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A Quarterly Publication on International Education

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b) **Research in Brief** – includes manuscripts that focus a specific topic or question using new data or conceptual framework that does not require a full-length manuscript; up to two figures/tables, and maximum 5-8 references (1,500-2,000 words).
c) **Study Abroad/Reflection** - includes descriptions and perceptions from students and scholars concerning another culture, language, people and society from an insider or outsider perspective (between 1,000 to 2,500 words).

d) **Book/Dissertation/Flim Review** - includes reviews and critiques of the written work of scholars from a number of disciplines related to international students (between 750 to 1,200 words).

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# Table of Contents

- **Campus Readiness for Supporting International Student Success (Editorial)**
  
  Rahul Choudaha, EdeEducation, USA
  
  I-V

- **1. Student Success through Leadership Self-Efficacy: A Comparison of International and Domestic Students**
  
  David H. K. Nguyen, University of North Dakota, USA
  
  829-856

- **2. Supporting Postsecondary English Language Learners’ Writing Proficiency Using Technological Tools**
  
  Kathleen A. Moore, Camille Rutherford, and Keith A. Crawford, Brock University, Ontario, Canada
  
  857-872

- **3. Helping the Transition: Mentorship to Support International Students in Canada**
  
  Clint Thomson and Victoria M. Esses, The University of Western Ontario, Canada
  
  873-886

- **4. Issues of International Students’ Academic Adaptation in the ESL Writing Class: A Mixed-methods Study**
  
  Eunjeong Park, The Ohio State University, USA
  
  887-904

  
  Mengwei Su, Laura M. Harrison, Ohio University, USA
  
  905-919

- **6. A New Conceptual Model for Understanding International Students’ College Needs**
  
  Eyad Alfattal, California State U., San Bernardino, USA
  
  920-932

- **7. International Undergraduates’ Retention, Graduation, and Time to Degree**
  
  Barry Fass-Holmes, University of California, San Diego, USA
  
  933-955

- **8. Japanese Language as an Organizational Barrier for International Students to Access to University Services: A Case of Aoyama Gakuin University**
  
  Hiroyoshi Hiratsuka, Aoyama Gakuin University, Japan
  
  956-966

  
  Namsook Kim, University at Buffalo, USA
  
  967-983

- **10. Support Services at Spanish and U.S. Institutions: A Driver for International Student Satisfaction**
  
  Adriana Perez-Encinas, The Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain; Ravichandran Ammigan, University of Delaware, USA
  
  984-998

- **11. How Tinto’s Theory Differs For Asian and Non-Asian International Students: A Quantitative Study**
  
  Suzan Kommers and Duy Pham, U. of Massachusetts Amherst
  
  999-1014
12. Exploring Sense of Belonging among Black International Students at an HBCU. .............................................................. Chrystal A. George Mwangi, U. of Massachusetts Amherst

13. Realities and Realizations: Reflections on a Social Work Exchange Program between the United States and China. … Jennifer Cullen, Jolynn L. Haney, Linda Houser, Jun Cao and Xi Mi, Widener University, USA

14. The Plagiarism Polyconundrum.............................................. Reine D. Bethany, New York Institute of Technology, USA

15. Working with International Students in the U.S. and Beyond: A Summary of Survey Research by NCDA International Student Services Committee. ............................. Elif Balin, San Francisco State University, USA.; Nicole M. Anderson, Tufts University, USA.; Satomi Y. Chudasama, Princeton University, USA.; Sutha K Kanagasingam, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA; Lily Zhang, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA

16. Food Identity and its Impact upon the Study Abroad Experience ......................................................... Andrea Ciliotta-Rubery, The Coll. at Brockport, SUNY, USA

17. From Isolation to Inclusion: Learning of the Experiences of Chinese International Students in U.S. ......................... Nancy Li Will, University of Washington, USA

18. International Student Engagement: Strategies for Creating Inclusive, Connected, and Purposeful Campus Environments. Clyde Barnett III, Eastern Michigan University, USA
American higher education is among the most preferred destinations for many globally mobile students. According to OECD (2016), the United States is the leading destination attracting 26% of all the globally mobile students followed by the United Kingdom (15%), France (11%), Germany (10%), and Australia (8%); yet the share of international students in the total enrollment at the tertiary level in the U.S. is only 4%. One of the primary reasons for the attractiveness of American institutions is the perception of quality education among prospective students and its implications for a better career and life success. The terror attacks of September 11, 2001 resulted in a temporary decline in international student enrollment, which continued until 2005/06. Since then American higher education has shown resilience and the enrollment of international students has been growing at a healthy pace. Between 2001/02 and 2014/15, the number of international students in U.S. universities and colleges increased by 67% to reach nearly 974,926 students (Open Doors, 2015). However, source countries and destination institutions skew this growth. For example, international students from the leading 10 places of origin grew by 121% and likewise, the leading 10 institutions of international student enrollment increased by 166% (Open Doors, 2015).

Global financial recession of 2007/08 was one of the reasons that contributed to the skewed growth. The recession compelled many institutions, including some of the top-ranked institutions, to aggressively expand international student enrollment. This growth pressure was even more pronounced in the American public institutions of higher education. For example, international student enrollment at 13 leading public research universities, which are part of the Big Ten Academic Alliance, grew by only
16% between 2001/02 and 2007/08 as compared to 74% between 2007/08 and 2014/015.

Table 1: International Student Enrollment Growth Post-9/11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014/15</th>
<th>2001/02</th>
<th>% Change (2001/02 to 2014/15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students from Leading 10 Places of Origin</td>
<td>687,329</td>
<td>310,947</td>
<td>121%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading Places of Origin as a % of Total Enrollment</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students at Leading 10 Institutions</td>
<td>106,754</td>
<td>40,180</td>
<td>166%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading 10 Institutions as a % of Total Enrollment</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrollment</td>
<td>974,926</td>
<td>582,996</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IMPLICATIONS OF SKEWED GROWTH**

This dramatic and skewed growth has implications for international student success. It has exposed the lack of readiness of many campuses to engage and support international students. Many large campuses which already had significant international student populations were unsure and unprepared about how to manage the expectations of campus and community stakeholders in working with the rapid growth of international students on the campus. Likewise, many small to medium-sized campuses, which were new to recruiting international students were not able to invest in and scale up corresponding infrastructure, resources and competencies needed to support international students.

The American Council on Education in its 2012 report identified that, “While efforts to recruit international students are on the rise, the data do not show a commensurate increase in support services for these students” (p. 5). Likewise, Green (2013) asserts that “…too many institutions have ramped up their goals without planning for the accompanying investment in student services, language support, or programs to facilitate integration into the local and campus community” (p. 53). Driven by financial pressures and limited resources, some institutions are charging or additional fees applicable only to international students (Redden, 2015).

At many campuses, support services for international students only address immigration and visa compliance. International students need, deserve, and want more in terms of academic and career support. For example, mismatch in expectations of career advancement prior to
enrollment and their actual experience on campus is one of the key reasons mentioned by international students regarding their dissatisfaction on American campuses (Choudaha & Schulmann, 2014).

By continuing to increase tuition and fees for international students without a proportionate reinvestment in the success of the students themselves, some institutions are behaving contrary to their missions, values and principles. Green (2013) asks, “To what extent do our practices in recruiting and providing a positive educational and social experience for international students align with the values and principles we articulate?” (p. 2). Likewise, Özturgut and Murphy (2009) concluded that U.S. institutions “… are not ‘practicing what they preach’ when it comes to meeting the needs of international students. They are not using the research to drive practice in accommodating international students” (p. 374).

IN SEARCH OF SOLUTIONS

It’s high time to stop treating international students as cash cows and embrace the values which institutions expect their students to manifest. To build a sustainable and an inclusive model of enrolling and integrating international students with local students and campus communities, institutions of higher education must invest in campus readiness. Glass, Buss, and Braskamp (2013) note that “It is imperative that institutions devote more attention (and perhaps also more resources) to this surprisingly neglected, though powerful, student demographic” (p. 44).

Many colleges and universities are missing the opportunity of investing in their students who later become their brand ambassadors. According to Lee (2010), “The perception of receiving fair and equal treatment was the most important influence leading a student to recommend the host university to others, followed by satisfaction with institutional services and the university’s reputation” (p. 76).

Institutions must proactively diversify international student body by investing in recruitment efforts that take time to cultivate new markets and attract different segments of students. Creating an inclusive campus climate requires not only providing adequate tools and resources but also building intercultural competence among diverse stakeholders including faculty, administrators, and students—domestic and international. Knowledge is only one part of the intercultural competence the other two parts are skills and attitudes. Many faculty and administrators know the need of intercultural competence, however practicing it with skill and a welcoming mindset is yet to be achieved on many campuses.

To continue the leadership of the United States as the number one destination among globally mobile students, institutional leaders (both at the
policy and program levels) would require proactive investment of time, talent and effort to define and deliver outcomes related to international students’ academic and career success.

SPECIAL ISSUE

The aim of this special issue is to advance the research agenda about the needs, experiences and expectations of international students so that research can help build institutional readiness for supporting academic and career pursuits of international students. This special issue includes a collection of 18 articles from 32 authors. They address several research concerns related to international student success including leadership self-efficacy, writing proficiency, mentorship, retention, student satisfaction, sense of belongingness, plagiarism, and career services.

I am thankful to the leadership and commitment of Dr. Krishna Bista, founder and editor-in-chief of the Journal, for providing this opportunity of editing the special issue. I appreciate the contributions of the authors and reviewers and we hope that this issue will further advance the awareness and actions needed in making campuses ready to support international students.

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ABSTRACT

There is scarce research that examines the leadership experiences of international students on campus. Leadership capacity and efficacy are important indicators of success in higher education and are linked to important academic, career, and life benefits, such as career and leadership aspirations, work performance, the ability to cope and overcome stereotypes, and the adaptation to and persistence in the face of challenging situations. This quantitative study focuses on international students’ confidence in their leadership abilities while studying in a foreign country and system in comparison with their domestic student peers. Findings suggest that college campuses and higher education professionals need to do a better job at engaging their international students in leadership opportunities while being culturally relevant.

Keywords: International student, leadership self-efficacy, student involvement

Research has exposed multiple challenges of international students while studying on their American campuses, but surprisingly there is scarce research examining approaches to involve international students in activities or examines their perspectives on student involvement to overcome these barriers. Integrating international students into the existing campus culture can be challenging (Andrade, 2006). Student involvement and participation in co-curricular activities can have a positive effect on students’ academic and social outcomes on campus. Along with involvement and participation, leadership is also an important indicator of success in higher education...
Leadership capacity and efficacy are linked to important academic, career, and life benefits, such as career and leadership aspirations, work performance, the ability to cope and overcome stereotypes, and the adaptation to and persistence in the face of challenging situations (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009; Hannah, Avolio, Luthans, & Harms, 2008; Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011). As a result, increasing leadership opportunities for international students will not only increase their educational success and career aspirations, but it will also be critical to integrating them on campus and developing their own diverse perspectives.

Since research on the development of leadership capacity in international students is absent from the national discourse in higher education, the purpose of this study was to examine whether students’ leadership self-efficacy was impacted by their college environments (LSE_post). More particularly, the study compared international students with their domestic student peers. Through quantitative analyses, this study utilized national data to make this comparison with the influence of their campus environments.

LEADERSHIP SELF-EFFICACY & STUDENT SUCCESS

This social construction of leadership has resulted in over 200 definitions and understandings of leadership behavior and leadership development (Rost, 1991). It is not surprising that most people do not understand what the concept of leadership really means (Burns, 1978). For the purposes of this study, leadership is defined in the post-industrial philosophy based on relational, reciprocal, and value-based models (Rost, 1991), which more closely reflects the social justice missions of higher education institutions. Leadership responds to the modern needs of society as a group through which purposeful and ethical engagement of individual energy and influence create change that benefits oneself and others and is collaborative with an authentic and positive approach (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Rost, 1991). Leadership development is the process of expanding one’s capacity to be effective in leadership roles (McCauley, Van Veslor, & Rudeman, 2010). For the purposes of this study, leadership development has focused more on developing human capital by focusing on individual intra-personal abilities instead of social capital and investing in interpersonal development and community relationships compared to the industrial philosophy of leadership and developing individual skills and abilities (Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005).

Given that leadership is an integral purpose of higher education (Dugan & Komives, 2007), it is important to understand how students fit into this complex concept. Komives, et al. (2005) found that as students
entered college, their approach to leadership appeared to be consistent to the industrial forms of the leader-centric and personal abilities models. As students developed throughout their years in higher education, their understanding of leadership shifted to become more relational, similar to the post-industrial leadership model (Komives, et al., 2005). This provides an important awareness to the present study that individuals’ concept of leaders and leadership can change over time. Students’ college experiences can change the way they think about leadership, which can also shift their perceptions of leadership efficacy.

Leadership self-efficacy, grounded in social cognitive theory, is the belief that one has the capabilities and resources to perform a specific task – leadership. This personal belief can change based on different factors of function, such as self-esteem, competency, and environment (McCormick, Tanguma, & Lopez-Forment, 2002). It can also be affected by how a person learns behaviors throughout his or her development, which influences his or her judgment and decision-making (Bandura, 1997).

Chemers (2000) describes leadership self-efficacy as a basis from which to understand one’s performance in organizing and leading others and asserts that one’s confidence can help develop mastery to become a better leader. In other words, self-efficacy in leadership refers to one’s confidence in his or her ability to lead, and this frequently impacts whether or not one decides to lead (Hannah, Avolio, Luthans, & Harms, 2008; Komives & Dugan, 2010; Murphy, 2002; Paglis, 2010). It has been found that self-efficacy is highly related to the frequency that a person reported an attempt to lead (McCormick, Tanguma, & Lopez-Forment, 2002). However, efficacy is fluid and is influenced by environmental factors that may either leverage or constrain an individual’s perceptions of his or her capacity for leadership (Bandura, 1997). Due to a myriad of challenges, international students may have different leadership efficacies than their domestic student peers depending on their learning environments. Enhancing international students’ efficacy for leadership may create positive environments for positive academic success and career outcomes.

LEADERSHIP SELF-EFFICACY OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

For the purposes of this study, international students are people from other countries who come to the United States for the primary purpose of obtaining a degree (Anderson, Carmichael, Harper, & Huang, 2009; Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000). It is important to note that international students do not include those who are in the United States as asylees, refugees, permanent residents, or any other immigration category that allows long-term legal presence in the United States. Student leadership for international students is an area that has yet to be researched,
and specifically, the understanding of leadership self-efficacy of international students is poorly developed. Leadership self-efficacy has been studied in a myriad of other student populations from women STEM students (Dugan, Fath, Howes, Lavelle, & Polanin, 2013), commuter students (Dugan, Garland, Jacoby, & Gasior, 2008), students of different races (Kodama & Dugan, 2013), to GLBTQ+ students (Martinez, Ostick, Komives, & Dugan, 2007), among others. Collectively, international students are becoming an increasingly relevant student population on American campuses and a student population that should not be ignored.

Although there is no clear evidence on how college environments impact leadership self-efficacy for international students, understanding the demographic and environmental predictors of leadership self-efficacy will provide an understanding of areas to examine coupled with the current research on international students. Anderson, Carmichael, Harper & Huang (2009) suggested that institutions should better facilitate international student engagement in campus activities through participation in co-curricular activities allowing international students the opportunity to meet new people and make new friends – which are important to a successful transition – adapt to new social networks and navigate the social skills, values, and customs of their new environment, which in turn increases their self-efficacy and confidence (Tomich, McWhirter, & Darcy, 2003; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002). In addition, more involvement in co-curricular activities and leadership opportunities will allow international students to voice their needs and concerns on campus.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES, ENGLISH PROFICIENCY & LEADERSHIP

Leadership can be influenced by culture. The differences in leadership style are rooted within different systems of cultural practices and values, and even within a common continent (Chhokar, Brodbeck, & House, 2013). Ronen and Shenkar (1985) found that clusters of European countries that share similar cultural values also share similar leadership concepts. Countries that cluster together are based on geographical proximity, common language or language groups, religion, economic, political, educational, social development (Hofstede, 1980; Ronon & Shenkar, 1985). Some of these determine cultural values, such as individualism, impacting the dimensions of leadership. These cultural dimensions are highly correlated with leadership dimensions (Smith, Dugan, & Trompenaars, 1996).

Although this study does not examine the differences of leadership self-efficacy based on these cultural clusters because of the limitations of the survey, it is important to note the impact of culture on these differences in leadership capacity and self-efficacy. Under leadership categorization
theory, the better the match between a perceived individual and the leadership concept held by the perceiver, the more likely it is that the perceiver actually visualizes the individual as a leader (Lord & Maher, 1991). As a result, if leadership concepts differ because of cultural differences between managers and subordinates or colleagues, this can constrain managers’ perception of their subordinates’ or colleagues’ leadership ability (Brodbeck et al., 2000). This could also impact the subordinate/colleague’s leadership self-efficacy. Likewise, if a student, faculty, or staff campus leader perceives an international student’s cultural difference as not having leadership capacity, it is unlikely that the student, faculty, or staff campus leader will encourage the international student to engage in campus leadership opportunities. These differences in leadership dimensions may also impact international students’ self-efficacy of leadership, particularly on the host campus in their host country and culture.

While English proficiency can also impact international students’ lack of confidence (Leong, 2015), the instrument used for the purposes of this study did not ask for language proficiency as a demographic variable. The study was unable to explore whether status as international student could be a proxy for English proficiency. In addition, while international students come to campus from other countries, this does not assume that they are coming from non-English speaking countries. While culture and language proficiency are important aspects to leadership, it is a limitation of this study and of the instrument.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

Bandura’s (1977) Social Cognitive Theory provides a model for understanding human behavior as the exercise of control in given situations, which is influenced by individual appraisals of their ability to perform. Social Cognitive Theory serves as the theoretical framework for this study because it is the theoretical foundation for leadership self-efficacy. An individual’s self-efficacy, or appraisal of ability, would influence an individual’s behavior to participate in leadership. From the theory of self-efficacy, a student is concerned with their environment, their actions, and how they perceive their actions in a particular environment. Connecting this to leadership theory is how leadership self-efficacy evolves through a related theory of Leadership Identity Development, which provides understanding how individuals come to think of themselves in terms of the leadership process (Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005). The relationship between one’s understanding of their ability and their appraisal to perform as leaders are connected to his or her involvement experiences, which would influence his or her’s leadership self-efficacy.
Astin’s (1993) Inputs-Environment-Outcome (IEO) College Impact Model, which allows the researcher to “assess the impact of various environmental experiences by determining whether students grow or change differently under varying environmental conditions” (p. 7), is the conceptual framework that influenced the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) instrument and is chosen for its cross-sectional design rather than the traditional longitudinal format. While Astin’s (1991) traditional IEO model assumes that data collection happens at a minimum of two different points to capture change, the model was adapted for the MSL from the pre-/post-assessment to a design that collected retrospective data at a single point. As a result, the MSL instrument asks students to retroactively reflect upon their prior knowledge and experiences. This then/now approach provides a more accurate measure of self-reported leadership development by reducing the amount of response shift bias (Howard, 1980; Howard & Dailey, 1979; Rohs, 1999, 2002; Rohs & Langone, 1997). Therefore, while the participants were in college, they answered questions that asked about their pre-collegiate activities and characteristics while also capturing environmental data, such as their current college leadership, institutional type, student status, racial group, perceptions of campus climate, and class standing (Astin, 1993; Dugan, 2011; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The purpose of this model is to allow researchers to modify the inputs or students’ background characteristics so that a more representative estimate of the influences of different college environments have on student outcomes (Astin, 1991). The independent variables in this study are the inputs and environments, while the outcomes are the dependent variables.

RESEARCH METHODS

Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL)

This study employed data from the 2012 Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL). The MSL was designed to examine and understand college student leadership development and the impact of college environments on leadership outcomes (Dugan & Komives, 2007). The instrument is based on Astin’s (1991) College Impact Model that controls for pre-collegiate characteristics, inputs (I), while assessing the impact of college environments (E) on student outcomes (O). The IEO model uses a longitudinal design with pre- and post-tests. The purpose of the MSL is to enrich already existing knowledge on college student leadership development and the ways in which higher education as a context can influence how the development of leadership capacity takes place (Dugan, Komives, & Associates, 2006). It is a national study of college student development leadership that explores a variety of factors on leadership and employs a quantitative, comparative, cross-sectional design through survey
The design of the MSL affords several benefits for this study. First, the MSL measures self-reported self-efficacies of leadership pre- and post-collegiate enrollment and leadership development via the social change model. This provides understanding of whether the host college environment impacts leadership self-efficacies of international students. Given the research questions in this study, the MSL captures demographic and environmental characteristics that provide insight into college student leadership development for a student population that few have focused on. The multi-institutional design approach supports the ability to disaggregate while generalizing the findings to understand the trends across various types of institutions. Since the MSL is one of the only multi-institutional studies of student leadership, it is an appropriate instrument for this kind of study to examine the experiences of international students nationally.

Research Question

In this study I asked if there is a difference between the leadership self-efficacy of domestic students and international students. Through this research question, I used a comparative, cross-sectional analysis of the students’ leadership self-efficacy prior to and during their study in the U.S. as an international student. Since efficacy is fluid and is influenced by environmental factors that may either leverage or constrain an individual’s perceptions of his or her capacity for leadership (Bandura, 1997), it is expected that the leadership self-efficacy of domestic students will differ from their international student peers. While it is expected that the
leadership self-efficacy between domestic and international students will be different since these two student populations have vastly different experiences and challenges, research has not examined the magnitude of this difference.

Sample

Data for this study was obtained from the MSL and financially supported by the Indiana University Graduate School. The MSL research team recruited respondents from 82 registered institutions of higher education in the United States and the countries of Mexico, Canada, and West Indies, and it was administered by the Survey Science Group (SSG) between the months of January and April. The data were collected through the internet using a web-based administration of the MSL Student Survey (MSL-SS). Emails were sent to ask students to participate. Participants were drawn from student samples that depended on the size of institutional enrollment. Campuses that had an enrollment of 4,000 or less used the entire student population as their sample, while those with enrollments exceeding 4,000 drew a random sample standardized at 95% confidence interval with a +/- 3% confidence of error.

