed by the researcher. Highly innovative participants (KAI score 124 to 127) were all faculty advisors. They showed an inclination towards a non-structured working environment and could not relate to the needs of a structure work approach of some of their advisees.

Student participants who were mid rangers stretched from KAI score of 80 to KAI score of 107. Out of 12 participants in this category, only 8 took part in the interview session. Their responses signified that they wanted their ideas to be acknowledged. Preference of comparatively less structure approach towards work increased from 80 to 107. Participants appreciated constructive criticism, liked open door policies, and preferred proper communication with the advisor specially when there was an issue.

Walid (KAI score: 90) said that, “If you give me something I will never give you the same thing. I try always to make it better. If I can do it differently, I do it differently.” A tendency to improve over the framework and also at times exploring different ways to solve the same problem was prominent from his reply.

Bahati (KAI score 104) appreciated the fact that her advisor is open to ideas and is not rigid about direction of research. While talking about her advisor’s approach towards work she said that, “It’s not like he is very strict to what he wants or maybe he wants to only focus on one direction. He shows different ways.” The very fact that her advisor provides her with choices makes her feel that she is not restricted to think in a definite line and length about research. There was only one faculty advisor participant who fell into the midrange category (KAI score 107). He preferred giving a lot of freedom to students to work in their own way at the beginning.

He also had no issue guiding the students step by step with the help of framework and bullet points if they preferred such approach.

Most adaptive participants were all students. The KAI score of adaptive student participants ranged from 64 to 76. These participants preferred highly structure work environment. They expected their advisor to guide them at every step even while choosing a job. They seem to appreciate their advisor providing new ideas. They expected their advisor to identify their personal and professional needs even at times when they had issues communicating their needs.

While responding to the question about preference in solving problem, Tanya (KAI score: 64) preferred to follow his advisor's way of working. She stated, "Usually I would go with his way". Hwan (KAI score: 75) was comfortable with her advisor coming up with new ideas of research work. He said, "I think she is the best guide I have ever met. ...She is more of giving ideas like telling you have to do this way and that way." He seemed to be happy with his advisor. Andrea (KAI score: 65) showed a tendency of asking a lot of question to his advisor regard his research work. He mentioned, "We often had differences of opinion at the beginning because I wanted to ask questions and sometimes the questions are not phrased the right way. So, it ended up looking like I was doubting him instead of like I was asking a question." It is evident from his response that he wanted to gain clarity in his research and wanted to have a clear vision about what his advisor's perspective was in order to form a line and length about the work he is supposed to do. Trying to do so, he ended up asking a lot of questions.

While the participants narrated their stories, most of them expressed satisfaction, happiness joy towards advising relationship. Worth mentioning that there were few stories of dissatisfaction too, which triggered the researcher to further analyses the relationship between

individual's working style and advising relationship. The purpose was to find out if and how individual's preference in working style interfered with the compatibility factor in the dyad relationship. There were some student participants who narrated their positive experience with their advisor. Jabari, whose KAI score was 76, said that, "I am a kind of person who is very detailed. So I want things explained out to me in detail. These are the work I want you to do. These are the steps I want you to follow. I think I am more comfortable in this way instead of giving me a headline like go work on it or give me a theory and tell me to solve the puzzle. I am a kind of person who wants steps so that I don't get stranded in course of completing the work or task."

It was evident for Jabari's response that he was inclined to a well-structured environment of work because of his highly adaptive nature. His expectation from his advisor was a detailed step-by-step guidance. Further he stated that he was very happy and satisfied with his advisor's involvement in his research because of the fact that his advisor understood his working style and academic need and catered accordingly. He said, "If my advisor wants me to do something he gives me detail, probably send me some links." This student centric pedagogical approach seemed to create work satisfaction in the students mind besides contributing towards his cognitive understanding of the subject matter.

Similar satisfaction level was seen in the response of Bahati. Being a mid-ranger (KAI score: 104) she preferred a less-structured environment to work compared to Jabari. She appreciated her advisor giving her the right to decide on her academic issues. She said, "He gives me his ideas but he allows me to do what I feel the right way to do it. When I send it back to him he will tell me like, "Okay, you are in the right direction or maybe you can change this to that."

It's not like he is very strict to what he wants or maybe he wants to only focus on one direction. He shows different ways. He gives you the right to decide what you want to do."

It was clear from Bahati's response that she enjoyed the independence and freedom given by her advisor with respect to her research work. She loved the fact that she had choices. She wanted her ideas to be heard and at the same time appreciated constructive criticisms. Hua who was in the same category (KAI score: 103) also gave similar reply. While responding to how she prefers working with her advisor she said, "Sometimes I have my own ideas and then I talk to him," I think this way is better." He will say, "Ok, what is your reason, then I will tell him. But sometimes he says no it's not doable because why he gives me some reasons. I think it makes sense, so I stick to his ways. I can talk to him, and a lot of times he is right." It seems that she is comfortable coming up with new ideas and appreciates constructive criticism from her advisor. Both Bahati and Hua seemed to like the fact that they can make their own judgments at work. Jabari, Bahati and Hua despite of their varied needs and expectations from advising relationship reported that they were happy with their advisor. The satisfaction level of student dependent on their advisor's understanding of students preferred style of working and catering them accordingly.

On the contrary, there were participants who were not happy with their advisor and wanted to or had changed their committee chair. Andrea was one of them. While describing his difficult situation he said that, "But with that mentoring, I just feel like I am stumbling in the dark. And so, I spend what I could do in a week if somebody properly explained to me how things work, like I feel like I am really launching the wheel every time I go to the lab. So, what could take a week takes me a month or sometimes even more. And so yea, he is constantly

implying that we are not doing enough work. We should stop going out, we should stop like doing other things.”

Andrea seemed not satisfied with his advisor’s mentoring. He was in need of more directions and guidelines from the advisor regarding his research. But unfortunately, the advisor could not relate to advisee’s academic needs and ended up misconstruing advisee’s effort and struggle to grasp the subject matter. Unable to match up with each other’s expectation created a lot of tension in the relationship. When the participant was asked to describe his advisor’s work preference he said, “So, we have the freedom to do things the way we want but at the same time he wants things in a certain way. So it’s weird. Often time that’s where I run into problems because he wants to be subtle so he wants to like imply things and have me pick them up. But I am not a very subtle person.”

According to Andrea’s response, it is quite evident that both the advisor and the advisee failed to relate to each other’s approach towards work. The advisor’s approach seemed open ended hence we can assume that the advisor is more on the innovative side. On the other hand, advisee’s preference for a more detailed and structured approach signifies that he is more adaptive person. His KAI score (75) reflects the same.