Table 1: 2012 MSL Question 33

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Variable label</th>
<th>Response coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEM9</td>
<td>Indicate your citizenship and/or generational status: (Choose One)</td>
<td>1 = Your grandparents, parents, and you were born in the U.S.  2 = Both of your parents AND you were born in the U.S.  3 = You were born in the U.S., but at least one of your parents was not  4 = You are a foreign born, naturalized citizen  5 = You are a foreign born, resident alien/permanent resident  6 = International student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At these institutions, student participants were oversampled by 70% in order to achieve at least a 30% response rate of the survey instrument in order to fall within the acceptable rate of 30-40% expected from internet survey data.
Table 2: Domestic and International Student Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Domestic students</th>
<th>International students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>47,246</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27,292</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>55,316</td>
<td>74.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>3,226</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American/Asian</td>
<td>4,377</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic</td>
<td>3,759</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>6,698</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race not included above</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Point Average</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.50 – 4.00</td>
<td>31,147</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00 – 3.49</td>
<td>27,934</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.50 -2.99</td>
<td>11,996</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00 – 2.49</td>
<td>2,762</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.99 or less</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No college GPA</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics</td>
<td>16,301</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional and Pre-professional</td>
<td>5,380</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>9,941</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>11,072</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>4,361</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health-Related Fields</td>
<td>8,184</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>5,028</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies</td>
<td>1,516</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>10,906</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>2,003</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Class Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Level</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman/First Year</td>
<td>16,031</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>16,374</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>18,812</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior/Fourth year and beyond</td>
<td>22,062</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Student</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parent/Guardian Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than HS diploma/GED</td>
<td>1,645</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS diploma/GED</td>
<td>8,928</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>9,670</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates degree</td>
<td>5,802</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>21,661</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>1,040</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>16,991</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>696</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate or professional degree</td>
<td>9,180</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parent/Guardian Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $12,500</td>
<td>3,171</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$12,500 - $24,999</td>
<td>4,005</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 - $39,999</td>
<td>5,277</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000 - $54,999</td>
<td>5,921</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$55,000 - $74,999</td>
<td>8,297</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 - $99,999</td>
<td>8,916</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 - $149,999</td>
<td>10,872</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000 - $199,999</td>
<td>5,040</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$200,000 and over</td>
<td>7,061</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>11,107</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>867</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rather not say</td>
<td>4,846</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Collection (Crawford, Couper, & Lamia, 2001). Students received up to four reminders within three weeks reminding them to participate. Once students entered the website, they were asked to enter their student identification number, which was separated from their email to provide confidentiality. The first question required consent from the student. If the student did not consent, the survey was closed immediately.

The 2012 MSL sample consisted of 91,178 study participants. There was a 33% response rate from a total of 276,297 students who were sent surveys. For this study, this response rate is acceptable as there are no other multi-institutional surveys with higher response rates. In addition,
scholars in the field of higher education and student affairs have also accepted this rate to be acceptable since this dataset has been used for other published studies. Since this study is specifically examining international students, those that disclosed and identified their citizenship and/or generational status were chosen as the study participants. From the students who responded to the survey, only 78,146 students responded to the question pertaining to their citizenship and generational status (See Table 1). Given the research question, participants that identified as international students were selected for comparison with their domestic student peers in this analysis. A total of 3,430 international students were identified. The remaining students were classified as domestic students and used as a comparison group. Sample sizes were balanced to avoid violations of statistical assumptions in latter inquiry (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Table 2 describes the characteristics of the two subsamples student populations of domestic (n=74,713) and international students (n=3,430).

Independent Variables

Input variables

Independent input variables included the student’s demographic characteristics, experiences prior to college (i.e., involvement in student organizations, leadership positions in student organizations, etc.), and quasi-pretest for leadership self-efficacy prior to college.

Table 3: Leadership self-efficacy pre-test scale; 2012 MSL Question 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Variable label</th>
<th>Response coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looking back to before you started college, how confident were you that you would be successful in college at the following: (Select one response for each)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRE2a</td>
<td>Leading others</td>
<td>1 = Not at all confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizing a group's tasks to accomplish a goal</td>
<td>2 = Somewhat confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRE2b</td>
<td>Taking initiative to improve something</td>
<td>3 = Confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRE2c</td>
<td>Working with a team on a group project</td>
<td>4 = Very confident</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The demographic characteristics chosen for this study included, but were not limited to, the student’s racial group, ethnic group, gender, and area of
study. Input measures that described pre-collegiate experiences were measured by responding to questions that involved engagement in co-curricular activities and community service by using a Likert scale from 0=Never to 3=Very often. A sample of activities asked about student engagement in student clubs and organizations, organized sports, leadership positions in student clubs, groups, or sports, community or work-related organizations, and training or education that developed leadership skills.

The student’s perceptions of leadership self-efficacy prior to college were measured with a composite variable that included a quasi-pre-test of four self-reported individual items where students rated their confidence using a Likert scale of 1=Not at all confident to 4=Very confident. Students self-reported on their pre-college confidence in: leading others, organizing a group’s tasks to accomplish a goal, taking initiative to improve something, and working with a team on a group project (Table 3).

In order to determine the students’ pre-collegiate leadership self-efficacy, I conducted a principal component analysis (PCA) to capture the variation of the above variables PRE2a, PRE2b, PRE2c, and PRE2d and reduce them down to the variable LSEpre. The Cronbach’s alpha level for this scale, which indicates the scale’s internal consistency, was found to be 0.87 for the entire student population (Dugan, Kodama, & Gebhardt, 2012; Dugan & Komives, 2010; Komives, Wagner & Associates, 2009). In order to confirm this level, I conducted my own analysis for all students surveyed.

**Environmental variables**

The environmental variables in this study included their class standing and institutional characteristics, including institutional size, control, and Carnegie classification. The other variables included student involvement experiences, such as membership in student organizations, on- and off-campus organizations, leadership positions in student organizations, community service, participation in formal leadership programs, mentoring relationships, on- and off-campus employment, sense-of-belonging, and discriminatory climate. Distributions for all environmental variables were examined for accuracy and normality distribution through histograms and all were unimodal.

**Dependent Variables**

**Outcome variable**

Since the purpose of this study was to examine how collegiate environments affect the educational outcome of leadership self-efficacy, the dependent variable in this study is the leadership self-efficacy post-test, which also served as the education outcome variable in Astin’s IEO college impact conceptual model. It was a composite measure that asked
individuals to self-report how confident they were in leading others, organizing a group’s tasks to accomplish a goal, taking initiative to improve something, and working with a team on a group project. Responses were reported using an identical scale as the quasi-pre-test of 1=Not at all confident to 4=Very confident.

Table 4: 2012 MSL Question 24: Leadership Self-Efficacy Post-Test Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Variable label</th>
<th>Response coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OUT2a</td>
<td>Leading others</td>
<td>1 = Not at all confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUT2b</td>
<td>Organizing a group's tasks to accomplish a goal</td>
<td>2 = Somewhat confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUT2c</td>
<td>Taking initiative to improve something</td>
<td>3 = Confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUT2d</td>
<td>Working with a team on a group project</td>
<td>4 = Very confident</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that in this post-test, students rated their efficacy of leadership at the time of taking the survey. Similar to the leadership self-efficacy pre-test, I conducted a principal component analysis to create the variable LSEpost by merging the responses to the four survey questions OUT2a, OUT2b, OUT2c, OUT2d. A separate analysis confirmed the reported Cronbach’s alpha of 0.87 for internal consistency of the scale (Dugan, Kodama, & Gebhardt, 2012; Dugan & Komives, 2010; Komives, Wagner & Associates, 2009). Similar to the leadership self-efficacy pre-test, to confirm that the internal consistency of the post-test scale was just as reliable separately for international students and domestic students, I conducted a Cronbach’s Alpha analysis of the leadership self-efficacy post-test scale for both the international student and domestic student population separately. For the international student subgroup, the reliability was similar and just as consistent as the total student population. For the domestic student population, the reliability of the scale was also similar and consistent. Distributions for all outcome variables were examined for accuracy and normality distribution through histograms and all were unimodal.

Data Analysis

The data analysis included several different statistical procedures to determine whether the host campus environment was a determining factor in international students’ self-efficacy of leadership and whether there were differences in their leadership efficacy between the international and domestic student population. Prior to analysis, the assumptions of linearity
and absence of multicollinearity were examined by running scatterplots and correlations. The scatterplots revealed no evidence of nonlinear relationships between the variables. Then, I screened the data for errors by examining the descriptive statistics of each variable to confirm that the data fell within the acceptable range and that the variables in the regression model did not violate statistical assumptions related to multicollinearity (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

**Regression model**

Using a multiple regression analysis using ordinary least squares regression, the following regression equation was used to determine the differences between their leadership self-efficacy prior to attending college:

\[
LSE_{PRE} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{INTL\_DUM} + \beta_2[\text{DEMO}] + \varepsilon,
\]

where \(LSE_{PRE}\) is the leadership self-efficacy pre-test rating; \(\text{INTL\_DUM}\) is a dummy variable indicating 1=international students and 0=domestic students; \(\text{DEMO}\) is a vector comprising of student demographics, which included class level, primary major, gender, race, GPA, parent/guardian level of education, and parent/guardian household income; and \(\varepsilon\) is the error term.

In order to determine if the differences in leadership self-efficacy of domestic students and international students are impacted by the collegiate environment, a multiple regression analysis was conducted on the leadership self-efficacy pre-test of international students and domestic students. Using a multiple regression analysis using ordinary least squares regression, the following regression equation was used to determine how the college environment impacted the students’ leadership self-efficacy:

\[
LSE_{POST} = \beta_0 + \beta_1LSE_{PRE} + \beta_2\text{INTL\_DUM} + \beta_3[\text{DEMO}] + \varepsilon,
\]

where \(LSE_{POST}\) is the leadership self-efficacy post-test rating; \(LSE_{PRE}\) is the leadership self-efficacy pre-test rating; \(\text{INTL\_DUM}\) is a dummy variable indicating 1=international students and 0=domestic students; \(\text{DEMO}\) is a vector comprising of student demographics, which included class level, primary major, gender, race, GPA, parent/guardian level of education, and parent/guardian household income; and \(\varepsilon\) is the error term.

**RESULTS**

**Examining differences in leadership self-efficacy prior to college**

Multiple models were used to analyze the impact of the student demographics as control variables. In order to determine which demographic control trait had a larger effect than the student’s international status, multiple regression analyses were employed that included different covariates and the resulting models were analyzed. The results of these models are presented below. In the resulting regression model, which
 included two interaction terms, the international student LSE_{pre} was significant at a p < 0.10 level.

After all of the student demographics were incorporated, the effect of the international students’ LSE_{pre} decreased but was still significant at a p < 0.10 level (LSE_{pre} = -0.024). Overall, international students had lower LSE_{pre} than their domestic student peers. While the students’ racial group had an impact, it was not as important as their academic major. Only African American/Black, Asian American/Asian, and race not included students had significant LSE_{pre} scores. For African American/Black students, after accounting for academic major, class standing, and class GPA, their LSE_{pre} score increased from $\beta = 0.052$ to $\beta = 0.064$. Their LSE_{pre} was higher than the reference racial group, White/Caucasian students. Asian American/Asian students had the lowest LSE_{pre} scores than any other racial group.

Academic major had the largest effect on a students’ LSE_{pre}. With business majors as a reference, all other academic majors reported lower LSE_{pre}. Students with undecided majors reported significantly lower LSE_{pre} scores than any other majors ($\beta = -0.259, p < 0.001$). Students majoring in the humanities ($\beta = -0.172, p < 0.001$), science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) ($\beta = -0.128, p < 0.001$), and social sciences ($\beta = -0.122, p < 0.001$) had some of the lowest LSE_{pre}. Although lower than the business major peers, professional/pre-professional ($\beta = -0.034, p < 0.001$), education ($\beta = -0.069, p < 0.001$), and multi/interdisciplinary studies ($\beta = -0.080, p < 0.001$) students reported some of the higher LSE_{pre}.

Examining differences in leadership self-efficacy after attending college

The purpose of this study was to examine whether students’ leadership self-efficacy was impacted by their college environments (LSE_{post}). More particularly, the study compared the outcome for international students against their domestic student peers. After including all student demographics as covariates and the LSE_{pre}, international students reported a much lower LSE_{post} than their domestic student peers ($\beta = -0.127, p = 0.001$).

The regression model showed a significant difference between the LSE_{post} of international students compared to domestic students. International students scored lower on average ($\beta = -0.127, p < 0.001$) on the LSE_{post} compared to their domestic student peers after all of the student demographics and LSE_{pre} were incorporated in Model 6. Demographic variables (race, academic major, gender, class standing, college GPA) were also not found to have a large influence except for the students’ academic major. Students’ majors were found to have a relatively similar effect on students’ LSE_{post} compared to students’ international/domestic status.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Int'l student leadership</td>
<td>-0.057***</td>
<td>-0.069***</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
<td>-0.024*</td>
<td>-0.024*</td>
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<tr>
<td>self-efficacy pre-test score</td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-.086***</td>
<td>-.083***</td>
<td>-.063***</td>
<td>-.064***</td>
<td>-.068***</td>
<td>-.068***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>-.324***</td>
<td>-.328***</td>
<td>-.267***</td>
<td>-.267***</td>
<td>-.270***</td>
<td>-.270***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
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<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.023</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
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<td>0.062***</td>
<td>0.062***</td>
<td>0.064***</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
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<td>0.109</td>
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<td>0.108</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American/Asian</td>
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<td>-.128***</td>
<td>-.129***</td>
<td>-.127***</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic</td>
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<td>-0.008</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
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<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.026</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race not included</td>
<td>0.064*</td>
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<td>0.080**</td>
<td>0.083**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic major</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Business*</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
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<td>-.129***</td>
<td>-.129***</td>
<td>-.128***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/pre-professional</td>
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<td>-0.034***</td>
<td>-0.034***</td>
<td>-0.034***</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-1.72***</td>
<td>-1.72***</td>
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<td>-0.018</td>
<td>-0.018</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health-related fields</td>
<td>-0.067***</td>
<td>-0.070***</td>
<td>-0.069***</td>
<td>-0.069***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary studies</td>
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<td>-0.081***</td>
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<td>-0.080***</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social sciences</td>
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<td>-1.23***</td>
<td>-1.22***</td>
<td>-1.22***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
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<td>-2.261***</td>
<td>-2.259***</td>
<td>-2.259***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class standing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman/First-year*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>-0.019**</td>
<td>-0.020***</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparing the differences between LSE\textsubscript{pre} & LSE\textsubscript{post}

Comparing the differences between the LSE\textsubscript{pre} and LSE\textsubscript{post} provided for interesting analysis. While the LSE\textsubscript{pre} analysis had other unobservable factors that were not accounted for in the model, which resulted in a small R-squared and low variability in the model, a comparison between the variables can explain the differences of LSE\textsubscript{pre} and LSE\textsubscript{post} for the various student characteristics. While domestic students were expected to increase their leadership self-efficacy after attending college, this conclusion cannot be drawn from these models as the LSE\textsubscript{pre} model explained very little variation (R-squared = 0.015) compared to the LSE\textsubscript{post} model (R-squared = 0.308). However, while comparing the leadership self-efficacy of students generally, international students’ leadership self-efficacy developed less over time during college compared to their domestic student peers. A
A comprehensive comparison between LSE\textsubscript{pre} and LSE\textsubscript{post} of the significant variables is reported below.

Table 6: LSE\textsubscript{post} with student demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International student leadership self-efficacy post-test score</td>
<td>-1.86*** (0.010)</td>
<td>-1.87*** (0.010)</td>
<td>-1.13*** (0.011)</td>
<td>-1.31*** (0.011)</td>
<td>-1.25*** (0.011)</td>
<td>-1.27*** (0.011)</td>
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<tr>
<td>International student leadership self-efficacy pre-test score</td>
<td>0.465*** (0.003)</td>
<td>0.464*** (0.003)</td>
<td>0.461*** (0.003)</td>
<td>0.454*** (0.003)</td>
<td>0.456*** (0.003)</td>
<td>0.456*** (0.003)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.009** (0.004)</td>
<td>0.001 (0.006)</td>
<td>0.042*** (0.006)</td>
<td>0.041*** (0.006)</td>
<td>0.007 (0.010)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>-0.231*** (0.046)</td>
<td>-0.211*** (0.047)</td>
<td>-0.083* (0.047)</td>
<td>-0.098** (0.047)</td>
<td>-0.171*** (0.049)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasia*</td>
<td>-0.005 (0.023)</td>
<td>0.011 (0.022)</td>
<td>0.005 (0.022)</td>
<td>0.007 (0.022)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>0.056*** (0.052)</td>
<td>0.086*** (0.051)</td>
<td>0.082*** (0.051)</td>
<td>0.086*** (0.051)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>American/Black</td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>0.038 (0.052)</td>
<td>0.058 (0.051)</td>
<td>0.051 (0.051)</td>
<td>0.056 (0.051)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian/Alaska</td>
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<td>(0.014)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>-0.123*** (0.014)</td>
<td>-0.124*** (0.014)</td>
<td>-0.119*** (0.014)</td>
<td>-0.116*** (0.014)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American/Asian</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>0.037** (0.017)</td>
<td>0.048*** (0.017)</td>
<td>0.046*** (0.017)</td>
<td>0.053*** (0.017)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>0.034* (0.019)</td>
<td>0.033* (0.019)</td>
<td>0.040** (0.019)</td>
<td>0.047** (0.019)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race not included</td>
<td>0.051 (0.027)</td>
<td>0.034 (0.027)</td>
<td>0.031 (0.026)</td>
<td>0.039 (0.026)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>-1.06*** (0.007)</td>
<td>-0.96*** (0.006)</td>
<td>-0.97*** (0.006)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/pre-professional</td>
<td>-0.65*** (0.009)</td>
<td>-0.43*** (0.009)</td>
<td>-0.43*** (0.009)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>-0.94*** (0.008)</td>
<td>-0.99*** (0.007)</td>
<td>-0.99*** (0.007)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>-0.002 (0.010)</td>
<td>-0.003 (0.010)</td>
<td>-0.002 (0.010)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health-related</td>
<td>-0.080*** (0.008)</td>
<td>-0.777*** (0.008)</td>
<td>-0.777*** (0.008)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.021** (0.009)</td>
<td>-0.027*** (0.009)</td>
<td>-0.026*** (0.009)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary studies</td>
<td>-0.063*** (0.015)</td>
<td>-0.066*** (0.015)</td>
<td>-0.066*** (0.015)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social sciences</td>
<td>-0.053*** (0.007)</td>
<td>-0.062*** (0.007)</td>
<td>-0.062*** (0.007)</td>
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<td>-0.197*** (0.013)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Class standing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freshman/First-year*</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>0.082*** (0.006)</td>
<td>0.083*** (0.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>0.171*** (0.006)</td>
<td>0.172*** (0.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior/Fourth-year &amp; beyond</td>
<td>0.267*** (0.006)</td>
<td>0.268*** (0.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>0.227*** (0.018)</td>
<td>0.228*** (0.018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>0.143*** (0.023)</td>
<td>0.142*** (0.023)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**College GPA**

| 3.50 - 4.00*         | - | -0.024*** (0.009) |
| 3.49 - 3.00          | - | -0.070*** (0.015) |
| 2.99 - 2.50          | - | -0.110*** (0.023) |
| 2.49 - 2.00          | - | -0.167*** (0.036) |
| 1.99 or less         | - | 0.007 |
| No college GPA       | - | 0.050 |

**Interactions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender * Race</th>
<th>-0.005*** (0.002)</th>
<th>-0.003 (0.002)</th>
<th>-0.003 (0.002)</th>
<th>-0.004** (0.002)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender * Major</td>
<td>-0.031*** (0.001)</td>
<td>-0.028*** (0.001)</td>
<td>-0.010** (0.004)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constant</th>
<th>1.823*** (0.008)</th>
<th>1.831*** (0.009)</th>
<th>1.850*** (0.009)</th>
<th>1.995*** (0.010)</th>
<th>1.834*** (0.011)</th>
<th>1.828*** (0.011)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adj. R-squared</td>
<td>0.267</td>
<td>0.268</td>
<td>0.271</td>
<td>0.284</td>
<td>0.307</td>
<td>0.308</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** N = 78,093 students.
* p < 0.10
** p < 0.05
*** p < 0.01
Table 7: Comparison between LSEpre & LSEpost

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>LSE&lt;sub&gt;pre&lt;/sub&gt;</th>
<th>LSE&lt;sub&gt;post&lt;/sub&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International student leadership self-efficacy score</td>
<td>-0.024* (0.014)</td>
<td>-0.127*** (0.011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.064*** (0.008)</td>
<td>0.041** (0.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>-0.270*** (0.065)</td>
<td>-0.171*** (0.049)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>0.064*** (0.015)</td>
<td>0.086*** (0.011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American/Asian</td>
<td>-0.127*** (0.018)</td>
<td>-0.116*** (0.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic major</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Business*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>-0.128*** (0.008)</td>
<td>-0.097*** (0.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/pre-professional</td>
<td>-0.034*** (0.012)</td>
<td>-0.043*** (0.009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>-0.172*** (0.010)</td>
<td>-0.099*** (0.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health-related fields</td>
<td>-0.097*** (0.010)</td>
<td>-0.077*** (0.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.069*** (0.012)</td>
<td>-0.026*** (0.009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi/Interdisciplinary studies</td>
<td>-0.080*** (0.019)</td>
<td>-0.066*** (0.015)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social sciences -0.122*** -0.062***
(0.009) (0.007)
Undecided -0.259*** -0.197***
(0.017) (0.013)

Class standing
Freshman/First-year*

Junior -0.020*** 0.172***
(0.008) (0.006)
Senior/Fourth-year & beyond 0.025*** 0.268***
(0.007) (0.006)
Graduate 0.090*** 0.228***
(0.024) (0.018)

Constant 3.035*** 1.828***
(0.010) (0.011)
Adj. R-squared 0.015 0.308

Notes: N = 78,093 students.
* p < 0.10
** p < 0.05
*** p < 0.01
(1) Model 5 used for the female variable

LIMITATIONS

Common to any research study, there were limitations to this study. First, the MSL survey was developed primarily for domestic students. As a result, many of the survey questions could be misinterpreted or misunderstood by international students. For example, questions regarding pre-collegiate experiences asking students to respond to participation in specific high school activities may not apply to international students. Many countries do not have high school varsity sports, nor do they have after-school extracurricular activities. Questions that do not have the same application to international students as domestic students, such as study abroad, could confuse student respondents to answer inaccurately. Also, because of the overrepresentation of domestic students, after disaggregating the data to analyze only the international students, often times results were not significant to permit conclusions to be made because of the small number of
responses. For example, in this study racial/ethnic background variables were collapsed and recoded. Although this practice is typical for higher education studies, it perpetuates an underrepresentation and marginalization of students, contributing to the lack of understanding of their unique needs.

Another limitation was a result of relatively small number of responses from international students. Although the number of international student was sufficient for statistical comparisons with domestic counterparts (i.e. 3,430 students), there was not enough to conduct a within group analysis to examine each ethnic group. Because of the large number of domestic students compared to the relatively small number of international students, this caused an issue of power resulting in poor-model fits and low power issues when analyzing these two student groups. In addition, unobservable factors in the LSE$_{pre}$ analysis resulted in a significant model but low variability. As a result, factors that were not accounted for resulted in a higher constant compared to the LSE$_{post}$ model that explained more variation. In addition, given the 33% response rate, there may be potential biases that affected the study’s interpretations of results. Since students self-reported their immigration status, this was an uncontrolled and potentially confounding variable. However, these aside, the data provided important data for comparison.

Despite these limitations, the study remains useful as it provides valuable information about leadership efficacy of international students. This study, despite its limitations also calls for more research on this important topic, including qualitative research. While previous studies have examined leadership-related issues of students, none have examined the growing population of international students. Given that the survey was originally targeted for domestic students, although it poses limitations for this study, the data allowed for valuable observations of international students on American host campuses.