Similar sense of dissatisfaction was seen in Tanya. She thought that her advisor does not provide her with enough motivation for publication because of which she was not being able to publish enough papers as her other peers. She thought that only working towards a degree may not be helping her to be competitive in the job market. She stated, “The one thing which matters a lot in my field is that we should have publications. The more the number of publications, more marketable a person is. And I think he is not able to be on time for that. He doesn’t push people hard enough. He doesn’t have set guidelines or deadlines.”

Tanya seemed to be dependent on her advisor for a set of guidelines on how to write a paper. She being very adaptive by nature (KAI score: 64) found it difficult to proceed without any framework. It is also clear that her advisor is unaware about her way of working which results in dissatisfaction and less productive relationship between the dyad. It is evident from the lived experience of these two students that misalignment in working style between the two individuals might lead to unsuccessful advisor-advisee relationship in academic settings.

The researcher found a relationship between preferred advising style of the faculty advisor and their individual KAI scores. KAI scores of five faculty member participants were 89, 107, 124, 125 and 127. Two of the participants whose score were 89 and 125 were not available for the interview. Out of the remaining three, faculty participants whose score was 124 (Dr. Thompson) and 127 (Dr. Brown) preferred giving students freedom in terms of carrying out their research work. They not only expected their advisee to figure out the gaps in the literature and frame research questions and objectives, but they also expected them to come up with research ideas and take the lead in terms moving forward with the research work. They never micromanaged their advisee but made it sure that they are well aware of their advisees' research progress. As an advisor, their involvement with advisee's research work was more as a facilitator which included providing suggestions in terms of taking certain course works relevant to the study, prescribing books to read, correct if the student is going in the wrong direction with the research, have one on one conversation regarding the problems the student is facing while doing the research and sometimes suggest options to solve a problem in a certain way.

It was very difficult for both Dr. Thompson and Dr. Brown to relate to the preference of a more structured approach in describing the research to their advisee. They had advisees who did not match their approach towards work. Dr. Thompson said, "I have graduate students with me

over the years who have gotten very frustrated with me when I don't tell them what to do, but I am very big on you need to figure out how to solve this problem". Dr. Brown also shared similar experience and mentioned, "Many students especially if they are new to the program they think that they need more guidelines from me and need more structure to come to a conclusion for the problem we are facing, especially when they are trying to really hone in on their research problem and developing their research ideas. They really would like me to tell them, but I won't."

From the responses of Dr. Brown, a clear sense of misalignment was prominent between the advisor and the advisee in terms of expectation and need related to their research work that lead to mutual dissatisfaction and frustration in the dyad relationship. Also, both Dr. Thompson and Dr. Brown seemed to be very rigid in their pedagogical approach and showed no signs of advocating for students' need in this regard. Worth mentioning is that the purpose behind such a facilitative approach from the advisor's side was for the student's welfare and academic development. It is just that since both Dr. Thompson and Dr. Brown were very innovative people, their natural tendency was to work in a less structured environment. They could not relate to the need for structured guidance. They saw detailed guidance as a barrier to train their students as an independent researcher and as an intrusion into the ownership of advisee's research work.

Dr. Brown later on explained that, "It is because I think that the students will be really successful if they come up with something that they really own as an idea and it means something to them and having me tell them what that is takes a bit of that away... there is different level of ownership over there and I think it is important that it is the student's work." Dr. Thompson also shared similar view and said, "I do that as an advisor because after the

student leaves me and they go into a faculty position or teaching or an extension position, they have to do it on their own. I would not be there to tell them you must do this, this, and this.” Their genuine concern for the student’s future beside their conviction in their pedagogical approach might have overshadowed the need for a few of the students to have detailed guidance from them.

Dr. Smith whose score was 107 preferred a more structured way of advising. Even though he wanted to give his advisee enough freedom to work at first, he chose to describe the work to his advisee in a more structured manner. He stated, “At first I give the advisee a lot of freedom to solve a problem. I try to give a framework or a bullet point list in a meeting to explain how I think we can approach this problem and I try to make sure that they understand the objective of the problem. Like what it is that we’re trying to do here and then I let them go and do it however they want. I rather like when I see that my student comes up with a varied perspective of addressing it. But if they don’t come back after a prescribed time and basically hasn’t addressed it then little by little I start taking more of a hands on search. In the meeting I will work on a task together such that by me modeling how I would approach the task then the student can hopefully learn from that sort of learning strategy experientially. But hopefully, I will only do that if a student is unable to solve the problem or does not solve the problem.”

A definite contrast in term of difference in approach towards advising was observed between innovative faculty (Dr. Thompson and Dr. Brown) and a mid-ranger faculty (Dr. Smith). The student centric nature of advising makes Dr. Smith’s pedagogical approach very flexible. This type of approach exhibits coping as well. In the advising relationship, the advisor and the advisee is working together as a team and there is always a change of a mismatch in terms of working style. In such cases, flexibility in work approach might be helpful and strategic

way to cope with the scenario. It is evident from the responses of the participants that coping behavior, which at times involves compromising, adjusting and accepting mentality, if executed from both the sides, contributes towards a successfully advisor-advisee relationship. Experience of Eamon with his advisor in terms of finalizing his research topic supports the aforementioned statement. He said, “May be the subject of work, the master’s subject, he told me to do something and I wanted to work on another thing. I know he choose to give my choice a priority because I am the one who is going to work on it. He is not the one who is going to work. That is the only time we got into argument. So ultimately he compromised.”

Eamon appreciates his advisor’s compromising nature in terms of giving priority to advisee’s research interest over his own while deciding advisee’s research topic. Considering the fact that interest is a motivating factor for one to work with full involvement, the advisor exhibited coping behavior in this regard contributing to the advisee’s work satisfaction.

On the other hand, Kalino described a completely opposite scenario where he had to compromise his research interest in order to give preference to his advisor’s academic area of interest. He stated, “That is not my interest, it is HIS interest. It is because if the advisor gets upset, then they will not help, and in college like this it is not that easy too frequently change your advisor. All the advisors are friends so the next person will get your feedback from the first person.”

Kalino’s response made it evident that he faced a compelling situation and was demotivated to work in an area that did not interest him. He was acting under a lot of fear and insecurity, which stressed him more. Andrea shared similar experiences. He shared his frustration by saying, “I mean I could think of several times when he insulted me and I really expected an apology and he just proceeded to tell me how I was wrong and what I should have

done better. I don't think I have seen him admit to compromise for anything." Worth mentioning, reconciliation from student's side is vital.

Bahati through her response showed a compromising attitude while she said that, "...if there is a miscommunication I am ok approaching him first." Due to the positional hierarchy, the advisor has better control over situation pertaining to advising relationship compared to the advisee. This instigates students to cope for their survival in academia. The situation is more intense when the advisee is an international student. International students because of their insecurities and lack of support system prefer to maintain a non-controversial situation with their advisor and as such choose to abide by the advisor's way. In such situation if the advisor shows coping behavior, it acts as a support system for the advisee, which is evident in case of Eamon.

Table 5

Categorizing Participants Responses According to their Respective KAI Scores (Mitra, S., & Anderson, J. C. (2016))

| More Innovative (107, 124, 127) | Mid-Range (80, 83, 85, 86, 87, 89, 90, 95, 97, 103, 104) | More Adaptive (64, 65, 68, 75, 76) |
|---|---|--|
| Wants a certain amount of freedom to work independently | Wants ideas to be acknowledged | Prefers a set structure and step-by-step guidance |
| Wants to be encouraged to come up with new ideas | Appreciates constructive criticism | Likes to ask lot of questions |
| Does not take constructive criticism personally | Prefers proper communication specially when there is an issue | Prefers the advisor taking the lead on new ideas |
| Enjoys facilitations vs. detailed guidance. | Prefers structured and detailed guidance. | Expects the advisor to know them well, both personally and professionally. |

Chapter Five: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter summarizes the research study. The findings are tied to the research framework and supported by published literature. Researcher explains various implications of this research. At the end, recommendations have been suggested for future research work.

The purpose of the study was to find out the factors that encourage and thwart the relationship between international graduate student and their academic advisor, which will help improve the academic condition of international student in U.S. academia. More specifically, are cultural or cognitive differences toward problem solving present, which differences are more salient in defining the advising relationship, and are coping behaviors being employed and by whom? This research work addresses the gaps in the literature by answering the following research questions.

1. What are the characteristics of the advisor pertinent to the framework (ex. educational and professional background, intercultural competence, and A-I score)?
2. What are the characteristics of the student pertinent to the framework (ex. educational and professional background, intercultural competence, and A-I score)?
3. What are the themes consistent in positive versus challenged advisor-student relationships from the viewpoint of international students?

What are the themes consistent in positive versus challenged advisor-student relationships from the viewpoint of advisors of international students?

Summary of the Study

Questions were asked to the student participants to describe their perception about their advisor from academic and personal point of view. They were also asked to articulate their expectation from their advisor. Also, participant's problem solving style, perception about host

country and freedom to express ones culture was taking into account. Similarly, faculty advisor participants had to respond to questions related to their perception of international advisee at personal and professional level, their perceptions about advisees' cultural background, and perception from stand point of an advisor, and their personal standpoint as well.

There were eighteen international students from ten different countries who took part in the research study out of which fourteen participated in the interview. Eleven of them were in PhD programs and four students were pursuing master's degree. Most of the students belonged to College of Agriculture or Life Science and few of them were from College of Natural Resource Engineering. Three faculty advisors (Dr. Thompson, Dr. Brown and Dr. Smith) participated in the research study. They were full time faculty in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Virginia Tech. All of them were U.S. born Americans and lived in U.S their entire life. Dr. Smith stayed for few years in other country while he was growing up. Each one of them had enough experience in guiding international students in U. S academic settings. Dr. Thompson had 23 years of experience in academia where he had advised more than 60 students and 1/3rd of them were international. Dr. Brown had 8 years of experience, advised 10 to 12 graduate students out of which 2 were international. Dr. Smith had three and a half years of experience in academia and was advising 5 advisees as committee chair out of which 2 of them were international students. Three of them were strong advocates of diversity and visualized it as a strength in academia. They were comfortable in mixing with people from other nationality and culture and exhibited strong desire to know more about foreign culture.

Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected in this study. The researcher invited probable participants by sending them personal invitation letter requesting them to participate in the study. The agreed student participants signed the online consent form by responding to

survey.vt.edu website. The link was provided to the participants via email. Faculty participants gave verbal consent to be interviewed. After obtaining consent from the participants, they were assigned a study number. The researcher hence represented the participants with those numbers. Student participants were given the KAI inventory to be completed online. The faculty participants completed the KAI inventory via online administration.

Next, the participants were subjected to semi-structures interview to know the characteristic of the participants related to the study and to glean insights about their factors that impact mentoring relationship from their perspective. Since the study encompasses international graduate students and faculty advisors, different set of questions were prepared for both the groups. Demographic interview questions framed for international graduate students included their nationality, degree program that they are currently in, their academic year, the name of their college and years they have spent in the U.S. Similarly, faculty advisors were asked about their current position, nationality, years in the U.S. (if not born in US) and years spent as a professor. After demographic information was gathered, participants were interviewed to gathering information on the advising phenomenon. This part of the interview helped the researcher capture the lived experiences of the participants about the phenomenon of study.

KAI scores of the participants were compared to their interview responses to see if at all there is any connection between their problem solving style and the nature of problem they are facing in mentoring relationship. Participant's responses were recorded and subjected to whole text data analysis that involved transcribing and analyzing (coding, theme formation). Sentence was considered the unit of analysis in this study. Finally, the researcher identified positive verses negative factors in advising relationship from perspective of an international student and faculty advisee, and grouped them into five major themes. Themes or factors are as follows.

1. Language barrier in U.S. academic settings
2. Cultural differences in and outside academic settings
3. Effect of building inter-personal bonding on advising relationship
4. Influence of constructive guidance on the advisor-advisee relationship
5. Congruency of working style

Discussion

In this section, the researcher relates the response of the participants to relevant literature. The findings of this study are discussed according to the themes and sub-themes.

Theme 1: Language Barrier in U.S. Academic Settings

International student participant faced language problem in U.S. They lacked fluency because of which they were not able to convey their thoughts in professional and non-professional settings. They carried heavy accent, which was another barrier for them to make themselves understandable to American peers. Language problem not only created professional barriers but also restricted them to socialize with host country people. Martin and Nakayama (2010) also reported similar issues. Findings of this study matched with Brunton and Jeffrey (2014) with respect to foreign student's difficulty to understand the meaning of certain words hence, making the process of learning in English a cumbersome task.

International students reportedly faced issues in writing American professional English. Some of them had their previous education in European style English, which was different from the American style in terms of word usage and syntax. Schmied (2015) discussed differences in style of English writing due to academic discourse. The lack of English language proficiency not only interfered with student's professional progress but also affected their confidence level. There was a feeling of insecurity in their minds because of the fear of getting judged. Faculty

advisors seemed to understand such issues and tried to provide a non-judgmental environment to the students. Issue with communication slowed their pace of learning and made academic life challenging for them in U.S. Trying to view this issue from the stand point of Kirton's problem solving style (2011), lack of language proficiency, which is Problem B drew more attention, time and energy, resulting in side tracking Problem A (research problem). The advisor had to prioritize on solving language problem to be able to concentrate on academic staffs. Considering the fact that the main goal of advising relationship is to solve a common research problem together, a shift in priority might create frustration in the relationship.