**DISCUSSION**

The majority of research on leadership self-efficacy to date has not distinguished international students from the domestic counterparts (Spencer-Rodgers, 2001). Because of the increasing importance of international students on campus, it is critical to understand how international students compare to their domestic peers in their sense of leadership self-efficacy, which is a critical college outcome (Astin & Astin, 2000). This study indicated that international students have smaller gains in leadership self-efficacy than their domestic peers. The largest significant difference between domestic and international students was observed in the leadership self-efficacy post-test, which reported the students’ confidences in their leadership capacity after some college or college graduation. Given
that higher education has taken upon itself the responsibility to prepare and
develop future generations of domestic and international students (Astin &
Astin, 2000; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhart, 1999), this finding suggests
that the experience for international students contrasts with their domestic
peers.

When international students responded to the LSE pre-test, their
scores were only slightly lower than their domestic peers after the regression
analyses were included and controlled for student demographics. Given that
the LSE pre-test asked students to reflect on their experiences prior to
attending college, it would appear that the variance between domestic and
international students’ LSE pre-test may be a result of cultural differences
and differing leadership opportunities prior to attending college. If the
college experience impacted domestic and international students equally, the
difference between the LSE pre-test and post-test for domestic and
international students would be similar in magnitude (see Table 7). However,
further exploration showed that while international students
improved their leadership self-efficacy after graduation or attending some
college, the magnitude of improvement was much smaller compared to their
domestic peers. It would appear that the college environment does not
shape leadership experiences equally for domestic and international
students.

These findings supported literature that international students face
challenges that impact their educational success on campus (Anderson,
Carmichael, Harper, & Huang, 2009; Dillard & Chisolm, 1983; Mori, 2000;
Owie, 1982; Schram & Lauver, 1988; Tseng & Newton, 2002; Yi, Lin, &
Kishimoto, 2003). While there are campus support services and
programming for all students, these services and programs are not equally
meeting the needs of international students (Kher, Juneau, & Molstad,
2003). These results also raise the question as to whether institutions are
investing enough resources for and staff and faculty time working with
international students. These challenges can significantly impact their self-
efficacy (Gloria & Ho, 2003) as exhibited by these findings, and the
personal belief of self-efficacy can change based on different factors of
function based on self-efficacy, competency, and environment (McCormick,
Tanguma, & Lopez-Forment, 2002).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND CONCLUSIONS

This study provides useful information and understanding of international
student self-efficacy of leadership. The results presented and interpretations
discussed have the following implications for research and practice in the
field and profession of higher education. The results suggest that
international students should not be treated as a homogenous group with
their domestic student peers. While campus administrators and professionals open all programs and interventions to all students, including international students, these are not impactful for international students since they are domestic student-dominated and domestic student-centric and may not be sensitive to the cultural norms of other countries. College administrators should consider developing leadership training and education programs specifically for their international student population. In some instances, programs may also consider the students’ racial and ethnic background, as students’ ethnicity can impact their leadership experience and efficacy. This could be achieved by partnering with campus cultural centers or identity-based organizations. This study can be used to shape the nature of educational interventions and their points of delivery; for example, international programming can target specific international student subgroups for certain programs where they would be more likely to be effective rather than spreading resources widely across the entire student population. Student affairs professionals should also understand how certain programs and services would be more beneficial to certain subgroup populations while others have no interest in them.

Overall, many campuses expect that international students will take part in programming and activities available to all students on campus; however, administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals do not realize that such an approach may alienate many students who are already struggling with the new academic system, cultural shock, language barriers, cultural differences, and instances of discrimination. This could prevent international students from positively engaging in opportunities around campus. The findings from this study suggest that more attention needs to be given to international students’ engagement and development of leadership capacity on American host campuses.

In addition, the study findings provide a more accurate examination of the leadership development and efficacy of international students and academic and social adaptations of particular international student populations in the United States. Understanding unique student subcultures and how they impact outcomes is important to interpreting general college outcomes instead of simply measuring them (Renn & Arnold, 2003). The theoretical implications of this study may influence future international student engagement, advocacy, recruitment, retention, alumni involvement, and engagement practices. It may also provide conceptual leads for the study of leadership development amongst international students in other countries outside of the United States.

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Supporting Postsecondary English Language Learners’ Writing Proficiency Using Technological Tools

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ABSTRACT

Postsecondary international students who are also English language learners face a number of challenges when studying abroad and often are provided with services to support their learning. Though some research examines how institutions can support this population of students, few studies explore how technology is used to support language development and writing proficiency. This article reports on an exploratory study that examined the resources English language learners use to support their writing and the impact of the use of writing productivity software’s on writing proficiency. Data were collected using a survey, writing samples, and a focus group. Findings indicate students frequently use technological tools to enhance learning and that technology-based supports such as writing productivity software can complement face-to-face supports.

Keywords: English language learners, language proficiency, postsecondary education, international students

The number of international students studying in Canada has increased 84% between 2003 and 2013 (Canadian Bureau of International Education [CBIE], 2014). Canada’s International Education Strategy set a goal of nearly doubling (to 450,000) the number of international students studying in the country by 2022 (Government of Canada, 2014). There is a host of
benefits for countries seeking to increase their international student population; for instance, international students can address skilled labour shortages, relieve demographic pressures of an aging population, and provide an economic boost. In 2012, Canadian international students spent $8.4 billion in their host communities, which helped to sustain 86,570 jobs (Government of Canada, 2014). International students also can diversify the student population across postsecondary campuses and bring different perspectives and experiences to such academic settings.

While the population of international students continues to increase, so too does the subpopulation of international students who are non-native English speakers (NNES). The CBIE’s (2009) 2009 Survey of International Students revealed that English was an additional language for 75% of 178,000 international students studying in Canada. The competition to attract international students is high and much of the discourse surrounding international students relates to their recruitment and enrollment; however, it is becoming increasingly important that these students receive support upon being enrolled. With the projected growing number of NNES students, postsecondary institutions similarly must be cognizant of how they can support NNES language development. As a result, institutions have begun to make student services a priority to ensure that international students’ needs and expectations are met. While a large body of research has investigated NNES language proficiency development through the use of face-to-face support systems, few studies have addressed how technology can be used to support English-language learning. Accordingly, the purposes of this study were to investigate how technological tools are used by university-level NNES international students and to explore the effects of writing productivity software on academic writing proficiency.

EXPERIENCING CHALLENGES

International students often face challenges with adapting to the culture of the location that they are studying in. International students may experience culture shock, loneliness, and homesickness when studying abroad (Dongfeng, 2012; Mahmood, 2014; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002). These challenges may be exacerbated by such students’ perception of having fewer social supports than those available to domestic students (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & Van Horn, 2002). In addition to challenges related to adapting to new cultural and social environments, international students must also adjust to academic environments—including expectations and skills—that may differ greatly from their previous educational experiences (Schutz & Richards, 2004). Additionally, there may be challenges adapting to student-centered teaching styles when NNES international students may be accustomed to teacher-centered
NNES students may face additional challenges when studying in locations where English is the sole or primary language of communication. In these cases, NNES students may face academic adjustment challenges that correspond specifically to language issues such as listening ability, lecture and reading comprehension, note taking, and oral communication. There is some evidence that suggests NNES international students perceive writing tasks as the most difficult language skill in comparison to speaking, listening, and reading (Berman & Cheng, 2001; Cheng, Myles, & Curtis, 2004). Challenges might exist regarding the rigor of academic writing and student expectations and perceptions of what exactly constitutes academic writing (Andrade, 2006; Bronson, 2004; Brown, 2008). Angelova and Riazantswea (1999) and Brown (2008) list additional writing challenges that NNES students might experience, such as topic choice, differences in writing style, organization, expressing personal opinions, and vocabulary. Findings from Singh’s (2015) study in which NNES students were asked to rank academic writing practices according to difficulty indicated that writing methodologies, findings/analyses, and literature reviews, using appropriate academic style, writing coherent paragraphs, and expressing ideas in correct (i.e., standard) English were the most challenging aspects of scholarly writing. Because academic writing is critical not only to the students’ ability to adjust to their new environment but also to their academic success, institutions are increasingly paying attention to how they can support and help develop their NNES students’ writing abilities.

SEEKING LANGUAGE SUPPORT

It is becoming commonplace for institutions to focus on supporting NNES students through various student programs and initiatives. Cownie and Addison’s (1996) study exploring the language support provided by 99 British institutions found that 95% of the latter offered some form of language support. Institutions typically have a range of language support programs and services in place to support the needs of all students, and NNES students specifically. Such support programs might include extracurricular language programs that are centralized at the institution (Benzie, 2010; Phillips, 2008); embedded faculty-based programs (Benzie, 2010; Hirsh, 2007; Peel & Luxon, 2007); and for-credit language courses (Benzie, 2010; Hirsh, 2007). Depending on the type of support, the student may meet one-on-one with a staff member or work in small groups. Benzie (2010) notes that the most common approach to language support is a generic study skills mode, but these types of programs typically have low attendance. Students may also turn to peers to proofread work (Cheng & Fox, 2008; Cheng, et al., 2004; Singh, 2015), as well as to professors and teaching assistants for guidance in academic writing (Cheng & Fox, 2008).
Regardless of the availability of various types of students services, students sometimes do not access them. Singh (2015), for example, found that only 22% of participants indicated they use third-party editors as a solution to improve their language difficulties with academic writing. Although some evidence suggests that participation in different types of language support programs have a positive effect on academic results (Benzie, 2010), students may be reluctant to make use of such resources due to various reasons, such as shyness, a lack of confidence, or at times a sense of cultural inappropriateness (Cheng & Fox, 2008). Such students may also perceive that writing support programs do not help; Cheng and Fox (2008), for example, found that 29% of participants in their study held such a pessimistic view. A disconnect between students’ perception of the anticipated outcomes and the goals/priorities of the language support services may also influence students’ decision on whether to seek language support.

While much of the discussion in this area has focused on how institutions can provide programs and services to meet the needs of their respective students, several studies have underscored the role of self-improvement and responsibility on the part of learners regarding improving language proficiency. Brown (2008) comments: “To address stress caused or exacerbated by language difficulties, the responsibility to improve language level resides with the student” (p. 19). Robertson, Line, Jones, and Thomas (2000) similarly found that participants recognized their role in their learning: “While there were plenty of calls for more assistance and recognition of their problems, there was also a strong component of self-help strategies in the responses, and a willingness to try new ways once the issues were fully understood” (p. 100).

The question, therefore, of how to efficiently support NNES language and writing needs while also fostering student independence warrants further attention. One approach to addressing such a question might be the integration of technology into NNES students’ language development programs.

**SUPPORTING NNES LEARNING USING TECHNOLOGY**

Some studies have considered how various forms of technology have been implemented or are used by NNES students to support their learning, particularly with regards to language proficiency. Hirsh (2007) notes the potential for the development of online support programs for students, which would be accessible from any location and at any time in order to meet students’ particular geographical/temporal needs. Moreover, Li (2006) found that participants revised their writing significantly more using electronic (i.e., word-processing) programs than they did when relying on hand-written samples.
Technology can be used by students in a variety of ways to support English language learning. Clerehan, Kett, and Gedge (2003), for example, examined NNES students’ use of online dictionaries and a concordancer that had been integrated into coursework with the purpose of developing study skills. Clerehan, Turnbull, Moore, and Tuovinen (2003) also designed an Online Student Resource Centre website that offered tutorials and downloadable resources whose ultimate purpose was to support students’ self-directed means of developing English language and academic skills. Other studies have looked at the potential for electronic feedback from tutors (Zareekbatini, 2015) and the use of Google Translator (Singh, 2015). Conroy’s (2010) study investigating students’ use of Google assisted language learning (GALL) found that 47% of the sample (n = 110) used Google for language learning and that participants were enthusiastic about using GALL for second language learning and improving their academic writing.

Writing productivity software is another example of technology-assisted learning that can support English language development and writing proficiency of NNES postsecondary students. Writing productivity software is an assistive technology through which users input text into a computer or a mobile device which in turn offer various features to support the process of writing, such as word prediction whereby the program provides auto-generated word suggestions as the user types. Such programs may also include thesauruses, dictionaries, speech-to-text ability, and other customizable features. Some research has suggested that word prediction software may have a positive effect on users’ typing speed, accuracy, and productivity, while also reducing the number of grammatical and spelling errors and the amount of cognitive load taken to produce written text (Anson et al., 2001; Arcon, 2015; Evmenova, Graff, Jerome, & Behrmann, 2010; Nantais, Shein, & Johansson, 2001). Much of the literature in this area, however, looks at the use of writing productivity software for elementary school students (e.g., Barbetta & Silio, 2009; Schock, 2011) and students with disabilities (e.g. MacArthur, 1996; Tam, Reid, Naumann, & O’Keefe, 2002). Scant research examines the use of writing productivity software for NNES postsecondary students, even though knowledge of how this type of software could be used to support the development of writing proficiency would be quite helpful. Conroy (2010) highlights this gap in the literature:

It is worth noting that university language support staff and management appear to be, at least on the surface, largely ignorant of, or at least ambivalent towards, the potential of these tools and techniques. Yet the findings here suggest that a significant number of EAL university students in Australia might either already use the tools and techniques, or be eager to start using them. If this is indeed
the case, could those students who already engage with the tools, as well as the wider population of EAL university students, benefit from appropriate instruction, support and guidance in using these tools and techniques to improve their English language and academic writing? (p. 878)

This study, therefore, seeks to contribute to this area of research by exploring the tools students currently use to support their writing development as well as the effects of a writing productivity software on writing proficiency. The research questions were:

1. What resources, digital and print, do NNES international students use to support their writing proficiency?
2. What effect does the use of writing productivity software have on NNES international students’ writing productivity?

RESEARCH METHOD

To fulfill the objective of the study, a multi-method design was used to conduct the study in the fall semester of 2015 at a mid-size university in southern Ontario, Canada. Research Ethics Board approval was granted from the participating institution. Students enrolled in the preparation certificate program were eligible to participate. All participants had completed an undergraduate degree in their home country (which in most cases was China) and obtained a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of 61 or an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 5.0 to be admitted to the preparation certificate.

The main features of the writing productivity software used in this study are word prediction and speech-to-text capabilities. For word prediction, the software helps students review words to use as they are writing and helps them select what they perceive is the appropriate terminology. As students use the software more frequently, the program learns about the user and the terminology they typically use so that the suggestions it makes are more accurate. The speech-to-text feature allows users to listen to what they have written so that they can hear errors in their writing. Spelling and grammatical errors, run-on sentences, and missing words, are examples of errors that can be found when using the speech-to-text feature.

Figure 1 shows the data collection methods. Phase one involved having participants complete a short (paper) survey that inquired about resources participants currently used to support their academic English writing and how often they used each of these resources, and also asked participants to indicate their level of ability in various English communication skills. After the survey, participants were given 30 minutes
to complete an online writing sample based on a TOEFL-like writing prompt. After completing the first writing sample, participants were provided with a 40-minute workshop that highlighted the writing productivity software that was the focus of this study. Following completion of the tutorial, participants were asked to complete a second writing sample, this time using the writing productivity software while they completed the sample. In this case, participants were given another 20 minutes to write about whether they agreed or disagreed with a different TOEFL-like prompt. Phase two of the study took place at the end of the fall semester after students had time to use the software on a trial basis.

Participants were invited to participate in a 30-minute focus group to discuss their perceptions of the challenges and benefits of the use of writing productivity software, as well as overall insight regarding the nature of in-person and electronic writing tutorial and editorial support they receive in their programs.

Figure 1. Research design

In all, 27 students completed the initial survey, the workshop, and two writing samples. Four students returned to participate in the focus group at the end of the semester. The survey data were compiled and descriptive statistics were generated. Each of the writing samples was evaluated using two electronic writing assessment websites that employ writing assessment software based on the assessment algorithm used by the online TOEFL test. The first writing assessment website provided the total frequency of errors in the samples and frequencies for the types of errors that were found. It evaluated samples for a variety of errors, grouped into grammar, mechanics, style, usage, and spelling. Grammar errors included errors with verbs,
pronouns, subject–verb agreement, possessive pronouns, fragments, and run-on sentences. Mechanics included compound sentences, sentence capitalization, missing commas, hyphenation errors, missing final punctuation, missing apostrophes, and proper nouns. Style errors addressed tone and length. Lastly, the usage category included article errors, preposition, and faulty comparison. The second writing assessment website provided an overall score as a percentage for the writing samples. The focus group data were transcribed by one of the researchers and the research team then analyzed the transcript for themes.

FINDINGS

The results of the survey highlight NNES in the preparatory certificate programs used a number of resources on a regular basis. Specifically, most students reported regular use of a digital Chinese/English dictionary and electronic spell checkers. Twenty-seven of the 28 student respondents claimed they used a digital Chinese/English dictionary daily or multiple times per day. Conversely, 20 participants responded that they used a print Chinese/English dictionary either “occasionally” or “never.” Such findings not only indicate that students preferred the digital option but also show that students use this type of tool very often.

We also inquired about use of spell check software, grammar check software, word prediction software, and text-to-speech software. Figure 2 illustrates responses for each of the latter categories. Almost half of the respondents indicated they used spell check software and word prediction software daily or multiple times per day. Eleven participants responded that they never use grammar check software, while 10 never use word prediction software. A noticeable finding was the infrequent use of text-to-speech

![Figure 2. Responses based on use of different types of software.](image-url)
software—17 participants reported they never used text-to-speech programs.

![Bar chart showing the use of tutoring support](image)

**Figure 3.** Responses to use of tutoring/editing support

The survey also inquired about students’ use of in-person and online writing tutors/editors. Most students reported they either never used their in-person or online writing tutor/editor or they did so on an occasional basis. For in-person support, 11 students said they occasionally used a writing tutor, while 10 students claimed they never did so. Only one student said they accessed a writing tutor on a daily basis, and three indicated they did so on a weekly basis. Results corresponding to the online writing tutor are comparable; 14 students responded that they occasionally use an online tutor, and 10 claimed they never did so. Overall, both in-person and online tutor/editor support were not used very often. Web-based electronic writing assessment software was used to evaluate each sample and provided an overall score. Twenty-seven participants completed Sample 1, which was the initial pre-workshop writing sample, and also completed Sample 2, the post-workshop writing sample.

The first electronic writing assessment tool evaluated total frequency of errors in the samples and frequencies for the types of errors that were found. This assessment tool determined that the average number of errors in Sample 1 was 5.19, while the average number in Sample 2 was 4.04. This indicates that there was a decrease in the number of errors when the participants used the writing productivity software.

An analysis of the errors made revealed that few students made errors related to style or with spelling. Most errors were made in the other categories such as grammar, mechanics, and usage. For grammar, most errors involved challenges with verbs, subject–verb agreement, and fragments. For mechanics, the most commonly made error included missing commas, followed by sentence capitalization. Errors in the usage category mainly involved article errors and prepositions.
The second writing assessment tool provided an overall score as a percentage for each of the writing samples. For Sample 1, 25 of 27 respondents were given a score while only 20 received a grade for Sample 2. The mean score for the 25 respondents who received a grade on Sample 1 was 78%, while the mean for Sample 2 was 75.65%. Overall, the post-workshop writing samples were scored slightly lower grades than the initial pre-workshop samples.

The feedback collected during the concluding focus group comprising four participants affords a qualitative understanding of the effect of technology used to support the latter participants’ writing productivity. Consistent with the survey results, one theme from the focus group was a reliance on some form of technology to help students with their writing. Students consistently noted how they used one or more technological tools such as digital dictionaries on a regular basis in addition to spell check and grammar check software.

Although the students noted the benefit of having personalized support from a face-to-face meeting with a tutor/editor and identified the motivation behind their decision to seek language support: “Where there is another person he can help me check and find the mistakes I cannot find by myself. If it is just me I can’t find anything. I think I am right.” They also revealed their concerns associated with in-person support.

Consistent with the survey results, several participants noted that the process of submitting assignments to a tutor/editor and then waiting to receive feedback often took up valuable time. One participant commented:

With the language support we have to submit the paper 3 days ago. We have to give time. So if we have to submit our paper we need to give it to them so we have shorter time to write the paper.

This participant is referring to a common academic policy that requires students to submit assignments to tutor/editors several days ahead of the ultimate submission deadline so that the person reviewing the paper can have time to provide necessary feedback. Participants also discussed other factors that affected their decision to seek support, including the belief that such editorial services did not meet their needs, and they expressed some skepticism regarding the feedback they received. As one participant noted, “They don’t really help us with the writing. They just check to see if we make some mistakes in the APA.” Another participant expressed uncertainty regarding the service and was unsure whether the tutor’s edits and suggestions were accurate.

When asked about the benefits of using the word prediction software to support their writing, the participants noted its convenience and appreciated that they could customize the software to meet their needs and
that it helped them to save time during the writing process. As one participant expressed, “Online is more convenient; if we go to tutor we have to book them or it’s not very convenient to person. But online we can do it whenever we want.” Participants also commented on the benefit of the speech-to-text feature, which allowed them to hear where a mistake was located. While further research is needed to pinpoint reasons for the decrease in writing assessment score, the research team has hypothesized that the decrease may result from increased reflection and metacognitive processing during the writing process. Participants in the focus group noted that they enhanced their usual writing process when using the software and paid greater attention on proofreading what they had written and reflecting on appropriate word choice. One participant stated that he/she made greater use of technology for proofreading because the feedback was immediate. The other participants agreed that spelling out a word during the drafting of a text was one of the writing productivity software’s most valuable features. One participant spoke of the benefit of this specific feature: “Sometimes I forgot the word and I can see the word in the prediction box—it saves a lot of time.” With only 30 minutes to complete the writing sample, more time may have been used for reflection and proofreading, thus negatively impacting the overall quantity and possibly quality of the second writing sample.

Finally, there were multiple instances during the focus group discussion when participants admitted that their lack of knowledge of how to use the software might have affected their writing. This recurring theme underscores that training may be a necessary prerequisite for working with new software and that the learning experience can be thoroughly enhanced when a tool is implemented properly. When asked for suggestions regarding the software, one participant recommended that a formal course should be offered that included tutorials on word-prediction software as opposed to mere one-on-one support. Interestingly, when discussing language support and tutors, another participant commented:

We cannot ask them for too much. This is our study. We should do it—the job—by ourselves.

DISCUSSION

The data from this study serve to inform stakeholders working in student service areas aimed at supporting NNES student success. Specifically, the finding that participants did not necessarily avail themselves of existing language support programs was surprising because of the researchers’ knowledge that this support is available to NNES students. However, this trend is consistent with the literature that notes students may not access
language support even when it is available. Combined with the findings that students frequently use technological tools to enhance their learning and perceive that there are a number of benefits of using these tools, this finding is noteworthy because it highlights an area of research that requires further attention.

The findings from this study are significant for two reasons. First, we believe the findings highlight that the software could be used most effectively as a writing and revision tool prior to students’ accessing in-person services. However, such technological tools should not be implemented as a replacement for face-to-face support but rather to complement existing course-based support and in-person editorial and tutorial services. Brown (2008) notes that self-improvement strategies must be used in tandem with additional support(s) in order for language proficiency to improve. But as noted earlier, while a large body of work has considered the use of various types of language support programs, there is a dearth of studies investigating students’ study skills and self-improvement.