Interestingly, faculty advisors are very much considerate about issues that international students face related to language problem and exhibited helping and non-judgmental attitude. Faculty advisors tried to provide exposure to their participants by prescribing and encouraging them to read a lot of books, providing them help with editing, pushing them to attend professional meetings and see how people interact, and sometimes taking them to different regions of America to get them acquainted to different accents of people. Students felt encouraged and motivated by their advisor's understanding and supportive attitude, which encouraged them to work harder. According to Kirton (2011), coping being physiologically very expensive, sufficient amount of motivation can help people exhibit coping behavior for a longer time.

Theme 2: Cultural Differences In and Outside Academic Settings

Sub-Theme 2A: Cultural Difference inside Academic Settings

Participants pointed out certain academic discourses that they face in U.S academia in terms of academic of teaching method, context of study, style of writing, way of professional communication, and certain professional ethics. These differences seemed to have an impact on

their academic accomplishments of the international students. Brown and Holloway (2008) also reported that international students face challenges in U.S. academic settings.

Student participants appreciated regular updating of course content in the academic settings. Some of the international students liked taking part in class discussion and share their thought freely. International student preferred class discussion may be because they wanted their opinions to be heard and valued. Class participation might have created a feeling of inclusiveness in their mind as well. On the other hand, when teachers gave examples in American context, then they felt secluded in class. Lack of enough knowledge about U.S. society acts as a barrier for the international student to interact with the environment around, hence they failed to follow the context of certain class examples and references. Unable to relate to follow classmates and the instructor, makes them feel left out.

The instructor of the class should take care of such issues while designing a class and should take examples in such a way that everyone can understand and relate to. There is a need for extra guidance in terms of helping foreign students gain knowledge about American society and certain cultural norms and more so if the subject matter of study is related to social science and extension that includes people.

Foreign students seemed to come in terms with the new system of education along with time. Understanding a different culture involves making sense of their value system as well, which demands some time investment. In order to act according to the environment, it is essential for the international student to be able to interact with and interpret societal feedback either directly or vicariously. This will help them to reflect on their course of action for a certain purpose and in cases mold according to the society. Student's ability and mentality to cope can help them adapt to the new environment. Literature proves that acculturation makes people more

flexible to work in multicultural settings (Berry, 2005; Lee, & Rice, 2007). The mentality to accept changes and move along with it might have helped the international student overcome hurdles.

Sub-Theme 2B: Cultural Difference outside Academic Settings

International students face cultural issues in U.S. In general, they found American culture different in terms of food habit, way of interacting, way of dressing, social norms, social gestures, to name a few. Besides having limited knowledge about American culture, international students even lacked knowledge about how social interaction happens in American society which hindered them from socializing. Despite all differences, foreign students exhibited an open mindset and expressed their desire to learn about other culture. In fact, participants pointed out that they were mentally prepared to face such differences and it did not affect their academic progress in U.S. Students showed coping attitude in order to overcome the differences.

American advisors visualized international students as representatives of different culture and related culture to “identity” of an individual. They always wanted their advisee to respect their original culture and additionally get exposed to American culture in order to understand the host country societies’ perspective. Advisors thought that necessity to adapt to American culture is a personal choice and is contextual. Ability of the environment (American advisor) to interpret different facets of one’s identity creates better understanding of certain behaviors of that identity (international student coming from different culture),

Theme 3: Effect of Building Inter-Personal Bonding on Advising Relationship

International students seem to have varied insecurities and things to worry starting from immigration issue to lack of communication skill. They miss their family and are worried when there is a political unrest back home. Similar conditions of international students were also

reported by (Evans et al., 2009). As such, they need the presence of a confidant who can provide them mental support and with whom they can share their worries and insecurities. International students tend to expect emotional support from their advisor.

Participants were appreciative of the fact that they can share their concern with their advisor besides being thankful towards advisor's understanding attitude. A friendly and welcoming attitude from advisor's side makes them feel comfortable and creates a trusting environment where they can share their insecurities with their advisor. Students seemed to prefer willingness of their advisors to listen to their concerns. It is evident from the findings that environment (advisor) should be able to understand certain observed behavior of the expressed identity (international student) and cope accordingly. This makes situation comforting for distressful for international student. This empathetic nature of the advisor acts as a support system for the advisee. Analyzing the problem faced by an individual from their perspective helps an individual get a better understanding of the other individual and makes situations relatable. This effort and genuine eagerness to solve advisee's issues is recognized by the advisee because of which a trust and confidence is created in the relationship. In order to have understanding of certain observed behavior of the international student it becomes essential for the advisor to make sense of students' action based upon differ facets of their identity. This involves both interaction and interpretation of expressed identity by the environment.

Students who shared strong bond with their advisors showed complete trust on their advisor in professional and personal matters. Trust and faith in advisor-advisee relationship seemed to be an important factor behind its success. The trusted relationship shared acted as a support system in time of distress. Having beside advisee in times of their professional and

personal crisis contributed towards trust building in their relationship. It created human connect.

The advisee appreciates advisor's genuine concern, mental support and physical help.

International students seemed to appreciate their advisors interest in their culture besides being respectful towards their belief and practices. Mutual respect for each other's culture and belief system played an important role behind good advisor-advisee relationship. Advisor participants' seemed to be very respectful about other nation's culture. To them, guiding international students was an opportunity to learn about other culture. Ability and willingness to interpret different facets of expressed identity (international student) by the environment (advisor) proved essential for a healthy advisor-advisee relationship. Advisees enjoyed meeting their advisors in unofficial settings and expressed their desire to know them personally. Advisor's knowledge about advisee's home country culture, festivals and traditions is highly appreciated. At many instances it is seen that advisor's ability to speak and understand advisee's native language creates an instant sense of connect between the two.

Making situation relatable is an attempt to connect to build human connect. One of the advisor participant strategically shares her weakness with the advisee wants to make the advisee realize that the advisee is trusted and will not be judged because of his/her weakness and is always welcome to share their concerns with the advisor.

In general, international students appreciated flexibility in their advisor in terms of scheduling meetings, re-considering deadlines, determining work place, power sharing and at times compromising if situation demands. Flexible mind-set reflects the fact that the advisor respects advisee's concern and tries to adjust accordingly. Interaction between observed behavior of the student and advisors' feedback happens and accordingly there are adjustments made from both the ends. Adjustable nature creates better understanding hence, create human connect.

Advisor's faith and trust on the advisee's integrity at work contributes towards creating human connect.

International student participant preferred one to one meeting with their advisor. They felt that it created a human connect. Advisees who had good relationship with their advisors pointed out the fact that their advisors were available to meet whenever they required them. But on the contrary, participants who had unsuccessful relationships reported that their advisors were too busy to meet them. There was a sense of disconnect that in their relationship which prevent the advisor to recognize advisee's need. A chance to interact with each other seems vital for understanding each other behavior and identity.

Theme 4: Influence of Constructive Guidance on the Advisor-Advisee Relationship

International graduate students appreciate their advisor's approach of working towards the advisees' overall professional development, including helping them acclimate to the American academic culture. The advisor's concern and interest in helping the international student acclimate creates a positive impression in the advisee's mind. The support of people within the environment, which is interpreted by environmental feedback, is essential. Also, helping the student understand the environmental demands makes it easy for the international advisee to reflect on their actions.

Advisor's involvement in advisee's research work seemed to be an important factor behind success of advising relationship. The concept of involvement was subjective. Involvement can be signified as one-to-one time spent in discussing the research, providing timely feedback and suggestions for improving the research, motivating students to perform better, and also identifying student specific needs relevant to the research work.

Feedback seemed to be one of the most important criteria behind the success and failure of an advising relationship. In general, international students gave utmost importance to advisor's feedback because they were learning and executing a lot of new things and ways inside academia at the same time and they wanted to know if they were progressing in the right direction. There have been instances where it is seen that the lack of involvement by the advisor in the advisee's research work makes the advisee question the advisor's expertise in the research topic or interest in the student. Interaction of observed behavior with environmental feedback is crucial. It is according to the environmental feedback that an identity comes to know how their exhibited behavior is reflected in the society. Accordingly, he or she gets a chance to mold their actions to be apt with environment. Lack of environmental feedback (advisor's feedback) will stop the process of interaction hence baring the process of introspection, resulting in creating lack of clarity of action in student (expressed identity).

Motivation and support of advisor proved to be another important factor behind successful advising relationship. At times, the advisee seemed to lose interest or feel demotivated to work for several reasons. In such situations, the advisor's motivation and encouragement helps the advisee regain the momentum to work. But motivation was different for different people. Students who preferred independence in work found advisor's non-interfering attitude motivating. The advisee was satisfied with his advisor's support and appreciated the fact that his advisor gives him enough space where can work independently towards his research. But for a student who requires detailed guidance, to him advisor's involvement is measured on the basis of how much the advisor pushes the advisee to publish his work. At times, the advisor also gets motivated by the advisee's enthusiasm, inner drive to accomplish results and success, hard work,

critical thinking ability, originality of thought process, and in some cases, aligned research interests became the deciding factor.

Theme 5: Congruency of Working Style

According to Kirton (2011), every person has his or her own working style. Since this research work focuses on advising relationship, working style becomes the most vital construct to be taking into consideration. It is because the purpose of such relationship is to work together as a team to solve a common problem.

Sub-Theme 5.1: Acknowledging Different Working Styles

The first and the most vital part of problem solving is to identify the issues that exists. It is observed that expectation from advisor varied according to student's preferred style of working. The satisfaction level of student dependent on their advisor's understanding of students preferred style of working and catering them accordingly.

Advisees who were more on the adaptive side preferred their advisor to provide them step-by-step guidance. These advisees were seen asking a lot of questions to their advisor in order to gain clarity in their work. They were uncomfortable generating new ideas but showed tendency to improve over the framework provided. According to Kirton's Adaptive Innovative theory (2011), adaptive people preferred more structured environment to work.

Advisee whose working style was more towards innovative side enjoyed advisor providing them with choices and not restricting them to follow a definite way to reach the solution. These advisees wanted their advisor to give them certain amount of freedom in terms of executing their research work. These students are comfortable coming up with new ideas and appreciates constructive criticisms from their advisor. Kirton's A-I theory (2011) states that people who are more on the innovative side prefers less structured environment as responded by

these participants. It is seen that if the difference of KAI score of participants is more than 20 points, then those two people are bound to have issue if they come to work together (Kirton, 2011).

There were few international students who were unhappy with their advisors. When they were questioned about the cause of their dissatisfaction with the advisor, a cognitive disconnect was observed in their reply. Some highly innovative participants (KAI, 124,127) who were faculty advisors expected their advisee to come up with research idea and to lead the research. They were against providing detailed guidance to their advisee. All their advisees had to follow the same way of working, which might not be ideal if the advisee is adaptive by nature. There were instances where few advisees were not happy with their advisor for not providing them enough guidelines. It may so happen that the advisee is very adaptive in nature but the advisor is innovative which creates misalignment in between them. In all such cases of misalignment, coping seemed to be the best solution.

Sub-Theme 5.2: Managing Cognitive Misalignments

After the problem, in this case diversity of working style, has been identified and acknowledged, it is important to be able to manage such differences. Since every individual has the potential to work outside one's comfort zone (Kirton, 2011), employment of coping in the relationship seemed to help manage such diversity. Having said that, ideal situations do exist where coping is not required and the advisor and the advisee is well at sink with one another. For example, Bahati shared a very good relationship with her advisor. Besides understanding each other's needs, and difficulties, there was immense amount of trust and confidence in their relationship. Her words like, "I feel comfortable. I feel like I am confident that he can lead me to the right direction" reflects the same. It can be assumed that alignment of cognitive style between

the dyad played a huge role behind such a healthy relationship. Bahati being a mid-ranger (KAI 104) preferred a less structured environment, which fortunately matched with her advisor's approach towards problem solving. Her response like, "It's not like he is very strict to what he wants or maybe he wants to only focus on one direction. He shows different ways" supports the argument.

Things were a little different with Dr. Smith. Being an advisor he came across students with different working style. There were some who preferred working independently and were comfortable coming up with new ideas but there were others who were in need of more detailed guidance. To make situation comfortable for the advisee, Dr. Smith tailored his guiding strategy according to the needs of his advisee. He said, "I rather like when I see that my student comes up with a varied perspective of addressing it. But if they don't come back after a prescribed time and basically hasn't addressed it then little by little I start taking more of a hands on search. In the meeting I will work on a task together such that by me modeling how I would approach the task then the student can hopefully learn from that sort of learning strategy experientially." This student centric pedagogy reflected a tremendous amount of understanding and coping in the advising relationship.

Unfortunately, Andrea shared a very depressing and demotivating experience with his advisor. There seemed to be a vast difference in working style of between him and his advisor. Andrea being an adaptive learner was in need of step-by-step guidance, which he did not receive from his advisor. Andrea said, "But with that mentoring, I just feel like I am stumbling in the dark. And so, I spend what I could do in a week if somebody properly explained to me how things work, like I feel like I am really launching the wheel every time I go to the lab. So, what could take a week takes me a month or sometimes even more." He further states that, "And so,

ya he is constantly implying that we are not doing enough work. We should stop going out, we should stop like doing other things.” Andrea’s words reflect lack of understanding and coping in the advising relationship. It made the situation very challenging for him.