Secondly, we posit that the findings draw attention to the importance of implementation when introducing new technology to students. The finding that the use of the writing productivity software did not have a positive effect on student writing productivity following the workshop suggests that the use of technology to support writing proficiency must be connected to coursework, so that students are given multiple opportunities to use and understand the relevant tool(s) at their disposition. In reference to the use of digital tools and their potential, Conroy (2010) asks:

Could those students who already engage with the tools, as well as the wider population of [English as an Additional Language] university students, benefit from appropriate instruction, support and guidance in using these tools and techniques to improve their English language and academic writing? (p. 878).

Further research is therefore needed in order to understand how best to embed the use of specific technology tools into coursework so that it may have a positive impact on English language learners’ writing proficiency.

**LIMITATIONS**

Due to the exploratory nature of the study there are a number of limitations. As a result of the sample size in the initial phase of the study, it is not possible to complete inferential statistics to explore if there were statistically significant differences between the writing samples. Additionally, the
Researchers were not able to track how often the participants used the software throughout the term. It is therefore not possible to make inferences regarding how frequency of use might have impacted writing proficiency. With a small sample of 4 participants returning for the focus group, there is the possibility of self-selection bias in that these may be the students who benefitted from the software while those who did not return may not have benefitted. Consequently, the study is therefore limited in generalizability.

CONCLUSION

This study explored NNES students’ use of various tools to support their learning and also the effect of a writing productivity software on students’ writing proficiency. Overall, the survey indicated that technological tools are being used by NNES postsecondary students more frequently than face-to-face support services. The participant’s affinity for using technological resources and the inconsistent use of in-person support reveals that combining the use of writing productivity software with access to human support may be a more effective way to support improvement in academic writing in comparison to using solely one or the other. This also supports the notion that embedded learning opportunities are needed to support the development of self-improvement strategies.

Consequently, a reconsideration of the singular dependence on providing in-person support services—particularly around language learning—is needed, especially within the context of increased financial constraints. While there is a tendency to pressure institutions to provide additional services to students, the cost of providing in-person services is high. Some have discussed the conflict between the resources institutions are allocating for language support and the ability of those working in these areas to meet the increased need for support (Brown, 2008; Cownie & Addison, 1996). With this in mind, institutions should seek to balance centralized in-person support services with embedded language support in cost-efficient ways that provide NNES with the timely, tech-enabled and personalized support they desire.

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- 872 -
Helping the Transition: Mentorship to Support International Students in Canada

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ABSTRACT
We developed a program that paired newcomer international students with Canadian student mentors. These pairs met weekly throughout a semester and international student participants completed measures at both the beginning and end of the program. We found that program participants experienced positive changes in sociocultural and psychological adaptation, and a reduction in acculturative stress over time. At the conclusion of the program, program participants also showed higher levels of psychological adaptation and lower levels of acculturative stress than control participants, who had not participated in the program. These findings make an important contribution to the empirical literature on the acculturation of international students and provide foundations for future research.

Keywords: Acculturation, acculturative stress, mentorship, psychological adaptation, sociocultural adaptation

In 2014, there were over 5 million international students studying worldwide (ICEF Monitor 2015). This number has tripled over the past quarter century (ICEF Monitor, 2015) and is expected to reach over 7 million by the year 2025 (Bohm, Davis, Meares, & Pearce, 2002). Canada has been no exception to this increase in international students as there were 22,000 international undergraduate students enrolled in Canada in 2000, and 89,000 in 2014 (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2014). In this context, it is important to understand the types of supports that can contribute to the adaptation of international students so that they flourish.
One such program involves mentorship in which international students are paired with host-national students.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Definitions**

As international students transition to life in the host culture in countries like Canada, they undergo the process of acculturation, defined by Sam (2006) as “all changes following contact between individuals of different groups or backgrounds,” (p. 11). Scholars studying the psychology of acculturation, and in particular, the acculturation of international students, have identified two primary domains of acculturation, psychological and sociocultural (e.g. Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). Furthermore, the term *adaptation* describes the stable changes that happen as a result of the acculturation experience. Thus, in investigations of the acculturation of international students, one can study both psychological and sociocultural adaptation. Psychological adaptation refers to newcomers’ psychological well-being in the new environment (Berry, 2006), while sociocultural adaptation, on the other hand, is a newcomer’s instrumental ability to negotiate day-to-day social tasks in the new culture (Masgoret & Ward, 2006).

**Predominance of correlational literature**

A large portion of the past literature on the acculturation of international students has been correlational. In their review of two decades of this literature, Zhang and Goodson (2011) found that higher acculturative stress, stress associated with making a cross-cultural transition, was predictive of more negative psychological outcomes. However, Ying and Han (2006) found that for Taiwanese students in the United States, more contact with host-national students (American students) reduced acculturative stress 14 months after the arrival of the international students. As for sociocultural adaptation, Li and Gasser (2005) found that the amount of contact that international students had with host-national students (students who were natives of the host country) was positively related to their cross-cultural social efficacy. Also, Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, and Van Horn (2002) found that international students who reported a greater degree of contact with host-national students reported better adjustment to the new environment. Finally, Rasmi, Safdar, and Lewis (2009) found that international students who formed more connections with Canadian students experienced better sociocultural adaptation 18 months after arrival in Canada.
Existing studies on peer-mentorship programs

While it appears that friendships with host-national students can have substantial positive outcomes for both the social and psychological domains of international students’ acculturation, experimental research is needed to establish directional linkages between friendships with hosts and these outcomes. A small number of studies have used quasi-experimental research designs to examine the influence of friendships with host students on international student outcomes in North America and Australia. Westwood and Barker (1990) paired newly arrived international students with peer mentors from the host-national undergraduate body and these pairs were encouraged to meet at least twice per month. International students who participated in the program achieved higher grades and were less likely to drop out of the university in comparison to students who did not participate in the program. Abe, Talbot, and Geelhoed (1998) examined the influence of a peer-mentorship program on various aspects of international student adjustment to university. They found that, in comparison to students who did not participate, international students in the program reported better social adjustment to university. Gresham and Clayton (2011) developed a program for international students and found that the students indicated that the most positive outcome of program participation was an improvement in their English proficiency and further development of friendships with host-national students. Woods et al. (2013) found that international students participating in a mentorship program experienced a positive change in the amount of time they spent with people from outside of their own ethnic group over a five-week period, relative to control participants, who did not experience a change.

The low incidence of international student friendships with hosts

Integrating the correlational literature with these results on peer-mentorship programs, it would appear that initiatives pairing international students with host students could improve both the social and psychological adaptation outcomes for international students. However, irrespective of the extent to which friendships with host students might help international students, there are data which suggest that these friendships do not easily form. A survey from the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE) revealed that over half of 3,000 international students surveyed in Canada reported having no Canadian friends (CBIE, 2015). While there could be a myriad of factors impacting whether international and Canadian students can connect, this report suggested that in addition to language difficulties, many group activities for international students on campus (i.e. international organizations, diversity events), do not involve host students, and can thus provide ample opportunity to meet fellow international students from other countries, but not host students. The CBIE report also
suggested that certain academic programs may in fact be mostly composed of international students, and thus also limit the opportunity to form connections with hosts.

The present work

Considering the literature on the acculturation of international students and their lack of friendships with host students, which, given the past literature, are highly beneficial for their social and psychological outcomes, the present study sought to address two primary issues. First, addressing the acculturation literature and the small number of studies on peer-mentorship programs, we endeavored to investigate the potential link between friendships with host students and better social and psychological adaptation for international students. Indeed, a recent comprehensive literature review recommends that more studies are needed that can assess the effectiveness of interventions like peer-mentorship programs on an array of social and psychological outcomes (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Second, we hoped to facilitate the occurrence of friendships between international and host students, which may not arise naturally on campus. If universities are now prioritizing internationalization, with more international students arriving every year (AUCC, 2014), it is imperative that they are equipped with current data that can inform them as to how to optimize the social experiences of international students once they arrive. The results of the present study could thus provide some insight as to a straightforward way by which to enrich campus social climates in the face of internationalization.

RESEARCH METHOD

In conducting this research, we recruited international student participants from a language-upgrading academic program at a large university in Eastern Canada. We then paired each of these students with a mentor, a host-Canadian student. Mentors were recruited from the undergraduate body at the university through social media and a volunteer website. Once created, the same-gender, mentor-mentee pairs were encouraged to meet weekly for the duration of at least one semester, explore campus, the local community, and practice conversational English. We also organized larger group events every 3-4 weeks that were held to ensure that all mentor-mentee pairs were meeting regularly. These events provided all members of the program (both mentors and mentees) the chance to socialize with one another over snacks and language games. We piloted this program from January to April 2015, and conducted the program again from September to December 2015.
Pilot program

Piloting the program provided information to help us maximize the effectiveness of the mentorship program and develop methods to evaluate it. We conducted focus group interviews with pilot participants to better understand their experiences, which provided several key insights. First, international students voiced that they felt integrated at university in the sense that they were able to access the same campus facilities as Canadian students. However, these students also stated that they had difficulty forming deeper or more meaningful social connections with Canadian students because they felt they lacked knowledge of Canadian culture. The mentorship program was a helpful medium for the students to begin to develop the cultural knowledge they felt was so important in socializing with Canadian students. Because these international students indicated that they had difficulty forming social connections with Canadian students and we expected that the mentorship program might help in this regard, we determined that outcome measures from the acculturation literature - sociocultural adaptation, acculturative stress, and psychological adaptation – could be used to examine the potential benefits that international students might gain from the mentorship program, and thus, serve as relevant indicators of program effectiveness.

Participants

In September 2015, we recruited 25 international student participants from a language upgrading academic program for our mentorship program, and the participants who signed up for the program completed survey measures at two times, Time 1 in late-September, and again at Time 2, in mid-December. Overall, the program sample consisted of 11 males and 14 females, who had been in Canada for an average of 7.72 months. Sixteen of these participants were from China, five were from Brazil, one was from Korea, one from Qatar, one from Angola, and one from Venezuela. The control sample consisted of 16 males and 6 females, who had been in Canada for an average of 9.68 months. All but two of the control participants were from China with one from Libya, and one from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Measures

We developed measures for sociocultural adaptation, psychological adaptation, and acculturative stress, while referring to the empirical literature on international students. To measure Sociocultural Adaptation, we used an 8-item scale with items drawn from the Social Situations Questionnaire (Furnham & Bochner, 1982). To measure acculturative stress, we used the homesickness and perceived discrimination subscales from the Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS, Sandhu &
Asarabi, 1994), the language difficulty subscale from the Index of Life Stress (Yang & Clum, 1995), and the Perceived Language Discrimination Scale (Wei, Ku, & Wang, 2012). We also used a 6-item measure of psychological adaptation very similar to the PANAS (see Koenig-Lewis, Palmer, Dermody, & Urbye, 2013), and would be relatively simple for English-learning students to understand, as well as a 4-item scale gauging life-satisfaction (Esses, Burstein, Ravanera, Hallman, & Medianu, 2012). Finally, we used the McGill Friendship Questionnaire (Mendelson & Aboud, 2012) to measure friendship quality for program participants at Time 2. Reliabilities for the scales we used can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th># of Items</th>
<th>Time 1 α</th>
<th>Time 2 α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural Adaptation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.865</td>
<td>.822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturative Stress: Homesickness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.659</td>
<td>.682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturative Stress: Language Difficulty</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.730</td>
<td>.426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturative Stress: Language Discrimination</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.886</td>
<td>.915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturative Stress: General Discrimination</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.706</td>
<td>.785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Adaptation (Adjectives + Satisfaction)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.512</td>
<td>.721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGill Positive Feelings</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>.761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGill Satisfaction</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>.820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGill Stimulating</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>.866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companionship</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGill Help</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>.838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGill Emotional Security</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>.838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGill Self Validation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>.906</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypotheses Examples

The following hypotheses were proposed:

H1: We predicted that program participation would lead to an increase in sociocultural adaptation, a decrease in acculturative stress, and an increase in psychological adaptation from Time 1 to Time 2. We also predicted that program participants would score higher on these outcomes than control participants at Time 2. We used paired samples t-tests to compare the scores of program participants at
Time 1 and Time 2 and independent samples t-tests to assess the differences between program participants and control participants at Time 2.

H2: We predicted that at Time 2, the effect of program participation on psychological adaptation would be mediated by a reduction in acculturative stress. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a bootstrapping mediation analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

H3: We predicted that better friendship quality at Time 2, would predict better sociocultural adaptation, psychological adaptation, and lower acculturative stress at Time 2, controlling for Time 1 outcomes. To test this hypothesis, we used multiple regression analyses.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics for program participants at Time 1 and Time 2, and control participants at Time 2 can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Program Group at Time 1 and Time 2, and Control Group at Time 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Program Time 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Program Time 2</th>
<th></th>
<th>Control Time 2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural Adaptation</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturative Stress</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Adaptation</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sociocultural adaptation. As expected, program participants experienced higher sociocultural adaptation at Time 2 than at Time 1, t(21) = -2.81, p < .01, d = .63, 95% CI = [-1.25, -.19]. At Time 2, we unexpectedly found that while program participants did experience higher sociocultural adaptation than control participants, this difference was not significant, t(45) = 1.22, p = .12, d = .36, 95% CI = [-.24, .96]. The difference in sociocultural adaptation between the program group at Time 1 and the control group at Time 2 was not significant, t(42) = -1.08, p = .143, d = .33, [95% CI = -1.03, .31].

Acculturative stress. As expected, program students showed a decrease in acculturative stress from Time 1 to Time 2, t(22) = 2.9, p = < .001, d = .64, [95% CI = .10, .58]. Also, as expected, program students showed lower acculturative stress at Time 2, in comparison to control students, t(45) = -2.1, p = < .05, d = .61, 95% CI [-.94, -.02]. The program
group at Time 1 and control group at Time 2 did not significantly differ in acculturative stress, \( t(43) = -.61, p = .274, d = .18, [95\% CI = -2.88, 1.54] \).

**Psychological adaptation.** As expected, program participants showed higher psychological adaptation at Time 2 than at Time 1, \( t(22) = -1.89, p < .05, d = .57, 95\% CI = [-.61, .03] \). Also, as expected, program participants showed higher psychological adaptation than control participants at Time 2, \( t(45) = 2.08, p = < .05, d = .60, 95\% CI = [.01, .92] \). The program group at Time 1 and the control group at Time 2 did not differ on psychological adaptation, \( t(43) = .68, p = .249, d = .20, 95\% CI = [-.63, 1.27] \).

**Mediation.** We conducted a bootstrapping mediation analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2008), investigating the indirect effect of the program on psychological adaptation through acculturative stress. The unstandardized indirect effect was computed by multiplying two regression coefficients. The first was the regression coefficient for group (the program group coded as “1” and the control group coded as “0”), when entered as the sole predictor of acculturative stress, \( b = -.48, t(45) = -2.10, p < .05 \). The second was the regression coefficient for acculturative stress as a predictor of psychological adaptation, when group was also entered as a predictor, \( b = -.36, t(44) = -2.72, p = < .01 \). These two regression coefficients yielded an indirect effect of \((- .48)(-.36) = .17 \). Unstandardized indirect effects were computed for each of 5,000 bootstrapped samples and the 95\% confidence interval was computed. The 95\% confidence interval ranged from .04 to .39. Thus, the indirect effect was statistically significant because the 95\% confidence interval did not contain zero.

We also tested the reverse mediation model. This model considered the relationship between the program and acculturative stress at Time 2, as mediated by an increase in psychological adaptation at Time 2. With 5,000 bootstrapped samples, this mediation model yielded an indirect effect of -.19 with a 95\% confidence interval ranging from -.44 to -.04. This indirect effect was also statistically significant because its confidence interval did not contain zero. These results would suggest that either of the hypothesized or reverse mediation models could be plausible.

**Friendship quality.** It was found that Time 2 friendship quality did not add to the prediction of the Time 2 outcomes, when the Time 1 outcomes were included in the regression model. Furthermore, the interaction of friendship quality and the Time 1 outcome did not add to prediction of the Time 2 outcome, in a regression model with the main effects. The coefficients for these regressions are reported below in Table 3. We next decided to examine the correlation between friendship quality at Time 2 and outcomes at Time 1. Those correlations suggested that students who had higher friendship quality at Time 2 had lower sociocultural adaptation at Time 1, \( r(20) = -.456, p < .05 \), and higher acculturative stress.
at Time 1, \( r(21) = .294, p = .087 \). Overall, these findings suggest that perhaps the students who felt they needed to improve the most at Time 1, reported the greatest degree of closeness to their mentors at Time 2.

### Table 3: Regression Models with Friendship Quality Predicting Time 2 Acculturation Outcomes, Controlling for Time 1 Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time 2 Sociocultural Adaptation</th>
<th>Time 2 Acculturative Stress</th>
<th>Time 2 Psychological Adaptation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( B )</td>
<td>( SE )</td>
<td>( B )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship Quality</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.207</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.416*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural Adaptation Time 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.615***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturative Stress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Adaptation Time 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\*\( p < .1 \), \***p < .001

### DISCUSSION

The pattern of results obtained suggests that the mentorship program developed for this research was effective at facilitating positive changes for international students on the outcomes measured over time. The paired-samples comparisons for program participants suggest that they experienced increases on sociocultural and psychological adaptation, and a reduction in acculturative stress over time. The independent-samples comparisons suggest that in comparison to a control group, the program students, who had the opportunity to make a host-Canadian friend over the course of the semester, showed higher psychological adaptation and lower acculturative stress at the end of the semester.

One result that was not consistent with hypotheses 1 or 2 was the non-significant difference between program and control students at Time 2 on sociocultural adaptation. A potential explanation for this non-significant difference may be related to the fact that many of the control participants lived in homestay, whereas this was not the case for program participants. Literature on homestay suggests that homestay families can serve as an instrumental resource that can assist students in learning the host language...
(Schmidt-Reinhardt & McKnight, 2004) and become more familiar with the host country’s customs and social and political climate (Shiri, 2015). Given that many of the students in the control group lived with homestay families, it may be the case that homestay could provide students an effective source of social support, and in the present context, the control participants may have received additional social support from homestay families.

**Directions for further research**

The results of the present work provide several interesting and potentially important grounds for future research. First, the program was only conducted over a period of three months and longer-term effects were not examined. It would be important to determine whether the outcomes observed here are maintained over a longer period of time following the completion of the program. Do students go on to form more social connections with hosts, having participated in the mentorship program? Future research could adopt more time points to investigate this. Additional time points could also allow for the temporal separation of acculturative stress and psychological adaptation. Although acculturative stress is typically seen as an antecedent of psychological adaptation (Berry, 2006; Zhang & Goodson, 2011), the current results suggest that perhaps a clearer picture as to which of the two mediation models examined in this study is more appropriate is needed. Does program participation enhance psychological adaptation through a reduction in acculturative stress, the opposite, or are they mutually reinforcing? Also, as discussed, future research should investigate the extent to which homestay families can serve as meaningful sources of social support, and the extent to which they can influence sociocultural adaptation. In further study, the effects of the program on the mentors who participated should certainly be examined. Participating in a mentorship program could encourage mentors to improve their intercultural awareness and communication, both of which are important skills for university graduates to possess when they are entering the workforce in a diverse country like Canada. Finally, although the results of present study support the effectiveness of mentorship programs, they were obtained with a small sample. A future replication could therefore be conducted with a larger sample size, and also include program and control participants from the same academic cohort completing measures at all time points.

**Practical implications**

As the present research produced results that suggested it was successful at helping international students’ acculturation outcomes, it may be worthwhile for similar programs in the future to consider the manner in which this program was structured and delivered. Pairs met each week for
the duration of the semester and while pairs were given a semi-structured guide on how to spend their time together, they were not given a rigorous checklist of activities to complete. The program seemed to function well when participants were given the freedom to find activities that they enjoyed together. The program also involved interactive activities that engaged all participants during the group meetings. The group meetings were especially beneficial in that they served the function of keeping pairs on track in reminding them to meet regularly. Therefore, future renditions of similar programs may consider allowing pairs the freedom to find and engage in activities they enjoy while offering structured group meetings with interactive activities every few weeks.

**Limitations**

One potential limitation with the present sample is that many of the students were from China. Past findings suggest that international students originating from more culturally distant regions (e.g. Asia, Middle East) may experience greater challenges in adjusting to a Western university as these regions share fewer commonalities with Western culture than regions like Europe or South America (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006; Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Therefore, the benefits observed from the predominantly Asian sample of students in the present study may or may not generalize to the cultural groups of students whose heritage cultures are more similar to Western culture. Indeed, the Canadian Bureau of International Education report revealed that only 28% of students from the Middle East and 31% of students from East Asia reported friendships with Canadian students, while 50% of students from Latin America and the Caribbean, and over 50% of European students, reported friendships with Canadians (CBIE, 2015). Thus, some ethnic groups of international students have an easier time connecting with hosts than other groups. The country of origin of international students and how it may interact with potential social or language barriers remains an important question for further study.

**CONCLUSION**

The present research makes an important contribution to the literature on international students as it utilized a quasi-experimental approach in order to assess the influence of friendships with host-national students on both the social and psychological domains of international students’ acculturation to university. Much of the past work, which pointed to the benefits of host-national friendships for international students, was correlational (see Zhang & Goodson, 2011), and did not assess a variety of outcomes in one study (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). The results of the present work can therefore be used to provide insight into a potential causal link between friendships with
host-national students and better adaptation outcomes. As more and more international students are welcomed into countries like Canada, research is needed to determine the types of initiatives that can best facilitate positive outcomes for international students. The findings of the present work support the effectiveness of mentorship programs while also offering suggestions for future research.

REFERENCES


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Issues of International Students’
Academic Adaptation in the ESL Writing Class: A Mixed-Methods Study

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ABSTRACT
Despite the contribution to economic and social impact on the institutions in the United States, international students’ academic adaptation has been always challenging. The study investigated international graduate students’ academic adaptation scales via a survey questionnaire and explored how international students are academically adapted in the U.S. college setting through qualitative research with class observations, field notes, and semi-structured interviews. In addition, the use of lexical bundles was examined as one of the academic literacy adaptation indicators. The quantitative and qualitative results revealed international graduate students’ academic adaptation in different angles. The implications of the findings are discussed.