Using the Organismic Socio-Behavioral Perspective

This research study was based on the conceptual framework, the organismic socio-behavioral perspective (OSBP) (Anderson et al., 2016). Using this framework, the researcher was able to find out the fact that satisfaction or dissatisfaction level in advising relationship mainly dependent upon the cognitive satisfaction level between the dyad.

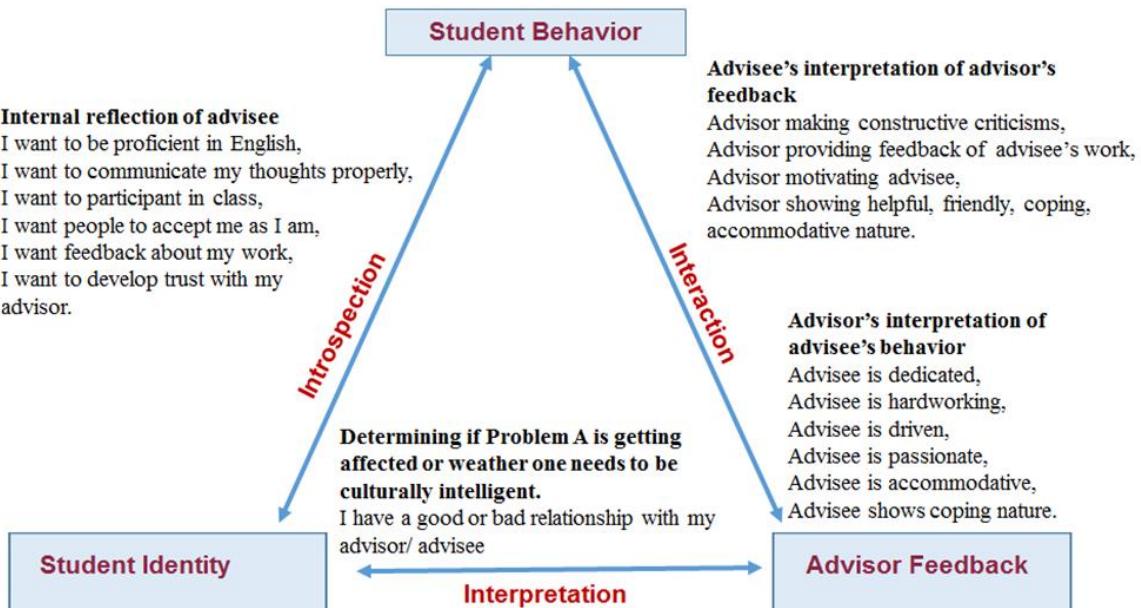


Figure 5. A revision of Organismic Socio-Behavioral Perspective based on the result of the study

Key Components of Organismic Socio-Behavioral Theory within the Contest of this Study

Themes pertaining to the factors that encourage or discouraged the advising relationship seemed to be associated with the feedback loops (introspection, interaction, interpretation) that connected the three main components (expressed identity, observed behavior, environmental feedback) of the theoretical framework. Since the purpose of the study is to improve the

academic condition of international student in US academia, students were associated with expressed identity, whereas the advisor and academic environment was associated with environmental feedback. The feedback loops happened simultaneously and were influenced by one another.

Introspection

Introspection is the internal thought process of the advisee that connects expressed identity to observed behavior. This feedback loop determines how the advisee reflects upon his or her personal behavior to see if the purpose is accomplished by such action or behavior. The advisee's willingness to cope, to learn about different culture, to adapt to the changed circumstance, to realize the fact that they are being understood or misunderstood and supported or not supported by their advisor are certain ways that the advisee reflects upon their own behavior.

This two-way process is influenced by circumstance, cultural origin and personal traits. It is the circumstance that motivates the advisee to cope with the changed environment. Circumstance also gives rise to certain expectation. It is observed that the advisee besides having academic expectations expects a supportive and friendly attitude from their advisor because somewhere down the line they are missing their family and are lonely. International advisee also wants their advisor to be willing to listen to their personal concerns. But determining advisor's support depends upon their personal need.

Personal need or expectation from the advisor seemed to be influenced by advisee's culture background and preferred style of work. Advisee's certain cultural or religious needs like praying certain times a day, or wearing traditional dress at work when supported by advisor also acts as a support system for the advisee. Some advisee expected their advisor to provide them

space for independent research and support their ideas at work and others preferred to be guided at every step and were comfortable following advisor's ideas. Realization of the advisor's support was determined by fulfillment of advisee's personal and professional needs by their advisor. Self-realization of advisee is dependent upon introspection of advisor towards advisee's action, which is termed as interaction.

Interaction

Interaction is the act of the student engaging with the academic environment based on the positive or negative environmental feedback received. This is brought about by the evaluation of behavior and is influenced by cultural and personal values, beliefs and preferences. Cultural preference includes expectation of the advisor from advisee to get acclimatized to American academic culture.

Faculty advisors expected their advisee to get adjusted to the academic culture in U.S. in order to survive in U.S. academia. They were willing to help and took it as one of their responsibilities as an academic advisor to help their advisee with the transition at all possible ways. At a personal level faculty advisors expected a certain amount of work interest, passion, hard work and potential (critical thinking ability) from their advisee. But these expectations were sometimes influenced advisor's preferred working style. Some advisor wanted their advisee to come up with new ideas and preferred a less structured pedagogical approach. They could not relate to advisee's need for a more structured working environment, which resulted in dissatisfaction in their relationship. But there were advisors who preferred student centric pedagogy and acted as per the student's demand. They tried to visualize the problem from the student's point of view and tried to avoid making assumptions.

All the advisor participants preferred to provide the advisee with a non-judgmental and safe environment where they can learn by making mistakes. The process of interaction influences behavior of the advisee. It is the feedback of the advisor that seemed to be a very critical factor behind an academically productive relationship. Feedback acts as a guideline for the advisee to make decisions regarding their line of action. Based on the advisor's response to advisee's behavior, the success or failure of the relationship is determined, which is known as interpretation.

Interpretation

Interpretation is when the advisee reflects upon his or her relationship with their advisor. Based upon their expectations from their advisor, and advisor's attitude towards advisee's personal and professional issues the advisee draws an inference about the nature of over-all relationship that they share with their advisor. Most of the advisee shared good relationship with their advisor, but there were few who shared their story of frustration and dissatisfaction with their advisor. It is to be noted that success of the advising relationship dependent upon how much the two individual's (advisor and advisee) need and expectation was aligned. Another important factor behind a successful advising relationship is coping. In a good advisor-advisee relationship, coping was employed from both the sides that made situations comforting and easy for both. Students who did not have good relationship with their advisor pointed out that they were the ones who were coping all the time. Flexible and understanding mindset from both ends helped develop human connect and bonding between the dyad.