Keywords: Academic Adaptation, ESL, International Students, Lexical Bundles, Mixed-methods Research

Open Doors 2015 has released the report of international students studying in the United States. The number of international students at U.S. colleges and universities had the highest rate of growth in 35 years, increasing by ten percent over the prior year in the 2014-2015 academic year. International students constituted approximately 4.8 % enrolled in the total U.S. higher education student population in the year 2014-2015 (“Institute of International Education”, 2015). In addition, international students are considered crucial for the economic and social impact on U.S. For instance, they have contributed more than 30.8 billion dollars to the economic vigor of U.S. higher education institutions and their communities and have been dedicated to scientific and technical research and related diverse and

Although the influx of international students has brought great value in the U.S. educational contexts, international students may not be successfully adapted to the target culture and language. Prior research (e.g., Cheng & Fox, 2008; Spack, 1997) has revealed that international students encounter challenges in their academic adaptation process while studying in a foreign country. Due to the increasing population of international students and their contribution to higher education in the U.S., it is important to explore how the international students studying at colleges and universities in English-speaking countries are adjusted to the target language and culture. As a result, this study examined international graduate students’ academic adaptation scales via a survey questionnaire and explored their academic adaptation in the U.S. college setting through qualitative research with class observations, field notes, and semi-structured interviews. To better understand the nature of their language use and help them to improve their English language skills, it is necessary to examine how the students receive the input and yield the output in second language (L2) writing. In this sense, lexical bundles can manifest the degree of academic adaptation through L2 writing. Hence, the research questions are:

1. Which dimension of adaptation is the most challenging for the international graduate students?
2. How do the international graduate students perceive their academic and literacy adaptation in the U.S. university?
3) What features of lexical bundles can reveal their academic adaptation through second language writing?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic Adaptation

Prior research (Campbell, 2015; Cheng & Fox, 2008; Kashima & Loh, 2006; Kim, 2012; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Ren, et al., 2007; Spack, 1997; Wadsworth, et al., 2008; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; Yu & Downing, 2012; Yuan, 2011) shows a lot of international students encounter challenges in their academic adaptation process while studying in a foreign country. Spack’s (1997) longitudinal case study identified inseparability of reading and writing processes in terms of the completion of academic assignments and revealed the participant’s strategic way of applying prior developed reading and writing tactics to new course materials, which raises issues about cross-cultural interpretations of student learning. Cheng and Fox (2008) explored how international students were successfully engaged in the academic setting and developed more strategic learning and social
skills as part of their acculturation process. The results confirmed that academic adaptation is a complex process in an L2 students’ intellectual, personal, social, and cultural life and cannot be a one-way transmission from a target community of specialists to novices. Kim (2012) demonstrated and analyzed the process of adaptation by dividing it into four components: a cultural encounter, an experience of obstacles, response generation, and the overcoming phase. Campbell’s (2015) phenomenological study examined how international doctoral students acculturated to their new educational settings. Three emerging themes included: the participants’ past experiences affecting their desire to study in the U.S.; the participants’ interactions within academic and non-academic settings; and the role of family relationships. The study revealed that the students were optimistic about the societal opportunities in the U.S. university, were grateful for the interactions with their instructors, had inadequate relationships with their academic advisers, joined limited social activities outside of academic settings, and made adjustment to family relationships. Campbell (2015) highlighted that the students’ educational and cultural backgrounds influenced their decision to study in the U.S. and affected academic acculturation to their new environments.

Based on the literature review above, several terms were adopted. Cheng and Fox (2008) defined academic acculturation as “the dynamic adaptation processes of linguistically and culturally diverse students engaging with the academic study” (p. 309). Morita (2000) pointed out that academic acculturation is a “complex, locally situated process that involves dynamic negotiations of expertise and identity” (p. 304). Various scholars (Kashima & Loh, 2006; Kim, 2012; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006) defined academic adaptation as a process of appreciation and acquisition of the target culture in an academic situation.

Lexical Bundles as an Indicator of Academic Literacy Adaptation

For a closer connection with lexicogrammatical awareness, phraseology—the study of fixed expressions and multi-word lexical units—is one of the fields that SLA (i.e. second language acquisition) and L2 writing researchers have paid attention to in recent years. Early formulaic language-related research emphasized idioms (e.g., kick the bucket, rain cats and dogs) viewed as “archetypical formulaic sequences” (Nekrasova, 2009, p. 648). With the agreement of the statement above, however, some other scholars (e.g., Cowie, 1988; Wray, 2002) have attempted to broaden a definition of an idiom to analyze the whole constructions of writing and argued that the category of formulaic sequences should go beyond conventional idioms and include more transparent constructions of sequential phrases.
In particular, the research on lexical bundles has been overlooked since traditionally linguists have focused on complete units of grammatical phrases and clauses, rather than lexical units that cut across grammatical structures. Furthermore, lexical bundles have been neglected by linguistics researchers who consider idiomaticity a requirement for language (Conrad & Biber, 2004). However, Hyland (2008) claims that lexical bundles are a key way of “helping to shape text meanings and contributing to our sense of distinctiveness in a register” (p. 5). Ellis, Simpson-Vlach, and Maynard (2008) maintained that formulaic language provides meaningful educational implications that formulaic language determines learnability and processing fluency.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The study is mixed-methods research via survey research and qualitative research. This study used a mixed method design with a combination of quantitative and qualitative data—more explicitly, the explanatory sequential design (Creswell, 2015). According to Creswell (2015), the purpose of the explanatory sequential design is to initiate a quantitative strand, to implement qualitative research, and to draw inferences for supporting the quantitative results. The research site was the English as a Second Language (ESL) Programs at a large mid-western university. A questionnaire was used for the survey research; semi-structured interviews, observations, and field-notes were employed for the qualitative research. Textual analysis was added to examine the participants’ writing patterns with regard to lexical bundles.

Sample

Convenience and purposive sampling was used for this study. The researcher asked the ESL Program Office which composition classes were available as convenience sampling. Then, the classes were selected according to the researcher’s criteria (i.e., international graduate students) as purposive sampling. Thirty-five participants in two classes joined the survey research out of the total 36 students. Based on the survey result and the participants’ voluntary decisions, three participants were chosen for the qualitative research and the textual analysis.

Instrumentation

First, a questionnaire was used for the survey research. There are three sub-dimensions of adaptation: sociocultural adaptation, academic and intellectual development/adaptation, and academic adaptation through L2 writing. Statements 1 to 6 are extracted from Ward and Kennedy’s (1999)
measurement study of sociocultural adaptation scale ($r = .85$). Statements 7 to 13 are selected from one of the subscales is academic and intellectual development ($r = .74$) in the Pascarella and Terenzini’s (1980) study; statements 14 to 20 are related to academic adaptation through L2 writing generated by the researcher.

Second, a semi-structured interview protocol was used for the qualitative research. The question items ask their college lives and academic writing in English in their academic adaptation process as well as demographic information. Since the semi-structured interview was utilized, follow-up questions were added to enrich the description of the participating students’ academic adaptation.

Third, the corpus-based text analysis software *AntConc* (Version 3.4.4) (Anthony, 2015) was employed for investigating lexical bundles. In particular, the function of clusters/N-Grams was utilized to detect the four-word lexical bundles and clarify whether they were not duplicated.

In brief, the data were triangulated with three different dimensions: quantitative, qualitative, and textual. The survey data were used for identifying the most struggle of academic adaptation. Qualitative data were utilized for a deeper understanding of their concerns. Since academic writing was a big concern, the textual analysis was necessary in discovering what specific language features impede the students’ academic writing adaptation. Therefore, a variety of the data were triangulated for uncovering the issues of academic adaptation.

**Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage) and correlation statistics were used for the survey data. Semi-structured interview data were analyzed to identify recurring patterns or themes. The final component for the analysis was about lexical bundles. Based on Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan’s (1999) lexical bundle project, the identification of 4-word lexical bundles has been focused on the analysis of the corpus data since 4-word lexical bundles are more common than 5-word strings and provide a more distinct range of structures and functions than 3-word lexical bundles (Hyland, 2008), holding 3-word bundles in the structure of 4-word strings (Cortes, 2004).

**Reliability Estimate of the Surveyed Data**

Reliability of the surveyed data was estimated on the total ($N = 35$) sample. The overall Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .784 for the 20 items. The reliability statistics range indicated a relatively high level of internal consistency and approached those reported in studies with similar populations; namely, Ward and Kennedy’s (1999) sociocultural adaptation for part of samples of international student population ($r = .85$).
RESULTS

Results from the Survey Questionnaire

The survey questionnaires consisted of three dimensions: sociocultural adaptation (Statements 1-6), academic development and adaptation (Statements 7-13), and academic development and adaptation through second language (L2) writing (Statements 14-20). In particular, I borrowed the sociocultural adaptation items from Ward and Kennedy (1999) and academic development and adaptation items from Pascarella and Terenzini (1980). The rest of the items (Statements 14-20) were about academic adaptation through L2 writing, created by the researcher. Descriptive statistics allow researchers to encapsulate the most important properties of the observed data with its average or its degree of variation in order to recognize the typical features of a particular genre (Oakes, 1998). The descriptive statistics of the responses were computed including the means, standard deviations, and percentages (Table 1).

The first dimension aimed at estimating the degree of sociocultural adaptation. The purpose of the questions (Questions 1-6) was to examine international graduate students’ sociocultural adaptation especially in the U.S. university. Most students agreed or strongly agreed that they can cope with sociocultural factors at university, such as school regulations and administration (percentage range of answering agree & strongly agree 88.6-97.1 %). In the first dimension, the most positive response was for Question 1 about following rules and regulations (97.1 %); the least positive response was for Question 6 about expressing ideas in class (88.6 %, see Table 1).

The second dimension was relevant to academic development and adaptation. The questions (Questions 7-13) asked the students about academic adjustment, and the responses varied from question to question (percentage range of answering agree & strongly agree 51.4-97.1 %). In the second dimension, the most positive response was for Question 10 about the positive influence of academic experiences on intellectual growth and interest in ideas (97.1 %); the least positive response was for Question 11 about attending cultural events at the U.S. university (51.4 % see Table 1).

The third dimension asked the students of academic adaptation through L2 writing (Questions 14-20). The responses were yielded with relatively low scores (percentage range of answering agree & strongly agree 57.2-82.8 %). In the third dimension, the most positive response was for Question 18 about the satisfaction with the academic development of writing (82.8 %); the least positive response was for Question 20 about the perception of the academic writing adaptation (57.2 % see Table 1).

The survey questionnaire revealed several aspects of international graduate students’ adaptation. First, the survey results showed that the students’ sociocultural adaptation was higher than academic adaptation and
Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Survey Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>% **</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I can follow rules and regulations at university.</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>.547</td>
<td>97.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I can deal with the administration at university.</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>.591</td>
<td>94.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I can deal with people of higher status at university.</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>.584</td>
<td>91.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I understand what is required from me at university.</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>.591</td>
<td>94.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I can cope with academic work.</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>.591</td>
<td>94.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I can express my ideas in class.</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>.583</td>
<td>88.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I am satisfied with the extent of my intellectual development</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>.507</td>
<td>91.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I am satisfied with my academic experience at this university.</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>.612</td>
<td>77.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Few of my courses this year have been intellectually stimulating.</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>.710</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My academic experience has had a positive influence on my</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>.539</td>
<td>97.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intellectual growth and interest in ideas.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I am more likely to attend academic events now than I was before</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>.981</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coming to this university.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. My interest in ideas and intellectual matters has increased</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>.584</td>
<td>91.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>since coming to this university.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I have performed academically as well as I anticipated I would.</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>.692</td>
<td>68.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. My academic experience at this university has had a positive</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>.796</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>influence on my papers in ideas in general.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Most of the courses this year have been involved in writing</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.561</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assignments accepting the rhetoric from my home country.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I would like to take more classes where I can involve my cultural</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>.845</td>
<td>62.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understanding and ideas well through writing in English.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. My interest in writing has increased since coming to this</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>.664</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>university.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I am satisfied with the extent of my academic development in</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>.612</td>
<td>82.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terms of writing a paper at this university.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I am confident in incorporating my cultural and academic</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.561</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experiences at this university into my writing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I have accomplished a high level of academic writing adaptation.</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>.608</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Percentage of Responses of “Agree” & “Strongly Agree”
academic L2 literacy acculturation. The majority of the participants were positive in the dimension of sociocultural adaptation (93.35 %), while dimensions of academic adaptation and academic L2 literacy adaptation yielded lower percentages (77.88 % & 68.17 %) respectively. The international graduate students seemed socially adjusted with the largest percentage among the three dimensions. In other words, they might have conformed to the target culture and society without a lot of difficulties. The students’ academic adaptation level was relatively lower than sociocultural adaptation. In particular, students had difficulty in acculturation of L2 writing (68.17 %).

### Table 2: The Average Percentage of the Three Dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Average Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dimension 1 Sociocultural adaptation</td>
<td>93.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension 2 Academic development &amp; adaptation</td>
<td>77.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension 3 Academic acculturation through second language writing</td>
<td>68.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results from the Semi-structured Interviews and Observations

The qualitative research revealed individual students’ academic acculturation and their challenges of L2 writing. Three participants volunteered to participate in the study, and their demographic information is described in Table 3.

### Table 3: Participants’ Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Pursuing Degree</th>
<th>Field of Study</th>
<th>Years in the U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st participant</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>30-32</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>10 mon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd participant</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>27-29</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>10 mon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd participant</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>33-35</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>10 mon.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three participants showed the diverse degree of academic adaptation and different challenges. For example, one student had an extreme anxiety about language barriers. Thus, he could not participate in adequate courses for his degree because he considered his English proficiency as the most crucial element in his academic path. His satisfaction with the academic adaptation depended on the improvement of the English language. Language is no doubt a necessary condition for learning in a foreign country. However, he struggled a lot with his low level of English, which has impeded his intellectual and academic development and adaptation. The second student had a different acculturative curve. Her sociocultural adaptation did not seem to be smooth due to her academic environment. She considered that the department plays a crucial role for the international
students’ adaptation. Due to insufficient academic orientations, she consistently answered items about regulations, requirements, and administrators in a university with negativity. From the results of the survey, observations, and interviews, she encountered challenges of sociocultural adaptation.

The interviews with the participants revealed that their challenges of L2 writing were a big issue to be specified. The participants’ challenges of L2 writing are described individually. The first participant encountered mainly two issues. The first problem was generally how he organizes or outlines academic papers aligned with the intent of the writing genre, such as annotated bibliographies and critical literature reviews.

For the annotated bibliography, I didn't know how to reduce the literatures into one paper. [For the critical review] I didn't know how to express my opinions about the literatures. That was the serious problem for me. But, in the class, the instructor introduced some methods and fixed my problem...I didn't know about [the verb usage]; I mean how to explain and how to express my opinions about the literatures. I think a verb [contains] the main idea of sentences. For example, I agree with the opinion, but I don't know how I can express [the agreement] by [using] other words. So, that is the problem in the annotated bibliography (the 2nd interview, 05/29/15).

The second problem was more relevant to local issues, like the verb usage:

We do not learn how to think or how to write about my thoughts in Korea. At the first time when I wrote the paper, it was very difficult [because] I didn't know how to explain and how to organize my thoughts. It's hard to describe my thoughts in detail in English. I think it is the most [difficult]. For me, the critical review paper was more challenging because I need to find some similarities and differences between two articles, analyze both of them, and relate them (the 1st interview, 04/01/15).

The second participant’s challenge came along with the organization of ideas in writing. She specified that she had a hard time composing the critical review paper due to the difficulty that she encountered with regard to the structure of the academic writing:

I think that an idea is more important than a language. I think if I have a good idea, I can find the way to write [although] it's not a good quality. But, if I have no idea, I can’t write anything. Even if we learn how to write, ideas—what we want to talk about the topic—are
so important… The most difficulty [in the writing class] is we have to find evidence. The professor always thinks that when we argue with something, we have to use the evidence from our experience (04/08/15).

While the first participant struggled with language issues and the second participant with sociocultural adaptation, the third participant’s academic adaptation was hindered due to innovative ideas in writing. She argued that language may not be an issue of her academic writing. Rather, she was concerned about ideas and thoughts to generate good quality of writing. She expressed different challenges of academic adaptation through L2 writing, such as finding scholarly evidence, because she considered that appropriate evidence by scholarly references results in good quality of academic writing.

The Use of Lexical Bundles as the Indicator of Academic Literacy Adaptation

To examine the participants’ academic literacy adaptation, lexical bundles were examined through their writing. Hyland (2008) and Leki (2007) claimed that being adapted to the expectation of academic writing and rhetoric enables learners to gain membership in the involved community. Two features of lexical bundles—structural and functional—were analyzed based on Biber et al.’s (1999) ancestral research.

Structural characteristics of lexical bundles

Figure 1 shows the proportions of structural patterns in graduate international students’ writing, compared to the ones in academic prose in Biber et al.’s (1999) project. Major structural patterns in Biber et al.’s project are noun phrases (32 %) and preposition with noun phrase fragments (33 %). The present study disclosed a somewhat different trend from Biber et al.’s work, with 67 percent of noun phrases, taking up two-thirds of the entire bundles; 17 percent of preposition with noun phrase fragments. Another main structural pattern displayed in international students’ writing is content-focused compound noun phrases, containing two or more words to make a single noun with 23 percent. It can be assumed that the reason for using a large portion of noun phrases and compound noun phrases would be the register type. The writing samples used in this study are all critical review papers. Thus, the writing samples tend to exhibit information from previous literature. Furthermore, specific disciplines (i.e., architecture & nursing) employ technical terms very frequently, such as ‘the cell cycle regulation’ with frequency counts of 15. Other structural patterns, such as anticipatory it + VP/-adjective phrase (+ complement clause) and passive verb + prepositional phrase fragment, have a similar trend to Biber et al.’s
patterns. The rest of the three structural patterns, such as pronoun/NP (+ auxiliary) + copular be (+), (verb +) that-clause fragment, and (verb/adjective+) to-clause fragment, are not found in the students’ samples. This would be because the written register is limited to only critical reviews, and the sample size is very small—three critical review papers with 12,941 word tokens. Biber et al. (1999) do not specify frequency counts of structural patterns, so percentage data are employed in Figure 2. Compared to academic prose in Biber et al., nouns are much more common than other parts of speech (i.e., adjectives and verbs) in the students’ writing samples. Nouns are the most frequently used patterns, reflecting that the written registers pursue the primary informational purposes of writing—critical reviews.

**Figure 1: Percentage Distribution of Structural Characteristics between Academic Prose and Participants’ Writing Samples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biber et al. (1999)</th>
<th>Sampled Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Bar chart" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Functional characteristics of lexical bundles**

About 40 percent of the functional use was revealed in the students’ written register in the preliminary findings. Biber et al. (1999) highlighted three primary functions of lexical bundles in the registers: 1) stance bundles, 2) discourse organizers, and 3) referential bundles. However, two types of functions (i.e., stance and referential bundles) were found in the study. Attitude/modality stance bundle, specifically with an obligation function, takes up 6.48 percent with seven frequency counts (e.g., *it is necessary to*). Referential bundles with the function of place occupy 12.04 percent with 13 frequency counts (e.g., *in the cell cycle*); referential bundles with tangible framing attributes take up 21.30 percent with 23 frequency counts (e.g., *the impact of urban form, the development of PTSD, phenomenon of post ICU-PTSD*). The rest of lexical bundles with 60.18 percent are all content-oriented combinations. For example, the most frequent bundle is ‘the cell cycle regulation’ with 15 frequency counts (13.89 %). However, ‘the cell...
cycle regulation’ is a technical term in the nursing discipline regardless of any lexical functions. Therefore, the analysis reveals that when international graduate students write critical reviews, they tend to use a lot of technical terms from the previous literature focusing on unique disciplines.

Table 4: The Summary Table of Lexical Bundles in the Corpus of the Final Papers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexical bundles</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the cell cycle regulation</td>
<td>NP</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the cell cycle</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>Referential-place</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impact(s) on travel behavior</td>
<td>NP</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impact of urban form</td>
<td>NP</td>
<td>Referential-framing attributes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the development of PTSD</td>
<td>NP</td>
<td>Referential-framing attributes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>form on travel behavior</td>
<td>NP</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is necessary to</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Stance- obligation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involved in the cell</td>
<td>VP</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the cell cycle</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phenomenon of post ICU-PTSD</td>
<td>NP</td>
<td>Referential-framing attributes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RB/E2F pathway and dream complex</td>
<td>NP</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the development of</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solve the problem of</td>
<td>VP</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>three argumentative organizational plans</td>
<td>NP</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total count</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>108</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total word tokens: 12,941

Note: F = Frequency, S = Structure

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

Three main topics are discussed from quantitative survey findings, qualitative semi-structured interview results, and the textual analysis of lexical bundles.

**Academic Adaptation from the Survey Results**

First, the survey data yielded two themes: difficulty in academic adaptation through L2 writing and the relationship between perceived
English proficiency and L2 writing. The survey questionnaire investigated three sub-dimensions—sociocultural adaptation, academic adaptation, and academic adaptation through L2 writing. The majority of the graduate international students are socially adjusted (93.35 %), while dimensions of academic adaptation and academic L2 literacy adaptation yielded lower percentages (77.88 % & 68.17 %) respectively. In other words, they tend to conform to culture and society without a lot of difficulties. The students’ academic adaptation level is relatively lower than sociocultural adaptation. In particular, students have difficulty in academic adaptation of L2 writing (68.17 %). According to Angelova and Riazantseva’s (1999) study, international students have all the attitudinal, cognitive, and social problems. Cheng and Fox (2008) argued that academic acculturation is a complex process in an L2 students’ intellectual, personal, social, and cultural life and cannot be a one-way transmission from a target community of specialists to novices. Therefore, although sociocultural adaptation does not seem to be problematic for the participants, it is necessary to carefully observe their adaptation with various angles—sociocultural, general academic and literacy-based academic.

The other important feature has been found in students’ perceived English language proficiency. The students’ perceived comfort of using English was statistically significantly correlated with academic adaptation (p < .05). The results may indicate that the students’ comfortableness of English influences their academic adaptation in the U.S. university. That is, as the students become comfortable with the English language, the academic adaptation becomes smoother. Their perceived communication level was also statistically significantly correlated with academic adaptation through L2 writing (p < .05). Hence, the perceived communication level may be critical in their L2 writing in the adaptation process. In other words, students perceive writing as a medium of communication. Proficient communication may improve L2 writing, which means that the students may recognize the audience in writing. As Spack (1997) revealed that the participant's educational background shaped the approach to U.S. academic discourse practices and the way she theorized about U.S. rhetoric, the findings confirmed that the international students’ perceived English proficiency as one of the background components influences their academic adaptation. In addition, the findings are quite significant because this is connected to the third topic of lexical bundles.

**Academic Acculturation in the L2 Writing Class**

The second main issue is academic acculturation generated from the qualitative findings of semi-structured interviews, class observations, and field notes. Survey results showed that academic acculturation through second language writing was the most challenging (68.17 %). The
qualitative findings confirmed that academic writing is the major concern of the international students. Among the three participants, two participants’ responses offered some meaningful aspects of academic acculturation. The first participant’s hardship of academic acculturation resulted from the mismatched expectation and a language barrier. Cheng and Fox (2008) also claimed that the issue of mismatched agendas leads to the difficulty in academic adaptation. Students’ expectations and needs sometimes do not meet the ones within the university. His lack of confidence in English is matched to the lower level of academic adaptation and acculturation through writing. His sociocultural adaptation level was comparatively better than academic adaptation. He attributed the lack of academic adaptation to English language proficiency. On the other hand, the second participant’s low sociocultural adaptation level contradicted the entire survey results. The second participant’s difficulty in sociocultural adaptation is attributed to her contextual barrier. A fair indication can be that a low level of sociocultural adaptation usually gets recovered as time flows. The second participant’s subsequent interview also suggested that her responses of Dimension 1 (i.e., sociocultural adaptation) have been changed more positively. To sum up, the most crucial factor of improving academic acculturation is still an adequate level of language proficiency in the academic setting. Angelova and Riazantseva’s (1999) study supported the findings that international students, who possess different writing experiences from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, need assistance to more easily adapt to the new academic repertoire. Campbell’s (2015) phenomenological study also suggested that international students’ educational and cultural backgrounds influence academic acculturation to their new environments. Hence, it is necessary to examine how they attempt to acquire English to be smoothly acculturated in the U.S. university.

Class observations and field notes discovered international students’ L2 academic disciplinary power into learning and teaching practices in the classroom. This disciplinary power may conflict with Leki’s (2007) argument about the mismatch of ESL composition courses and students’ experiences of academic literacy. The first participant had linguistic challenges in the class, particularly the verb usage connected to formulaic language functions. When the first participant expressed his difficulty to the instructor, the instructor showed a new strategy to use Word & Phrase INFO in the COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) corpus reference tool to the students with one example paper. This instructional adjustment was confirmed by Fujioka’s (2014) argument about “changes and transformations the writer brought to himself, his writing practices, his professor, and the social practices in his community” (p. 55). The first participant’s rigorous class participation stimulated the instructors’
willingness to modify teaching practices, which ultimately contributed to the first participant’s improved writing practices.

Without doubt, corpus-based instruction with the COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) has been proved to be effective in enhancing students’ academic acculturation. Yoon and Hirvela’s (2004) study revealed that the students perceived the corpus approach as beneficial to the development of L2 writing skill and increased confidence toward L2 investigation of attitudes toward corpus-based writing instruction. Similarly, most students seemed to be satisfied with using corpus data in the advanced academic writing class. Different resources, such as the instructor’s feedback and tutorials, gradually challenging assignments, and peer-editing, would be also helpful. Since the advance of technology, students have heavily depended on computer-generated information. The corpus engagement in composition must be a necessary condition to provide effective instruction of especially L2 writing.

Lexical Bundles as an Indicator of Academic Literacy Adaptation

The investigation of lexical bundles is essential in finding out whether a relationship between academic adaptation and lexical bundles exists. In other words, the use of lexical bundles can be an indicator of the improvement on international students’ academic literacy adaptation. Structural and functional components are the two characteristics of lexical bundles by Biber et al.’s (1999) study. In terms of structural features, the participants’ lexical bundles are found to follow the trend of the most frequent used noun phrase fragments from Biber et al.’s (1999) work. In particular, content-focused compound noun phrases are most frequently used due to the special written register, such as critical reviews. The functional use of lexical bundles was not represented as meaningful in the findings due to the small sample size. However, it turns out that the students do not seem to express their own voices in critical reviews. Rather, they tend to write carefully not to misconstrue the original articles. To make this pilot study meaningful, it is necessary to accumulate writing samples in the corpus for significant contributions to the corpus research.

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations that need to be addressed for enhancing future research. First, due to the small sample size ($N = 35$), the results cannot be generalizable, and the corpus data was too small to be analyzed or interpreted. Second, validity would be another limitation. The survey questionnaire items were not factor-analyzed for validity. Finally, although the researcher took field notes during the observations in the classrooms, little information of field notes was used for analyzing and interpreting the
participants’ behaviors and attitudes regarding academic adaptation, and the phenomena of the classroom.

**IMPLICATIONS**

This study provided a picture of the international students’ academic adaptation by incorporating different research methods—survey, semi-structured interviews, observations, and a textual analysis. The research also offered potentials for researchers to implement mixed-methods research in order to enrich research about academic adaptation with various research-based evidences. Future research needs more improvement. First, more samples are necessary in developing valid and reliable survey research so that the results can be representative and generalizable. L2 writing samples should be accumulated for significant contributions to the corpus research. Furthermore, examining different genres of writing and registers (i.e., spoken and written) would provide a lot clearer essence of lexical bundles in L2 writing. As Sánchez Hernández’ (2013) study suggested, a simple exposure to lexical bundles may not lead to the acquisition or mastery of the formulaic expressions by international students. Hence, my future research will connect the information and knowledge of lexical bundles to L2 learning instruction and pedagogy. In light of qualitative case studies, various research techniques, such as field notes, interviews, and verbal protocols, should be practically employed for yielding valuable findings. In order to do this, the researcher should learn effective ways to conduct qualitative case studies by rigorously reading research-relevant prior studies and theoretical pieces of writing.

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Being Wholesaled: An Investigation of Chinese International Students’ Higher Education Experiences

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ABSTRACT

Using academic capitalism as a theoretical foundation, this phenomenological study examined the new study abroad experiences of Chinese college students in six popular English-speaking study destination countries—the U.S., the U.K., Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, and Singapore. Qualitative data collected from 20 interviews indicate some hosting higher education institutions prioritize enrollment growth and neglect recruitment process and student development. Three main findings are 1) delegating recruitment to overseas agencies causes mismatches between host institutions and the Chinese students, 2) Chinese students having insufficient language skills are prone to have a dissatisfied study abroad experience, and 3) high density of student population from one country impedes Chinese students’ integration on campus. Implications for higher educational professionals, students, and faculty are presented.

Keywords: academic capitalism, Chinese international students, student satisfaction

While the large global increase in the international student population is a significant trend, it is rarely discussed in the contexts of its economic origins and its impact on students. According to International Consultants for Education and Fairs (ICEF) data released in 2015, the total number of international students surpassed 5 million in 2014, which more than doubled and tripled the numbers in 2000 and 1990, respectively (‘The state of...
international student mobility in 2015’, 2015). While university officials cite other motivations for encouraging international student growth (such as global awareness and diversity), some scholars worry the impetus for recruiting these students is largely financial (Choudaha et al., 2013; Matthews & Lawley, 2011; Ross, Grace, & Shao, 2013; Thomason, 2013). For instance, as the largest hosting country for international students, the U.S. received $30.8 billion through exports of higher education in 2015 (John Siegmund, Barb Rawdon, & Clara Ren, 2016). International students present an attractive market for cash-strapped universities seeking students who will pay the higher out of state tuition rate, generally without financial aid. While higher education institutions can and should take care of their bottom line, how does the profit motive affect universities’ treatment of students some worry are increasingly viewed as “cash cows” (Cantwell, 2015)?

The global financial crisis in 2007 swept across North America and European Union countries, causing many of those developed countries to cut their government funding to higher education. In the U.S., state fiscal support for higher education from FY2008 to FY2013 has decreased by 10.8% (Zumeta, 2013, p. 32). In Canada, government funding to university operating budgets dropped from 84% to 58% in the last thirty years (Ivanova, 2013). In the U.K., the British government announced in 2010 a 40% cut in funding to higher education over a five-year period between 2010 and 2015 (European University Association, 2011). In the same year, the Australia common wealth government ceased its commitment to increase expenditure in higher education; instead, it announced in 2013 a plan to reduce AU$ 2.3 billion funding over a four-year period, the largest budget cut to higher education since 1996 (Jump, 2013). In order to survive such an austere financial climate, higher education institutions in these four countries simultaneously shifted their cost to the students. International students are viewed as a key part of the solution because they pay tuition at a higher rate than domestic students.

China is a particularly lucrative market for international students. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), China accounted for 17% of the world’s international students in 2013, sending 712,157 young people abroad for higher education (‘Global flow of tertiary-level students’, 2016). The top four English-speaking destination countries that Chinese international students choose are the U.S., the U.K., Australia, and Canada. The United States hosted over a quarter of million Chinese college students in 2014, more than the U.K, Australia, and Canada combined (2016). The majority of today’s Chinese international students can afford the cost of a foreign higher education; over 95% of Chinese students studying overseas are self-funded (Choudaha et al., 2013).
The high density of international students from one country poses both opportunities and challenges to university administrators. While universities tend to highlight the diversity Chinese students bring to campus, their overrepresentation compared to students from less developed nations suggests financial motivations play a significant if not exclusive role. Scholars have focused on either how universities tap the Chinese student market or what challenges Chinese students face, few studies connect these disparate bodies of scholarship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rhoads and Slaughter (2004) define academic capitalism as “a regime that entails colleges and universities engaging in market and market-like behaviors.” They identify the motivation of this new institutional behavior as generating “revenue from their core educational, research, and service functions, ranging from the production of knowledge created by faculty to the faculty’s curriculum and instruction” (p. 37). The two scholars concluded that U.S. higher education institutions are slowly evolving into a corporate-like enterprise that pursues monetary gains, at times eclipsing their educational mission.

Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) are particularly concerned about undergraduate students being exploited in the U.S. educational markets. Colleges and universities market themselves to undergraduate students in ways that best serve the institutions’ interests. Such practices inevitably position students as consumers, as opposed to their traditional role as products of the education process (Sirvanci, 1996). Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) focus on the impact of academic capitalism on American higher education. However, today’s market is a global one, not bound by institution, state, or country. Academic capitalism blurs old boundaries and expands transnationally (Hanley, 2005; Kauppinen, 2012). The overseas market appealed to not only American colleges and universities but all other Western higher education institutions in the context of the most recent financial collapse. While the escalating enrollment of Chinese students is lucrative for host higher education institutions, how their experiences are impacted is an under-examined phenomenon in the literature.

RESEARCH METHOD

The aim of this research was to understand the relationship between Chinese international students’ overseas educational experiences and host higher education institutions’ global attractiveness in the context of academic capitalism. We choose to use a phenomenological approach because it “describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a
concept of phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). Our participants shared the experience of being Chinese international students; our aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of what meaning they ascribed to features of their college experience they identified as significant.

Finally, we embarked on this research in hopes of uncovering data with the potential to inform higher education policy regarding international students. Phenomenological approaches are particularly well-suited for describing common experiences of complex problems. Once understood in greater depth, these experiences can provide the foundation upon which to build increasingly more well-informed policy (Creswell, 2007).

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What institutional features do Chinese students identify as most important in impacting their experience of international higher education?
2. How do Chinese students define quality in their experiences of international higher education?
3. How can institutions of higher education create environments that offer Chinese students the best opportunity for a quality international education experience?

Participants

We selected 20 Chinese international student participants who met the following criteria: (a) Participants have had at least one year’s experience of studying abroad. (b) The language used in the participants’ programs of study is English. (c) Participants are self-funded students.

Half of the 20 participants are Ohio University students or recent graduates recruited by the researchers based on participants’ stratified satisfaction in their educational experiences. The other half of the 20 participants selected were current or very recent graduates of non-American colleges and universities—5 British (4 English and 1 Scottish), 2 Australian, 1 Canadian, 1 Dutch, and 1 Singaporean. Those participants were recruited from an ESL test-prep school in Shanghai to which one of the researchers had access. All participants are identified by pseudonyms.

Data Collection

The data are composed of 20 in-depth interviews (30-60 minutes) conducted with the participants either in person or via SKYPE. Interviews occurred in offices, libraries, and other campus environments reflecting the natural setting appropriate for qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). We organized the questions chronologically, asking each participant to reflect on their pre-entry, in-college, and post-college experiences. We recorded each session and had each recording transcribed. We edited each
transcript for clarity only before sending them to participants. We employed member-checking as a trustworthiness measure, returning transcripts to participants and allowing them to explain, correct and elaborate as needed. As another trustworthiness measure, we maintained a shared researchers’ journal to capture non-verbal communication as well as our impressions.

Table 1: QSR NVivo Data Coding Output Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In vivo</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Actually there are 16 students in my class and half of them are from China and half of them mostly come from the U.K.”</td>
<td>high density of Chinese student population</td>
<td>The high density of Chinese student population on campus becomes a source for isolation, which affects the students' development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yeah like half (of the class are Chinese), I’d say. Yeah, that’s quite a lot, but yeah.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“MFE program has 90% of the international students and most of them are from China. So the class is not much different from that in our country.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“70% of the students in my class are from China.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“All my class were American, only one Asian. Actually, I think I'm the only Asian in the history department.”</td>
<td>low density of Chinese student population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am in engineering and there are not many Chinese students in the engineering program.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We don’t have too many Chinese students here … I was also the only Chinese student in my class.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Somehow there would be a (Chinese) group in the class: we sit together and talk to each other only.”</td>
<td>Complaints about having high density of Chinese student population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We prefer a larger school which has more students with different cultures and not just Chinese, you know…in the U.K. most of the business schools have many Chinese students. I don't prefer that.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think there is no difference if they study in China or in the U.K. because they live with all the Chinese students, play the computer games together, and go to the pubs together every night.”</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I join the study group because they’re all American students and I think I have made some improvement there. It was very helpful.”</td>
<td>Preference of having low density of Chinese student population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It gives me more pressure, well, not in a bad way, positive pressure to make me know more people in the class”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes. That was one of the reasons why I chose the Netherlands rather than the U.K. or the U.S. I want to avoid too many Chinese students.”</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis

We used QSR NVivo 10 for qualitative data analysis in this research. After the data was transcribed and member-checked, the first step of data analysis is sorting, which involves creating a database and comparing the data with the research questions again (LeCompte, 2000; Thomas, 2006). The data were further developed into codes; there were 682 total codes, averaging 34 codes from each participant’s interview.

In the process of coding, QSR NVivo 10 tracks the repetition of the codes. Themes are drawn from the repeated codes. When new codes stop emerging, this is a sign that data saturation has been reached and no additional interviews are necessary (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). After coding was completed and its consistency checked, we concluded the findings from the processed data.

RESULTS

Application Challenges

Findings indicate that the majority of the participants lacked sufficient knowledge and instruction in the application process. International recruitments agencies emerged as a theme in challenges participants faced as part of the application process. Over half of the participants reported they hired international recruitment agencies to facilitate their applications. However, the findings show that agencies do not always treat their clients’ academic interest as their priority. Wei Ming, an undergraduate student at RMIT University in Australia, expressed his frustration with studying a major that he dislikes and told the researcher how his agent convinced him to choose it:

Wei Ming: I like art, designing, and journalism, better.
Researcher: Why are you studying Business IT if you like those?
Wei Ming: My agent told me if I study those majors, I cannot stay there after graduation. So I changed my major.

When we asked Wei Ming whether he would choose the same major if he had the chance, he firmly rejected the notion. Like Wei Ming, many other Chinese students were counseled by the international recruitment agencies to be “pragmatic,” which meant letting perceived financial gain outweigh actual interest when selecting a major. Fortunately, several participants ignored this advice and prioritized academic interest. When we asked what advice they would offer future Chinese students, they all mentioned the importance of finding a right field of study. For example, Wang Hao, who studies Mechanical Engineering at McMaster University in Canada, stated,
“When you choose a program, follow your heart. If you choose a program that you don’t like, it’s really hard to go through it.”

Findings also reveal there are some international recruitment agencies that deliberately hide critical information from their clients. For instance, one of our participants, Qian Peng has been stuck in the English remedial class for nearly two years at Ohio University; he expressed resentment toward the agency he hired:

Before I come here, my agency told me, “Go to America, go to Ohio University, all you need to do is learning some English.” But they did not give me more information about the Ohio Program of Intensive English (OPIE). OPIE is divided into too many unnecessary levels and it is too time-consuming. Without passing OPIE, we are not allowed to register for class credits. I have a friend who has been studying OPIE for over three years now.

Qian Peng experienced a disconnect between his experience and what the agency communicated to him about the university’s academic expectations. This was a theme we saw repeatedly in both our study as well as the literature on the limits of recruitment agencies.

While recruitment agencies sometimes present challenges in the application process, findings indicate students who made a college choice based on their own research tended to report higher degrees of satisfaction with their international higher education experience. For instance, Hong Chuan, an undergraduate student at Ohio University who majors in History, showed remarkable knowledge in differentiating the features between the higher education in the U.K. and the U.S., thanks to his two cousins who have already been studying in the two countries, respectively. He chose an American institution because he prefers its broad undergraduate education, which has “more diverse and more flexible courses.” Hong Chuan demonstrated excellent academic records and actively participated in various social activities.

Language Improvement

Findings indicate that low language skill affected participants’ experiences in significant ways. In the classroom, many participants found themselves struggling to follow the lectures, take notes, or participate in discussions. Some participants reported feeling too self-conscious to ask professors questions after class. Participants also reported language as a barrier in activities like getting a driver’s license or standing up for themselves when ridiculed. Language emerged as a highly meaningful factor in determining participants’ ability to navigate both academic and social challenges.
For the Chinese students whose language skills were below par, the mandatory intensive English remedial course was frequently cited as the largest source of pain. Wang Jianhao, an undergraduate at Ohio University, described the struggle he and his fellow classmates had in OPIE:

Some of the students are very good at studies; they can pass every level. But some students are poor at studies. Either because they don’t like English or they cannot focus on their studies, they fail this class. They can’t move up to a higher level. They just stay there, semester by semester.

Wang Jianhao eventually gave up after one year’s study at Ohio University and found a fresh start at Wilfrid Laurier University Brantford Campus in Canada.

Although, technically the duration of such programs is listed as approximately twelve weeks or one quarter/semester in most of the countries where the participants study, in reality, it is not unusual to see Chinese students who spend two school years in the program or even four years in some extreme cases. Qian Peng, who felt he was hoaxed by his agent to come to Ohio University, complained to the researchers that he was not able to go back China for two years because he had to take the language course during the school breaks. Participants reported the nonstop study of one subject and long-time separation from families at home greatly increased their stress levels. As one participant explained, “It’s a waste of time and money to study English outside of China; prepare the language well at home before going abroad.”

For many Chinese students, writing is more of a daunting challenge than speaking. One participant described how he used his university’s writing program to address this challenge, but added that most Chinese students did not take advantage of this opportunity: “WISE is a student support program that offers one-week courses after school that teach academic writing, critical thinking, and so on. Both undergraduate and postgraduate students can participate for free. Nevertheless, I find most of WISE participants are European students. No Chinese faces there except me.” When we asked why he thought this was, he explained that many international students felt it was “brazen” to seek help for a skill they were supposed to already have.

While advice during the pre-entry process was not always helpful, the ability to access resources during their international experiences was often crucial for participants, especially with regard to language acquisition. For example, Chen Hong, a graduate student graduated from Brunel University in England, attributes her language improvement to the conversation partner she made at school. They would meet periodically and
read newspapers together. Such opportunities of one-on-one tutoring by the local students were much valued by the Chinese international students in our study.

Navigating the differences between Chinese and Western classrooms emerged as a theme related to both language struggles and triumphs. Nearly every student mentioned the transition between hierarchical nature of Chinese instruction and less formal Western teaching styles. Expectations of student participation proved confusing at first, but students generally reported positive feelings about professors who solicited their ideas in class. Participants added their appreciation for professors who slowed down class discussions to give them time to translate their thoughts before speaking, a simple, but effective technique for helping students achieve greater success in navigating this different classroom culture.

Density of the Chinese Student Population

Participants frequently cited high numbers of Chinese students on campus as a source of academic, linguistic, and social isolation from other students. Our participants who studied in England, Scotland, Singapore, and the U.S. all reported that they take classes where over 50% of the students are their compatriots. In an extreme case, 90% of the cohort at Ohio University’s Master of Finance and Economics program (MFE) are Chinese. The most detrimental impact on the Chinese international students in such high density of the same population is isolation. One participant, Wang Lili, had good insight on this issue because she first studied as an undergraduate student at University College Cork in Ireland in a low Chinese student density environment and then pursued graduate studies at Ohio University in a high Chinese student density. She told the researchers how she felt differently in the two universities: “[Having fewer Chinese students in classes] gave me more pressure but not in a bad way. I needed to get to know more people outside of the five Chinese in class. Having this experience makes me confident in talking here at Ohio University.”

In the English remedial program, the situation gets worse as the Chinese students almost make up the entire class. Liu Feng, another participant who went through OPIE offered his perspective on this problem:

Most of my classmates come from the same country: China and Saudi Arabia. We sometimes talk in our own languages in the class—for instance, when the instructor separates us into group discussion in the class, the Chinese students would often say Chinese to each other.

The high density of the Chinese student population impacts students’ social experiences as well. It is common for Chinese students to
choose to live with each other once they are not required to live on-campus. It is thus difficult for them to improve their English when they dwell in an environment that does not require them to practice their secondary language. Lin Xiong, a graduate student at University of Scotland, articulated this point:

Yeah, I think that’s why I improve my English so slow. I don’t know why but every time when I speak English to the westerners, I am not very nervous; however, when there is another Chinese student present, I would get nervous. In the winter holiday, I traveled alone in Europe for forty-six days. When I came back, my British friends said my English became very good. Now, after two months I live with my Chinese flatmates, my spoken English is terrible again.

Findings also indicate that some participants took action to deal with this conundrum either before or after matriculation. Zhao Yinyin, a graduate student at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands, chose to study in the Netherlands because she heard from a classmate that Chinese students were overrepresented in many U.K. and U.S. universities. Ma Dong, a graduate student at Ohio University, deliberately joined a study group that was entirely made up of local students. Pan Jing attributed her successful transition to studying in the U.S. to finding her American roommate, who studied Linguistics and enjoyed talking with an ESL learner. Participants were sometimes able to negotiate the linguistic and social isolation they felt when surrounded by other Chinese students, but they generally had to be pro-active in order to do so successfully.

DISCUSSION

The researchers set out to investigate what factors affect the “customer experience” of the Chinese international students around the world through the lenses of academic capitalism. The results support Slaughter and Rhoades’s finding (2004) that under a regime of academic capitalism, students are targeted as revenue generators and are not always well-served by that ethos. Students and parents who have little information about international higher education often resort to the international recruitment agencies and take their professional advice seriously. But the reality is that the advice they receive from agencies is often not as reliable as they might imagine. Conflicts of interest most likely account for much of the problem. Normally, a recruitment agency should represent either the colleges or the students, depending who is paying for the service. Unfortunately, Chinese students’ status as a lucrative market has created a conflict of interest
wherein less scrupulous recruiters steer students toward institutions based on the agencies’ potential financial gains rather than the students’ best interest. This would not necessarily be a problem if only the universities were paying the agencies’ fees and there was transparency about whose interests were being served. However, if students are paying the fees, they ought to be advised based on their interests’, not the universities’.

This issue is exacerbated by the fact that there are no global or national regulatory organizations to provide an industry norm by which international recruitment agencies must abide. Some countries, such as Australia and the U.K., are increasing penalties for institutions that do not properly vet these agencies. Measures like this may be an important first step in promoting oversight and consumer protection for students who use recruitment agencies.

Negative consequences for international students with regard to ESL programs may also be related to the rise in policies, practices, and procedures informed by academic capitalism. As higher education institutions around the world are all competing for Chinese international students, institutions sometimes have to choose between tuition revenue and institution’s academic rigor. In the end, the enrollment pressure has caused many higher education institutions in the popular destination countries among the Chinese students to lower their admission standards and admit applicants who have not yet met the language requirement. A common practice among some colleges and universities to cope with these large numbers of less qualified recruits is to detain them in English remedial courses either operated by the institutions themselves or the outsourced contractors. By doing so, institutions further expand Chinese students’ consumption by charging additional tuition and fees. Consequently, institutions do not have the urgency to push the students in the English remedial course to graduate in a timely fashion. From our research, we conclude that the longer the Chinese international students struggle in this kind of course, the less they are satisfied with their study abroad experience.