Working around Inter-Personal Issues

It cannot be denied that since every individual is unique in certain ways, certain level of difference always exists between two individuals. The most important step is to acknowledge the

differences and then try to work around it. If two identities are supposed to work together as a team, then there should be a minimum level of coordination between the two. Coordination encompasses understanding each other's weakness, strengths, needs, difficulties, and approaches to name a few. This research study focused on interpersonal problems between the advisor and the international advisee in U.S. academic settings. The main purpose behind the advisor and the advisee coming together is to solve research or academic related problems (Problem A). The probable issues that exists in this relationship revolves around language barrier, cultural differences, academic discourses, mismatch of research interest, lack of human connect, lack of motivation, communication gap, miscommunication, difference in cognitive style etc. These issues are Problem B that distracts attention of the problem solver from Problem A. In ideal situations, the dyad spends maximum time and effort in solving Problem A but, in certain unfavorable situations Problem B becomes time and energy consuming. Since an individual can concentrate on one thing at a time (Friedel. C, 2014, Borst, Taatgen, & van Rijn, 2011) Problem A gets side lined affecting the purpose of the advising relationship (see Figure 5). In such situations, adjusting, understanding and coping nature of the two individuals is essential in order to make situation comfortable for both the parties. Even though coping is mentally and emotionally very exhausting, it is perhaps the only way to tackle Problem B (Friedel, 2014). Employment of coping from both advisor and advisee makes situation comparatively less stressful.

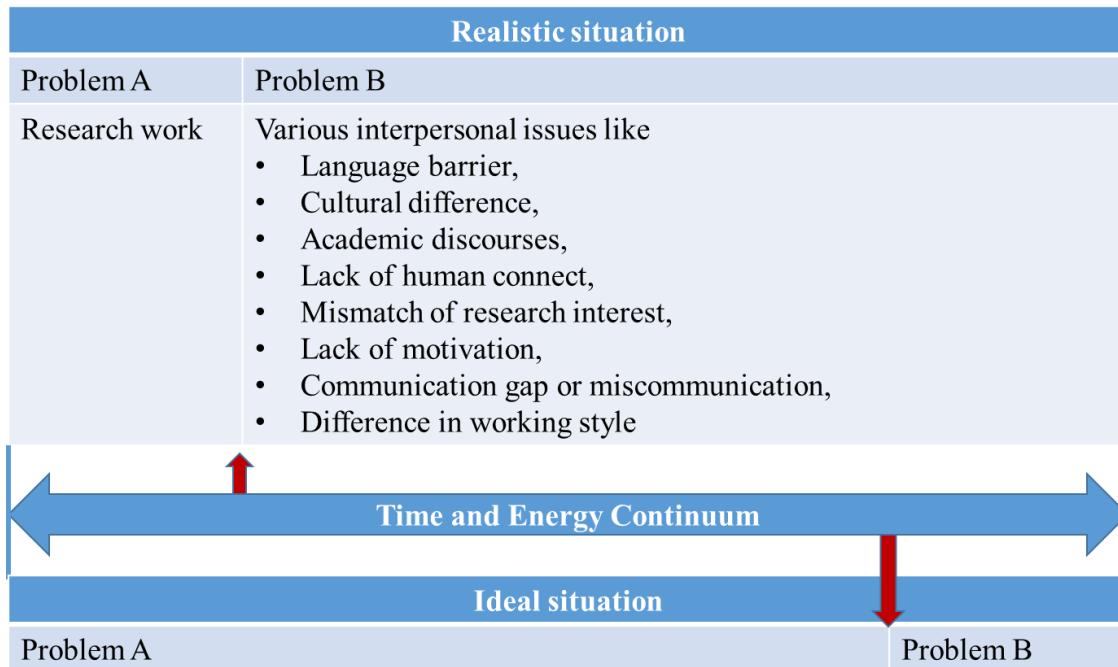


Figure 6. Illustration of time and energy investment in solving Problem A and Problem B

Recommendations for Practice

Based upon the findings of this research, international students seemed to face complex problems in U.S. academic and non-academic settings. These students expect a lot of mental support from their advisors. They tend to be dependent upon their advisor in terms of personal and professional guidance. As such, it becomes the responsibility of the higher education institution to support the needs of the international students. In order to mitigate issues for international student in U.S and to provide a good academic environment for them, recommendations have been developed. They are as follows:

- Faculty advisors should be specially trained by the university as to how to deal of international students. They should be made aware of the challenges and insecurities of international students inside and outside the US academic settings.
- Faculty advisors should be trained with the knowledge of KAI to advocate and acknowledge the academic needs of students in a better way.

- Because a lot of learning occurs in the classroom that is beneficial to the productivity of the international student, instructors should be trained to design culturally responsive courses and create inclusive learning environments.
- Instructors should provide more guidance to international students to address some of the language barriers that exist, this is likened to differentiated instruction for domestic students who need additional instructional support.
- International students in US academic settings should be provided an orientation class about the culture in U.S. They should be made aware about U.S societal norms, belief system, morals, ethics etc.
- To make the advising relationship less stressful for all, coping behaviors should be employed by both individuals.

Recommendations for Future Research

In this research work, the perception of international advisees and faculty advisors towards the advising relationship was studied. As such, not all the problems faced by advisors and advisees could be identified properly. Some of the results are based on assumptions and perception of either the advisor or the advisee and may not highlight actual interactions. To this end, the following recommendations for future research were developed.

- Match pair advisors and advisees in order to glean insight into the issues that exist in particular situation and how the situations were influenced by the specific KAI pairing.
- Replicate the study with more participants from different disciplines, colleges, and universities.

- Since some of the international students face issue with English communication, future research in this line should have provision for international student to give their interview in their native language so that they can express themselves more easily.
- Another faculty member should interview advisors in order to provide participants a relatable and safe environment to discuss their experiences.

Conclusion

This study explores the condition of international students in U.S. academic settings. The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that encourage or thwart the relationship between advisors and their international graduate students. The theory of Organismic Socio-Behavioral Perspective (OSBP) (Anderson, 2007) was used as a conceptual framework for this qualitative study. The study also utilized Kirton's Adaption Innovation theory (Kirton, 2011) in order to reason out if the difference in problem solving between the advisee and the advisor is cultural or cognitive and which differences are more salient in defining the advising relationship, and are coping behaviors being employed and by whom? This research work addresses the gaps in the literature by describing the characteristics of the faculty advisor and international advisee pertinent to the framework (ex. educational and professional background, intercultural competence, and A-I score) and by finding out the themes consistent in positive versus challenged advisor-student relationships from the viewpoint of international students and faculty advisors. Findings of the research are as follows.