Compared with the need for English language improvement, Chinese international students’ demand for a campus environment that is conducive for cultural learning only emerged recently. In the past, the Chinese student population of any Western higher education institution was much smaller than it is today. Academic capitalism has encouraged a dramatic increase of Chinese students’ enrollment in many Western colleges and universities. Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood (2013) provide important scholarship on this point. The researchers established a social interaction continuum model of international student experiences. Under this model, many Chinese students can be recognized as “Social Segregators,” that is, those students who “socially interact only with conationals, excluding other nationals and host nationals” (419), because the majority of
the population in their classroom and residence is Chinese. Institutions that have high enrollments of Chinese international students must be aware of how significant this newly emerged issue of on-campus segregation is. This research indicates that for some Chinese international students, the density of the Chinese student population in a foreign higher educational institution has become a criterion for making a college choice.

**IMPLICATIONS**

Higher education institutions must take the initiative in communicating with future students rather than leaving that responsibility to profit-driven international recruitment agencies. Today, the Internet has brought the world closer than ever. Hiring international agencies is not the only option to reduce the cost of recruiting international students from overseas markets. It is recommended that any institution that expects a large Chinese student enrollment should at least have a Chinese translated web page to explain the institution’s admission requirement and application procedure so that potential students and their parents could access the information directly. This research finds that when choosing a college, Chinese applicants and parents are particularly concerned about a country’s immigration policy, institutional ranking, and job placement. Although the majority of the Chinese students return home after graduation, many of them have the desire to find a job in the country where they have studied and lived.

Reaching out to the Chinese applicants also involves helping the applicants explore their own academic interests and find the right programs before enrollment. The Chinese educational system is known for its articulation of competition rather than interest cultivation. Chinese parents typically have little knowledge of foreign higher education curricula and their links to career paths. Therefore, it is not surprising to see the statistics that a dominant majority of Chinese undergraduate students choose business-related majors for their overseas higher education. Institutions ought to reach out to Chinese parents and students, informing them of their abundant choices, preferably in their own language instead merely displaying the program information on the websites.

An important finding of this research is that Chinese international students’ success is closely linked to their motivation. Those who do not volunteer but are pressured or even forced to study abroad have a high risk of failure. They are often not committed to studying and isolate themselves from the campus life. Therefore, colleges and universities concerned about retention and completion rates of international students should make efforts to attract self-motivated applicants.

Colleges and universities that have experienced a large increase of Chinese international student enrollment should make efforts to address the isolation caused by the high density of one ethnic group among the student
population. On the academic front, institutions could “dilute” the density by encouraging Chinese students to take different majors. In order to achieve this goal, institutions must take measures to educate future Chinese applicants and their parents, giving them more thorough knowledge about less popular majors. In terms of the social aspects of college life, institutions could purposefully assign Chinese freshmen to a diverse living environment. Like other students, Chinese students may need encouragement from the institution to stretch out of their comfort zones. Findings from the current study suggest greater social integration plays an important role in Chinese students’ ability to learn English and succeed academically as well. By addressing admissions, socialization, and academic needs holistically, institutions improve their chances of serving Chinese students more effectively.

CONCLUSION

Academic capitalism connects higher education institutions around the world in one global market. As public sector investment in higher education declines, many Western institutions have courted Chinese students as new revenue sources. The increase in Chinese students has not always been managed thoughtfully, however, as observed in challenges with both international recruitment agencies and campuses where the Chinese population has reached such high numbers that it becomes difficult for these students to have a truly international experience. The current study’s findings include linguistic and social segregation as barriers to a quality international education for Chinese students. To ameliorate these problems, institutions could communicate more clearly and directly with students and parents in the pre-entry process so they could avoid the misinformation that often comes from recruitment agencies. This communication could also help students better assess their motivation for study abroad and choose more carefully as a result. Once on campus, university officials could reduce academic and social isolation by assigning students to a broader range of housing. While the consumer ethos may incline some administrators to let students choose their residence, many excellent universities like Stanford place students in the housing to maximize opportunities for diverse living environments. Perhaps ironically, it may be necessary to challenge academic capitalist values like consumer choice for universities to effectively meet the needs presented by a greater influx of Chinese students. The universities that fail to adapt to Chinese students’ needs for more integrated language, academic and social opportunities will likely lose them to higher education institutions that respond more effectively to their concerns.
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A New Conceptual Model for Understanding International Students’ College Needs

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ABSTRACT

This study concerns the theory and practice of international marketing in higher education with the purpose of exploring a conceptual model for understanding international students’ needs in the context of a four-year college in the United States. A transcendental phenomenological design was employed to investigate the essence of international students’ needs within their study experiences and explore a conceptual model that can explain these needs. Qualitative data were collected from 12 undergraduate and graduate international students through semi-structured interviews. Using thematic analysis, findings expand typical marketing mix frameworks and advance an eight-dimensional international student needs model: Program, Place, Price, Promotion, Process, People, Physical Facility, and Peace.

Keywords: Globalization, Higher Education, Internationalization, Marketing Mix, Student Needs

Colleges have been engaged in recruiting international students who are largely perceived as a source of revenue, while paying little attention to these students’ desires and requirements. The crux of sustainable marketing and success in recruiting international students is about analyzing and satisfying students’ needs and aspirations. The study reported in this article is distinct from other needs analysis/assessment studies, e.g. Martens and Grant (2008), where the objective is to engage in the evaluation of the level of need for specific programs or services that would assist in developing and/or improving these programs or services (Posavac & Carey, 1997). The present study concerns the broader phenomena and aims at providing insights for campus level strategic internationalization planning.
BACKGROUND AND STUDY MOTIVATIONS

As free-market and neo-liberal economic views have spread since the 1990s, the global direction taken by governments worldwide has been favoring a near-universal participation in an ever more financially independent and market-oriented higher education (Kwiek, 2004). The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in January 1995 is an expression of commitment to such global direction (Herbert & Abdi, 2013). Governments, as well as higher education providers, view international students mainly as a source of revenue (Naidoo, 2010). The United States of America (U.S.) Department of Commerce (2016), for instance, reports that international students contributed more than $32 billion to the U.S. economy in 2014.

In fact, the significance of international students extends beyond the amounts of money these students bring, as they make useful political, cultural, social, and educational contributions (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Campuses that host international students benefit from international profile and reputation building; faculty, student, and staff development; and research and knowledge production (Knight, 2004). Countries that attract and retain talented international students build their human capital, knowledge economy, and develop strategic alliances with other nations (Altbach, 2016; Edwards, 2007).

Further internationalization of higher education, including wider attendance of international students in classes and other campus life activities, seems to be happening with an inexorable veracity. This is so mainly because internationalization is a consequent of globalization that is empowered by continual advances in transportation and communication technology (Casey, 2009). In fact, globalization concerns the current reality relevant to the virtual impossibility for nations, societies, and communities to sequester themselves and their educational functions from their counterparts in the world (Spring, 2008). Globalization necessitates looking at the world as a whole since current human activities in different localities involve increasingly intensifying processes of transfer and exchange of products and services, as well as views, information, knowledge, and people (Anderson, 2001).

Globalization and neoliberalism – including its consequent increasing higher education internationalization activities – are tied to each other, as they happened to spread around the world around the same time in history (Schuetze, Kuehn, Davidson-Harden & Weber, 2011). Neoliberalism concerns the reconstruction of the philosophical underpinnings and economic mechanisms through, and by, which education functions in society in a way where individuals, rather than the state, are more responsible for pre-dictated outcomes (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Critics argue that claims of value made by neoliberal thinkers are not supported by
evidence from empirical research, as individuals’ interests may be different from the society as a whole (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2008). At the international level, underdeveloped and developing countries may not have enough potential to actively or equally engage in a free trade context; such countries are likely to become consumers rather than providers or equal partners (Beck, 2012).

On the other hand, proponents of neoliberal and market orientations to education believe that neoliberal economies design policy and practices to be focused on outcomes and quality enhancement through market freedom; quality improves through global competition, as only schools that satisfy students’ need, hence are perceived as good, survive (Szekeres, 2010). Maringe and Gibbs (2009) argue that due to the current global economic conditions, “the university has had to embrace the technologies of the market and consumerism; strategic planning with its emphasis on mission, vision and value, matching resources to opportunities and of course marketing” (p. 4). Except for the case in some affluent Western European countries, much of higher education around the world has increasingly been involved in entrepreneurial revenue generating activities and marketing (Childress, 2009).

**MARKETING AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS’ NEEDS**

In fact, marketing has often been a source of suspicion to educationalists; it can easily be linked to commercialism and selling, and is regarded as an intrusion on educational values (Hayrinen-Alestalo & Peltola, 2006). It is not, “an uncommon misconception that marketing is little more than advertising and selling” (Ivy & Alfattal, 2010, p. 131). Marketing, however, is not necessarily so as it is a multi-value process and not merely about selling and promotion (Wright, 2014). The concept of marketing involves, “identifying the nature of what is required by the clients [students and other stakeholders] and then ensuring that the school gives ultimate priority to supply that product [program or other services] and maintain its quality” (Davies & Ellison, 1997, p. 4). In a similar vein, Ham and Hayduk (2003) propose that marketing higher education is about satisfying the needs of higher education customers, students, faculty, parents and other stakeholders, while higher education sustains its quality and values; otherwise, higher education institutions will not, in the long run, and under normal competitive conditions, survive and prosper.

The market has the force to improve education since one of the intended benefits of increased competition and choice is to motivate schools to develop a closer relationship with students and become more responsive to their needs (Brown & Baker, 2013). The market is not an actor that positively or negatively affects education and its quality, but rather the
domain in which different stakeholders interact and perform exchanges (Regini, 2011). Neoliberalists advance that the state and the academic communities are not agenda free and do not necessarily act for the best interests of all citizens (Brown, 2013). Marketing education, on the other hand, helps provide the context in which social interests are negotiated and fulfilled by society (McMahon, 2009). A common feature of all marketing definitions is the investigation of customer needs – requirements and desires – and the satisfying of those needs (Filip, 2012). The analysis of customer needs is often done through a marketing tool referred to as the marketing mix (Ivy, 2010).

A highly cited marketing mix model for education is the 7Ps: Program, Place, Promotion, Price, Process, Physical Facilities, and People (Kotler & Fox, 1995). These constitute the domains of students needs’ as (1) ‘Program’ refers to the programs a higher education campus makes available to students. (2) ‘Place’ concerns the delivery of ‘Program’, as it relates to making education accessible in terms of time and physiogeographical distribution of ‘Program’. (3) ‘Promotion’ is all the methods that institutions use to speak to the public. (4) ‘Price’ are tuition and other expenses incurred during study. (5) ‘Process’ is the management of enrollment, teaching, and learning. (6) ‘Physical Facilities’ concerns the way in which the institution is physically shaped and includes the nature and quality of campus facilities provided. Finally, (7) ‘People’ is the administration, the faculty, and the staff of a higher education campus. The degree of importance of each of the dimensions of the marketing mix is perceived differently by different student populations. Thus, sustainably successful higher education institutions need to constantly engage in the analysis and satisfaction of relevant student populations’ needs as per the contexts and the objectives of such institutions (Ivy, 2008).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is based on findings from a qualitative study regarding the experiences of 12 undergraduate and graduate international students who were studying at a public comprehensive university campus in Southern California. The campus was medium size, almost 20,000 students of which 1,172 were international, about six percent. Two participants were from China, two from Korea, two from Saudi Arabia, one from Brazil, one from Germany, one from Japan, one from Mexico, one from Syria, and one from Turkey. Seven participants were undergraduates and five were graduates, and they studied in five different colleges, Arts and Letters, Business and Public Administration, Education, Natural Sciences, and Social and Behavioral Sciences. Nine students were self and/or family funded, and three students received funding through scholarships.
Data used were extracted from a more comprehensive mixed methods longitudinal project. The transcendental phenomenological study reported here sought to explore what it was like to experience international education in the U.S. in comparison to the dimensions of international students’ needs established in the literature: Program, Place, Promotion, Price, Process, Physical Facilities, and People. This method helped investigate the universal essence of the lived experiences of participants with the objective of finding out about the commonalities in these experiences (Polkinghorne, 1989). Elicitation of data was done while asking broad questions about what and how in semi-structured interviews that lasted between 60 and 90 minutes: (1) What is international education experience like? And (2) how is international education experienced? The first question was intended to help listen to stories where students described what international education meant to them including these students’ desires and requirements. The second question, on the other hand, provided an opportunity where students could report challenges they faced as they were experiencing international education. Both questions were purposefully constructed in broad terms with the intention to help collect freely emerging data (Seidman, 2012), that would answer the following specific research question: What can be a conceptual model that would explain international students’ college needs?

Interviews were recorded and manually transcribed. Then, data were coded in two cycles using theme analysis methods and Moustakas (1994) six-step procedure: (1) bracketing out researcher impressions about the phenomena; (2) verbatim transcript were studied with respect to their significance for a description of the experience, all relevant statements were recorded and each non-repetitive, non-overlapping statement was listed; (3) the meaning units were related and clustered into themes; (4) the meaning units and themes were synthesized into a description of the textures of the experience using verbatim examples; (5) a structural description was constructed; and (6) a textualstructural description of the meanings and essences of the participants’ experience was constructed.

Taking into consideration that themes come both from the data, an inductive approach, and from the researcher’s prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon, a priori approach (Ryan & Bernard, 2003), and due to the nature of the research question, data were coded in two cycles. The first cycle was top-down and employed ‘structural coding’ (Saldaña, 2009, p. 66). The topics of inquiry, or priori themes, corresponded to the 7Ps marketing mix model. The second cycle of coding was bottom up, as it looked for any additional and freely emergent themes other than those identified in the model. Hence, inductive and deductive thinking were employed (Creswell, 2014), while trying to make sense of data and build the themes of international students’ needs.
Trustworthiness of the data was enhanced by member checking through face-to-face follow up interviews where participants gave feedback on the descriptions of their experiences. Additionally, feedback from two peer debriefers who are experienced qualitative researchers was solicited to ensure credibility. One debreifer had been an international student herself and the other was familiar with international students’ issues as he had coordinated international programs at a comprehensive university campus in Texas. Debriefers were given the raw transcripts, the structural descriptions, and the individual textural descriptions. The researcher and the debriefers had four 45-minute discussion sessions on the meanings made of the participants’ experiences.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Analysis suggests that international students’ requirements can be described through Program, Place, Promotion, Price, Process, Physical Facility, and People model advanced previously in the literature. However, as an additional theme emerged from the data, a more comprehensive conceptual model would include an eighth P dimension that can be called ‘Peace’.

**The Need Domains in the Traditional 7Ps Model**

Colleges offer degree and non-degree programs, libraries, housing, dining, and other services. These are all referred to as Program and establish the offerings higher education institutions provide to their students (Ivy, 2008). Data in this study suggests that international students expect these to be of better quality and/or uniquely different from programs offered in their home country. In addition, when asked to describe their program needs, participants provided meaning units that illustrated that they aspired to distinguish themselves by having international education experiences that would elevate them socially, and qualify them for improved employment prospective.

I made my decision to leave home and come here based on the quality of the education such as our school of business here has excellent reputation and they have many majors in MBA we do not have at home. People will respect my degree when I go back home. The education here is, I think, is the best and I am sure I will easily find a good job back in Saudi Arabia. (Frank)

Frank thought that his program at the campus where he studied offered more focused concentrations, and it was of better quality than similar programs in his home country. The analysis of the data revealed Program related needs were the most to be brought up and expanded on by participants. These findings suggest that much of the essence of
international students’ experiences revolve around program and service needs relevant to expectations from their host international campus and their international experience as a whole. In addition, textural descriptions also revealed People, Price, Physical Facility, Process, and Place needs. Although these need domains were consistent as categories with those advanced in the traditional 7P model by Kotler and Fox (1995), it was found that international students’ requirements do not constantly match those of domestic students. For instance, international students interviewed in this study thought that course scheduling was unexpectedly inconvenient for them. In fact, campus scheduling, especially for graduate courses, takes into consideration the domestic population’s needs for evening classes since a good percentage of these work and study at the same time. On the other hand, international students are normally dedicated only to their full time study and prefer morning classes.

Lastly, compared to other need domains, Promotion was reported in less significant statements and only four meaning units in the data were deemed relevant. Participants suggested that they needed effective communication about their campus programs, services, activities, and events. Here is a reflection that Henry shared in his interview:

A lot of things are going on. I heard from my friends the rec center give a skiing trip last week. I did not know until after. I still do not know where to find out. They should tell us... We would go because it is a lot of fun and I could make American friends.

In fact, international students appreciated engagement opportunities provided by activities organized by student union, student clubs, and their campus recreational center, although they thought that information about these activities are not always easily available. This suggests that campuses need to consider additional channels that can deliver messages to these students more effectively.

Adding Peace: The New 8Ps Model

The most important finding of the analysis in this study is the recognition of a new need domain, Peace, that was not reported on in previous marketing mix models. Figure 1 below illustrates the new 8Ps international education marketing mix model advanced by this study.

In addition to the traditional seven need domains, structural and textural descriptions in the present study reported reflections on how participants sought safe and peaceful experiences while they were studying abroad. Meaning units that made this theme incorporated ‘safe/safety’, ‘tolerant/tolerance’, ‘welcoming’, ‘friendly’, ‘peaceful/peace’, and
‘secure/security’. In describing their need for Peace, participants shared the following:

You know, living in China and coming here is different, totally different. In China, I cannot imagine what it is going to be like here. I was afraid and my family wants me to be safe. You know Hollywood movies… In China, we think that Americans are big, and dangerous, and have guns in their cars. I am sorry for the stereotype but this is how we think. Yes, I was afraid when I first came… mmm… I am still… I don’t stay out after eight. The university should have more life and activities at night. I feel lonely and do not know how to go to parties. I did not travel all the way … come here to stay in my room. (Laura)

Honestly… Errr… The U.S. can be scary. Just after I arrived I saw the picture of a wanted person posted on doors in the university. I think he kidnaped a student. When I saw that, I was scared because it was posted about two days before and I said, mmm… this is the beginning. I know there is police station on campus but I need the university to help make the campus secure especially for people like me. You see I am wearing hijab [Muslim headscarf] and people may not tolerate my religion. I feel unwelcomed sometimes and make me sad. (Sarah)

Laura and Sarah needed further support from their campus. They thought that their experiences could be enhanced if their campus had invested more in promoting its safety of environment, or Peace. As most
campus facilities, including the library, were closed in the late evening and at night, students felt that they were locked to their rooms with much fear to participate in non-university-organized activities. Sarah further told that compared to domestic students, international students had more sensitivity and anxiety relevant to their identity and religious beliefs, as these might not be tolerated. Other support needs brought up by participants, and were found to be related to Peace, were relevant to international students’ potential feelings of isolation and loneliness. These students hoped that not only would their campus provide them with educational guidance, but also it would have venues through which it provided emotional, motivational, social, and sense-of-security-related support. These four main aspects of Peace, as an international student need domain, are illustrated in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2: The Four Main Aspects of Peace Need Domain**

Figure 2 suggests an intersectional and sequential relationship between the four aspects of the Peace need domain identified. Participants’ testimonials evinced that campuses that engaged international students for the betterment of any of these four aspects were likely to positively influence the other aspects at the same time. For example, when a campus engaged its international students with social activities, the campus was at the same time providing emotional and sense of security support through providing students with opportunities to build social networks. These were likely to reduce potential feelings of loneliness, isolation, and intolerance, while at the same time they increased international students’ motivation to engage more with campus life, which again resulted in more opportunities to receive social support through building more, or expanding, social networks.

To conclude, a variety of needs and need domains were associated with international students’ experiences. Many of these students left considerable economic, social, cultural, and navigational capitals they possessed at their home countries, as they ventured into foreign educational
experiences. These students engaged in building social networks with domestic, national (from their home country), and other international populations. They also invested efforts to learn about their new environment, and they expressed an expectation that their host university campuses would provide support through programs, as well as advising and counselling services that could help them navigate towards achieving their aspirations. While the marketing mix model was developed primarily with domestic students in mind, previous research into international students’ needs has reported on educational, social, and cultural challenges that international students experience, as well as these students’ acculturation and adjustment processes (Lewthwaite, 1997; Lin & Yi, 1997). In addition, studies such as Luzio-Locket (1998), and Misra, Crist, and Burant (2003) described the influence of cross-cultural adjustment on students’ academic performance and highlighted the significance of formal (campus-provided) and informal (community-provided) social support. Findings in this study lend support to those advanced in Stoyoff (1997) where difficulties international students experience relate to sense of insecurity, social isolation, financial concerns, psychological problems including anxiety, loneliness, and depression.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Motivated by economic, cultural, and educational benefits, higher education institutions around the world have been engaged in recruiting international students. Recruitment activities have been mainly reactive to competition rather than informed strategic marketing, where the analysis of students’ needs guides the development of responsive higher education offerings. A tool for conducting such analysis is the 7Ps marketing mix, which was used as a conceptual model for the study reported here. Findings suggest that international students’ needs go beyond those that are reported in traditional marketing models and a new 8Ps model was advanced. International students additionally require Peace, which can be defined as all aspects of an educational campus that provide students with welcoming, safe, peaceful, study-oriented, and socially inclusive experiences. Colleges may want to invest in improving Peace on their campuses and communicating the availability of relevant environments to their prospective international students. This is likely to positively influence international students’ choice, satisfaction with choice, and consequently sustainable, successful marketing through word-of-mouth.

Finally, limitations in this study relate to its methodology. The original objective of the study was not to examine or develop a conceptual model, as for these, qualitative methodologists suggest grounded theory techniques. However, in the process of data analysis in this study, and as the
Peace theme strongly emerged as a district need domain not covered in traditional marketing mix need dimensions, it was imperative to reconstruct the research agenda and advance these findings. Future research into international students’ needs may test the 8Ps conceptual model proposed here statistically through data reduction methods, e.g. principal axis factoring techniques, with the objective of revealing the underlying matrix of the different need items, as well as possible correlation and intersectionality amongst need domains.

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International Undergraduates’ Retention, Graduation, and Time to Degree

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ABSTRACT

The present study tested the hypothesis that the international undergraduates at a West Coast American public university during recent years of dramatic enrollment growth should have low retention and graduation rates. This study showed instead that these students were retained and graduated at rates surpassing predictions from research and theories on international undergraduates’ unique challenges (American immigration regulations, academic integrity standards, and teaching methods; English writing) and academic struggles. Moreover, contrary to predictions related to academic struggles, the primary reasons for these students’ attrition were leave of absence for compulsory military service and deciding against attending the University. These results disconfirm the study’s hypothesis and instead suggest that these international undergraduates generally have succeeded academically.

Keywords: attrition, graduation, international students, retention, satisfaction, student success

Retention and graduation rates are important indicators of student success (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). These indicators have been defined as “the percentage of a school’s first-time, first-year undergraduate students who continue at that school the next year” and “the percentage of a school’s first-time, first-year undergraduate students who complete their program within 150% of the published time for the program,” respectively (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). In addition to their importance for student success, retention and graduation rates are used for accountability purposes (Gold & Albert, 2006), enrollment-related funding and management (Berger, Ramírez, & Lyons, 2012), and compliance with the federal Student Right to Know and Campus Security Act (Cook &
Pullaro, 2010). They also have attracted the attention of elected officials who have called for American universities to improve their students’ retention and graduation rates (Asimov & Gutierrez, 2015; Obama, 2009).