- A link between participants' cognitive styles and their expectations for the advising relationship was observed.
- Cultural difference outside academia had no impact on academic progress of international students.

- Acculturation into American academic culture seemed essential for academic success of international students in U.S academic settings.
- International students wanted their home country culture to be acknowledged in a multicultural setting.
- Success of advising relationship seemed to be dependent upon how much the advisor and the advisee exhibited coping behavior.
- Acknowledging the differences and accepting a person in a holistic manner as a separate identity worked best in a multicultural setting.
- Developing a human connection between the advisor and advisee seemed to be vital for a successful and academically productive advising relationship.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Questions to be asked to the international student participants

Basic demographic questions

1. What is your study number?
2. What is your nationality?
3. What degree program are you currently in?
4. What is your academic year?
5. Which College do you belong?
6. How many years have you been in US?

Data collecting questions

a. Perceptions about the advisor at a personal level

1. Who is your academic advisor?
2. What are certain things you appreciate in your advisor?
3. Describe your advisor's attitude towards you in the unofficial settings (departmental parties or get together)?
4. What are your expectations for your advisor? (Friendly, approachable, welcoming, smiling face, detached types, too official)
5. How does your advisor treat you as a person (Takes you for granted; values your time; treats you as one of his/her peer)?
6. Do you find your advisor's attitude similar with his/her other students?
7. Did you feel at any point that you need to change your advisor? Why?

b. Perceptions of Advisor's academic support

1. Does your research domain match with your advisor's?

2. How involved is your advisor in your research work? What does your advisor do to support you as you conduct your research work?
3. Are you satisfied with the amount of time that he/she spends supporting your research?
4. What is his/her reaction like when you successfully complete your duties or complete the work that the advisor gave you to do (Appreciative, critical, encouraging, critiques positively)?

c. Perceptions of Advisor's support outside academics

1. Do you find your advisor approachable? (Personality wise: strict, have smile on face, rude, too official, chilled out type of personality)
2. Have you ever shared concerns (other than academic problems) with your advisor?
3. How does your advisor react to your problems?
4. Does he/she interfere in your personal life?

d. Preferences for working (solving problem)

1. Do you need to solve problems that your advisor gives you in his/her preferred way or does your advisor give you the freedom to solve the problem in your own way?
2. How strict is your advisor about deadlines? Do you successfully meet the deadlines? If not what are the consequences that you face?
3. Who is responsible for setting your weekly schedule (can you make your own schedule or dose your advisor tell you when to come in to work)?
4. When there is a miscommunication or difference of opinion, who compromises? You? Your Advisor? (It depends on the situation. Both may compromise from time-to-time. Who compromises more? How do you feel about this relationship as it relates to compromising?)

e. Perceptions of the host country

1. Describe your social life in the US?

2. How is the American culture different from the culture in your country?
3. What challenges do you face in US academia?
4. How is the US education system different from your country?
5. Do you possess any preconceived notions about the ethnicity or religious background of your advisor?

f. Freedom to express culture

1. What are some notable differences that you see in your advisor in terms of culture (speaking, mixing with people, attitude, manners, mentality etc.) which you can't relate to?
2. How do you like to dress when you meet with your advisor?
3. Would you like to put on your traditional dress at departmental functions? Why so or why not? (How would you like to show your culture in the environment you are in now?)
4. Does your advisor give you space in terms of cultural beliefs and practices in academic settings?

g. Additional questions

1. What motivated you to come to the US for having an Agricultural Degree?
2. How is the US academia and life in the US different from what you expected it to be?
3. On a scale from 1 to 10 (1 being lowest impact level and 10 being highest impact level) how much does your relationship with your adviser impact your satisfaction level in the US academia?
4. What advice would you like to give to someone from your country who wishes to come to the US for studying agriculture?

Appendix 2: Questions to be asked to the advisors of the international student participants

Basic demographic questions

1. What is study number?
2. What is your current position?
3. What is your nationality?
 - a. If not born in the US, How many years have you been in US?
4. How many years have you been a professor?

Data collecting questions:

a. Reflexivity:

1. Describe your current responsibilities?
2. How many students do you currently advised?
3. How many of your advisees are international?
4. How much time do you devote in advising?
5. How do you judge a student's potential?
6. As an advisor do you give enough freedom to your advisees to solve a problem or to do a work in their own way or style?
7. How often do you socialize with people from different cultures or nationalities? On a scale of 1-10, how do you rate your level of comfort with interacting with people from different cultures.
8. Which of the following descriptors best describes the feedback you like to give your advisees upon completion of a task: Appreciative, Critical, Encouraging, Constructive?

b. Perceptions about international advisee at a personal level:

1. What do you believe are challenges your international advisees face while in the US?
2. Do they share their professional and personal problems with you?
3. How do you address the challenges of your international students? (Taking care of funding etc.)
4. Do you believe you deal with international students differently from domestic students? If so how?
5. What are certain things you appreciate about your international advisees?

c. Perceptions about international advisee at an academic level:

1. What are certain qualities that you look for in an international student while you are selecting them?
2. In academic settings what kind of issues do you face while dealing with your advisees?
3. Describe your experiences while guiding international students?
4. From an academic perspective do you find any difference between an international student and an American student?
5. How strict are you about deadlines? Do your international students successfully meet those deadlines? If not what are the consequences that they face?

d. Perceptions about international advisee related to culture:

1. What are some notable differences that you see in your advisee in terms of culture (accent while speaking, mixing with people, attitude, manners, mentality, dressing etc.)? How do you react to those differences?

2. Describe his/her attitude towards you in the outside of the academic settings (departmental parties or get together)?
3. Do you take into account the ethnicity or religious background of your international advisees when interacting with them? How so?

e. Perceptions about international advisee from an advisors view point:

1. How involved are you in your international advisee's research work?
2. How do you find international advisee's approach towards work differ from an American advisee? Are you comfortable with it?
3. When there is a miscommunication or difference of opinion, who compromises? You? Your international advisee? (It depends on the situation. Both may compromise from time-to-time. Who compromises more? How do you feel about this relationship as it relates to compromising?)

f. If not mentioned in the above questions, ask the following questions:

1. Did you feel at any point that you made a wrong choice while selecting an international advisee? Why?
2. Do you prefer giving your international students advices outside of the academic settings (dressing, socializing etc.)?
3. Do you feel the necessities to adopt to different strategies while advising an international student? If so why? Explain.
4. What is your take on the fact that international student should adapt to American culture while their stay in US? Why, how and up to what extent?