Efforts to improve retention and graduation rates at American postsecondary institutions recently have become more complicated due to the dramatic increase in their nonimmigrant international student populations. These institutions have admitted and enrolled increasing numbers of students from other countries in the years after the great recession of 2008. According to the Institute of International Education’s (IIE) annual Open Doors reports, this increase amounted to 2.9% in 2009–10, 4.7% in 2010–11, 5.7% in 2011–12, 7.2% in 2012–13, 8.1% in 2013–14, and 8.8% in 2014–15 (IIE, 2015a). First-time international undergraduates’ enrollment in American universities increased by 1.3% in 2009–10, 5.7% in 2010–11, 6.5% in 2011–12, 9.8% in 2012–13, 7.7% in 2013–14, and 3.0% in 2014–15 (IIE, 2015a).

Increased international student enrollment has led administrators, faculty, and staff at a West Coast public university (hereafter referred to as “the University”) which has been recognized for its excellence in academics and research (U.S. News and World Report, 2015) to become increasingly concerned about these students’ prospects for academic success (see also Oliver, Vanderford, & Grote, 2012). Specifically, the concern is that international undergraduates collectively struggle academically (term grade point average [GPA] below 2.0 [C]) due to English weakness (Fass-Holmes & Vaughn, 2014). Concern at the University has increased despite historically strong support for international students through a wide variety of programs and services intended to optimize these students’ satisfaction and engagement (Fass-Holmes & Vaughn, 2014), and thereby promote their retention and graduation (Tinto, 1975). To the extent that this concern is justified, however, the University’s retention and/or graduation rates could be compromised by its international undergraduates’ academic struggles.

In addressing the above concern, the primary purpose of the present study was to measure retention and graduation rates of the University’s international undergraduates, and to determine these rates’ values during the six most recent academic years (AY) when nonresident enrollment grew dramatically (Dorado & Fass-Holmes, 2016). This study’s results were expected to reveal whether these rates supported the concern that the University’s international undergraduates collectively were struggling academically. The research hypothesis was that if these students in fact were collectively struggling, then their retention and graduation rates should be commensurately low.

Two secondary purposes of this study were to measure the time to degree for the University’s international undergraduates who did graduate during the five most recent AYs, and to identify what reasons were
responsible for the University’s international undergraduates not to be retained or graduate. The time to degree measurement could further reveal the extent to which the concern about these students’ academic struggles was empirically supported. The analysis of reasons why these students were not retained and/or did not graduate also was expected to address this concern; if international undergraduates in fact were collectively struggling academically, then the ones who were not retained and/or did not graduate should have done so as a consequence of low GPAs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review addresses the following three research themes: international undergraduates’ challenges while attending American universities; retention and graduation; and international undergraduates’ academic struggles at the University. These themes provide the necessary context for the present research study’s goals as explained below.

International students’ challenges

International undergraduates (especially ones whose native language is not English) have been reported to experience various challenges which impact their success at American universities (Gautam, Lowery, Mays, & Durant, 2016; Perry, 2016). These challenges include (but are not limited to) acculturative stress (Jackson, Ray, & Bybell, 2013; Yan & Berliner, 2013), American academic integrity standards (Bista, 2011), American teaching methods (Ota, 2013; Roy, 2013), campus climate (Ota, 2013), discrimination (Ota, 2013), English language (Andrade, 2006a; Ota, 2013; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010; Yan & Berliner, 2013), family expectations (Ota, 2013), finances (Mamiseishvili, 2012; Sherry et al., 2010; Yan & Berliner, 2013), homesickness and/or loneliness (Andrade, 2006a; Ota, 2013; Sherry et al., 2010), interpersonal interactions (Roy, 2013), social norms (Ota, 2013; Sherry et al., 2010), and study practices (Yildirim, 2014). Although many of these challenges also could be experienced by domestic undergraduates, some of them uniquely affect international undergraduates.

One challenge uniquely affecting international students is English writing. All international (and some domestic) students for whom English is a second language might experience challenges with English grammar (e.g., articles, verb tenses, word order), pronunciation (e.g., consonant clusters, intonation, phonology, syllables, vowels), and/or vocabulary (e.g., phrasal verbs) (Frankfurt International School, n.d., a, b; Yin-Croft, 2012). However, students from Asian and Middle Eastern countries (who constitute a majority of all international students attending American universities; IIE, 2015b) are likely to experience unique challenges with English writing. These students’ countries have a number of localized dialects (Arab
Academy, 2010; Japanese-Language, n.d.; Languages of China, n.d.) that uniquely differ from English with regard to their written form. For example, China’s Mandarin language has a logographic system of writing (rather than an alphabet) in which characters represent whole words (Frankfurt International School, n.d., a). Arabic also differs from English in its written form, specifically its directionality (right to left) and style (cursive script without upper and lower case) (Frankfurt International School, n.d., b). These fundamental differences between Asian and Middle Eastern languages versus English could be more problematic for international students than American universities recognize (Benzie, 2010; Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, 2016; Leong, 2015; Lin & Scherz, 2014; Ren, Bryan, Min, & Wei, 2007). Asian and/or Middle Eastern students might struggle with writing even though their scores on standardized tests of English proficiency meet universities’ admissions requirements (Fass-Holmes & Vaughn, 2014; Oliver et al., 2012; Vaughn, Bergman, & Fass-Holmes, 2015). Consequently, these students’ unique challenges with English could be related to writing difficulties which, in turn, could impair performance on exams and term papers (Kuo, 2011; Unruh, 2015). Thus, the above difficulties could uniquely jeopardize international students’ graduation and/or retention.

Another challenge which international undergraduates experience at American universities, but domestic counterparts do not, is mandatory compliance with federal immigration regulations (Urias & Leakey, 2009). These students must comply with regulations for reporting to the federal government’s Student and Exchange Visitor Information System database (NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2016) which include (but are not limited to): maintaining full-time enrollment (a minimum of 12 hours) each semester or quarter; attending and passing all courses; and obtaining an extension of the official program of study’s end date if additional time is required to complete degree requirements. Non-compliance with the regulations could result in termination of the student’s Form I-20 (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2015), which consequently could result in detainment at U.S. ports of entry when the student travels (Feal, 2008). Detainment can be a frightening and/or stressful experience for international students (Mantle, 2003; Urias & Yeakey, 2005) in addition to ending and/or interrupting their educational program of study in America. International students who fail to comply with U.S. regulations therefore could experience adverse effects on their graduation and/or retention which domestic students do not.

A third challenge which international students could uniquely experience at American universities is lack of familiarity with Western academic integrity standards and/or teaching methods (Hanassab & Tidwell, 2002; Sherry et al., 2010; Simpson, 2016). Although academic integrity
standards at American universities apply to all enrolled students, internationals could be more vulnerable to violations of integrity standards than domestic counterparts (Bertram Gallant, Binkin, & Donohue, 2015). Their vulnerability, as documented in the educational research literature, has been attributed (at least in part) to a lack of familiarity with American standards for academic integrity (e.g., Lupton et al., 2000; Mori, 2000). For instance, international students reportedly are unfamiliar with plagiarism standards because of their home countries’ culture, learning methods, and teaching styles (Bista, 2011). Plagiarism standards additionally are unfamiliar to students from countries where using another person’s work as if it were one’s own is viewed as flattery or is an unintended side effect of collectivism, memorization, and group work rather than as an integrity violation (Simpson, 2016). Because American universities typically expel students found guilty of academic integrity violations, international students’ vulnerability to cheat could have serious consequences for retention and graduation (Fass-Holmes, in press).

Besides their lack of familiarity with American academic integrity standards, a fourth challenge is that international students (especially ones enrolling at a U.S. school for the first time) could be uniquely unfamiliar with American teaching methods (Smithee, Greenblatt, & Eland, 2004; Unruh, 2015). For example, international students reportedly are unfamiliar with America’s learner-centered classroom culture (Smithee et al., 2004). International students’ lack of familiarity with American teaching methods additionally is acknowledged in the federal regulations which require international students to maintain full-time enrollment every semester. These regulations specify that a reduced course load may be approved for three reasons related to academic difficulties, one of which is “unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods” (NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2016).

Retention and graduation

The above four challenges which international students uniquely experience, in addition to the ones they experience in common with domestic counterparts, would lead to the prediction that international students’ retention and graduation should be adversely affected. English writing difficulties, academic integrity violations due to unfamiliarity with American standards, and lack of familiarity with American teaching methods should contribute to international students’ academic struggles. To the extent that their struggles consequently result in poor grades and low GPAs, these students should be at risk of academic probation or disqualification (the latter would lead to dismissal). The extent to which international students consequently are dismissed for poor academic performance should lead their retention and graduation rates (respectively)
to be commensurately low because retention and graduation would be prevented by dismissal.

How can international students’ retention and graduation rates be explained or predicted, taking into account these unique challenges? Numerous student retention models and theories have been published (Aljohani, 2016), including Tinto’s Institutional Departure Model (1975), Bean’s Student Attrition Model (1980, 1982), the Student–Faculty Informal Contact Model (Pascarella, 1980), Astin’s Student Involvement Model (1984), the Non-traditional Student Attrition Model (Bean & Metzner, 1985), and the Student Retention Integrated Model (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993). These models and theories address factors and variables (e.g., affordability, lack of access to jobs, and transfer to another university) which have been shown to influence students’ decision to leave school prior to completion (Choudaha & Schulmann, 2014). However, they do not account for international students’ unique challenges because 1) the above models and theories were developed and published well before the dramatic increase following the great recession of 2008, when the numbers of international students attending American postsecondary institutions represented a fraction of total enrollment (IIE, 2015a); and 2) unlike the factors and variables which lead students to decide to leave school and which are addressed in student retention models and theories (Aljohani, 2016), these unique challenges are factors which influence universities’ decision that international students will leave school (be dismissed) prior to completion. For these two reasons, the unique challenges which affect international students are not specifically addressed in student retention models and theories (Di Maria & Kwai, 2014). These models and theories consequently would be limited in explaining and/or predicting international students’ retention and graduation.

Although student retention models and theories do not specifically account for international students’ unique challenges, numerous studies based upon these models and theories have been conducted to identify reasons why internationals decide to leave school (e.g., Andrade, 2006b; Choudaha & Schulmann, 2014; Kwai, 2009; Schulmann & Choudaha, 2014). Many of these studies reported useful qualitative information based upon interviews and/or focus groups. However, relatively few studies have been published which report quantitative data on international undergraduates’ retention or graduation rates. One example is Meagher’s (2014) internet-based interactive chart which shows 2013’s top 200 nationally ranked universities’ 6-years graduation rates for international undergraduates (ranging from Stanford University’s 100% to University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s 42%) with an average of 70%. Additional quantitative data like these for multiple entering classes, disaggregated by applicant type (first-time freshmen versus transfers), likely would be
Informative and useful to administrators, instructors, and international education researchers.

**International undergraduates’ academic struggles at the University**

The University’s increase in international student enrollment following the great recession of 2008 has led to heightened concern among administrators, faculty, and staff that their international students collectively struggle academically. This concern has intensified despite historically strong support. A diversity of mandatory and voluntary programs and services (Fass-Holmes & Vaughn, 2014) is offered to optimize international students’ academic and social integration, thereby promoting their retention and graduation (Tinto, 1975). For example, all of the University’s newly admitted international students are required to attend an orientation that includes segments on academic integrity and American teaching methods.

The concern that the University’s international undergraduates collectively struggle academically, however, has not been supported by research findings. A recent study showed instead that the mean term GPA earned by these students was 3.24–3.33 (roughly between B and B+), and that at most 10% of them struggled (term GPA below C) (Fass-Holmes & Vaughn, 2014). Moreover, the University’s international undergraduates evidently have succeeded academically despite difficulties with English; more than 60% of these students failed the University’s English writing proficiency requirement, then earned average academic marks between D+ and C- in mandatory English composition and/or English as a second language classes, yet their term GPAs (which excluded these classes) were between B and B+ (Fass-Holmes & Vaughn, 2014). These findings were met with a skepticism which responded that degree-seeking international transfer undergraduates (TRAN) who previously attended community colleges must be the academically struggling students. This skepticism also was not supported by research findings—another study showed that 1) five cohorts of TRAN earned first-year mean GPAs between B- and B, 2) less than 12% earned GPAs below C, and 3) less than 15% were in bad academic standing (probation, subject to disqualification, or dismissed) (Dorado & Fass-Holmes, 2016).

In summary, research studies on the University’s international undergraduates have not confirmed concerns that these students collectively struggle academically, that TRAN who previously attended community colleges are the ones who struggle academically or that these students choose their major field based upon its dependence upon English writing proficiency. Instead, these studies have shown that the University’s international undergraduates in general have succeeded academically. One key missing data point with regard to these students’ success, however,
would be their retention and graduation rates. These metrics of student success therefore were measured in the present study.

**Objectives**

The present research study’s primary objective was to test the hypothesis that international undergraduates attending the University during the time corresponding to the recent period of dramatic enrollment growth (Dorado & Fass-Holmes, 2016) should have low retention and graduation rates. A second objective was to measure the time to degree for the University’s international undergraduates who did graduate; if these students struggled academically, they should have required additional years to complete their degree requirements. This study’s third objective was to identify what reasons were responsible for the University’s international undergraduates to not be retained. If these students in fact were collectively struggling academically, then the ones who were not retained should have had low GPAs.

The following questions were addressed in the present study. How many and what percentage of international first-time freshmen (NFRS) and TRAN were retained in their second fall term at the University? How many and what percentage of international NFRS and TRAN graduated from the University? What reasons were responsible for NFRS and TRAN who did not graduate and/or were not retained? What percentage was due to low GPAs (academic struggling)? For all international NFRS and TRAN who graduated from the University, regardless of the cohort to which they belonged, what was their time to degree?

**RESEARCH METHOD**

**Participants, data collection, and analyses**

Demographic data for international (F-1 or J-1 visa; U.S. Department of State, n.d.) NFRS and TRAN who submitted a statement of intent to register (SIR) at the University during at least one of the fall terms of AYs 2009–10 through 2014–15, inclusive, were extracted from the University’s student information system database using structured query language programs (Vaughn et al., 2015). These six AYs’ data were used in the present study because they were the most recent ones for which retention data were available, and because they coincided with the University’s dramatic increase in international undergraduate enrollment (Dorado & Fass-Holmes, 2016). The resulting records contained each student’s unique campus ID plus values for demographic variables of interest—academic status, admit term/year, applicant decision (SIR), applicant type (NFRS or TRAN), class (freshman, etc.), citizenship country, degree conferred, department, education level (undergraduate), gender, major, registration
status, term, and visa type; these records were organized in a spreadsheet file. To determine the reason why any given student was not retained, advisors’ notes in the student records within the University’s international students office’s internal database were inspected and the relevant information was entered into the above spreadsheet. Confidentiality was ensured by following IRB approved procedures which involved encryption and statistical analysis of the spreadsheet’s contents on a secured computer. Descriptive statistical analyses in spreadsheet software consisted of computing counts and percentages disaggregated by the above demographic variables as appropriate.

To compute counts and percentages for retention rates, each cohort’s records were extracted from the University’s student information system database for the initial fall term when the cohort’s members submitted SIRs after receiving an admission offer. The cohort members’ IDs then were used to match against extractions for the following AY’s fall term; the match had as an additional condition that records for the following fall term had to have a registration status code indicating enrollment in and payment for classes. Therefore, cohort members who were retained in the following AY’s fall term had a record in that extraction, cohort members who were not retained did not. Quality controls ensured that cohort members with double majors or multiple records were not double-counted. Computations then were based upon the number of records in the initial extraction (SIRs) versus the corresponding number which had matching IDs between the initial and following fall terms’ extractions. Cohort members with conferred degrees were excluded from retention rate computations because they no longer were eligible to be retained.

This method was based upon an operational definition of “retention” (using number of SIRs) which underestimated retention rates and differed from the conventional one (the percentage of a school’s first-time, first-year undergraduate students who continue at that school the next year; U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). It was used, however, to account for admitted international undergraduates who decided against attending the University in the initial fall terms (along with counterparts who left the University in the following fall terms because of finances, better fit at another institution, location, etc.; Choudaha & Schulmann, 2014; Schulmann & Choudaha, 2014). These students were quantified in this study’s attrition analysis of reasons why students were not retained.

To compute counts and percentages for graduation rates, the cohort members’ IDs in the above initial fall term records were used for matching against IDs in extractions from the University’s student information system’s database of conferred degrees. This was done for AYs up to and including 2014–15 (the most recent AY for which conferred degrees data were available at the time of this study).
each student’s unique campus ID plus values for the demographic variables of interest (see above). Quality controls ensured that cohort members with double majors or multiple records were not double-counted. Computations then were based upon the number of records in the initial extraction versus the corresponding number which had matching IDs between the initial fall term’s extractions and the extraction from the degrees conferred database. Because the conventional amount of time for NFRS to complete degree requirements was 4 years and for TRAN was 2 years, the FA13 and FA14 cohorts’ graduation rates were expected to be low due primarily to insufficient time.

Time to degree was computed by extracting all international undergraduates’ records from the University’s student information system’s database of conferred degrees, regardless of the cohort to which they belonged. The resulting records contained each student’s unique campus ID plus values for demographic variables of interest which included admit term/year, applicant type (NFRS or TRAN), degree type, degree conferred term/year, education level (undergraduate), graduation date, and visa type. Students with double majors were counted twice—once for each degree conferred. Computations of time to degree (total number of years) were based upon the admit term/year value and degree conferred term/year value. Numbers of international undergraduates, mean times to degree, and standard deviations were computed for ones who graduated in AY 2010–11 (regardless of their admit term/year), in AY 2011–12 (regardless of their admit term/year), and so on through AY 2014–15 (the most recent year for which degrees conferred data were available at the time of this study). These computed values then were disaggregated by applicant type (NFRS vs. TRAN).

RESULTS

The total number of international undergraduates in each of the present study’s six cohorts, disaggregated by applicant type (NFRS vs. TRAN), is shown in Figure 1. The fall 2009 (FA09) cohort had the smallest numbers of NFRS and TRAN; the fall 2014 (FA14) cohort had the largest. FA09, fall 2010 (FA10), and fall 2011 (FA11) cohorts had smaller numbers of NFRS than TRAN. However, this pattern reversed beginning with the fall 2012 (FA12) cohort—it had a larger number of NFRS than TRAN—and continued in the fall 2013 (FA13) and FA14 cohorts. The FA13 and FA14 NFRS cohorts both were more than 15 times larger than their FA09 counterpart. By contrast, the FA13 and FA14 TRAN cohorts both were less than 3 times as large as their FA09 counterpart.
Retention

Retention rates for each of this study’s six cohorts, disaggregated by applicant type (NFRS vs. TRAN), are shown in Figure 2. These rates ranged from just under 85% to 94% for NFRS, and from 84% to 90% for TRAN. Thus, at least 84% of the NFRS or TRAN who submitted SIRs were registered for classes in the fall term of the AY following their admit term/year at the University. The FA09 cohort had the highest NFRS retention rate; the FA14 cohort had the highest TRAN retention rate. Each cohort’s NFRS retention rate was slightly higher than TRAN.

Graduation

Graduation rates for each of this study’s six cohorts, disaggregated by applicant type (NFRS vs. TRAN), are shown in Figure 3. These values ranged from 0% (1- and 2-year rates) to just under 83% (6-year rate) for NFRS, and from just under 1% (1-year rate) to just under 92% (5-year rate) for TRAN. Thus, up to about 83% of the NFRS and 92% of the TRAN in this study’s cohorts had graduated by the end of AY 2014–15. The FA09 cohort had the highest NFRS graduation rate (6 years); the FA10 cohort had...
the highest TRAN graduation rate (5 years). NFRS graduation rates were lower than TRAN for each cohort.

*Figure 3. Graduation rates of international undergraduates at the University, disaggregated by applicant type. Values above the bars are percentages; ones at the bottom are counts. For each of the study’s six cohorts of first-time freshmen (NFRS) and transfers (TRAN), this figure shows the percentage who graduated by the end of academic year 2014–15.*

Abbreviations: FA09=fall 2009; FA10=fall 2010; FA11=fall 2011, FA12=fall 2012; FA13=fall 2013; FA14=fall 2014

**Attrition**

The graph in Figure 4 shows NFRS attrition data disaggregated by cohort. The number of NFRS who were not retained in the fall term following their admit term/year ranged from 3 (FA09 cohort) to 89 (FA12 cohort). The lowest percentage of these NFRS was 5.8 (FA09 cohort) and the highest was 15.2 (FA11 cohort). Thus, a maximum of about 15% of the NFRS in this study’s cohorts was not retained. The two most frequent attrition reasons were leave of absence to serve in the military (South Korean males) and decided not to attend the University (i.e., NFRS who submitted SIRs but never attended classes at the University). Poor academic performance (resulting in disqualification or subject to disqualification) was the third most frequent reason. Other reasons were transferred to another institution, stopped attending the University, and academic dishonesty. For each of these reasons, within each cohort, the percentage was 5% or less (data displays available from the author upon request).

*Figure 4. International first-time freshmen’s (NFRS) attrition rates and reasons for not being retained at the University. Values above the bars in the top graph represent counts; all others represent percentages. For each of the study’s six NFRS cohorts, this figure shows the numbers (grey bars) and percentages (line) who were not retained in the fall following their admit term/year. Abbreviations: FA09=fall 2009; FA10=fall 2010; FA11=fall 2011, FA12=fall 2012; FA13=fall 2013; FA14=fall 2014*
Figure 5 shows TRAN attrition data disaggregated by cohort. The number of TRAN who were not retained in the fall term following their admit term/year ranged from 33 (FA10 cohort) to 63 (FA11 and FA13 cohorts). The lowest percentage of these TRAN was 11.3 (FA10 cohort) and the highest was 16.6 (FA11 cohort). Thus, a maximum of about 17% of the TRAN in this study’s cohorts was not retained. The two most frequent attrition reasons were decided not to attend the University (i.e., TRAN who submitted SIRs but never attended classes at the University) and leave of absence to serve in the military (South Korean males). Poor academic performance (resulting in disqualification or subject to disqualification) was the third most frequent reason. Other reasons were academic dishonesty, transferred to another institution, and stopped attending the University. For each of these reasons, within each cohort, the percentage was 5% or less (data displays available from the author upon request).

Time to degree

The average number of years for degrees to be conferred to the University’s international undergraduates who graduated between AY 2010–11 and 2014–15, inclusive, disaggregated by applicant type (NFRS vs. TRAN), are shown in Figure 6. The time to degree averaged less than 4 years for NFRS and about 2 years for TRAN. Degrees were conferred in an average of 3.6 years to NFRS who graduated in AY 2013–14 or AY 2014–15; 3.7 years to NFRS who graduated in AY 2010–11; and 3.8 years to NFRS who graduated in AY 2011–12 or AY 2012–13. Degrees were conferred in an average of 1.9 years to TRAN who graduated in AY 2012–13, 2013–14, or 2014–15; 2.0 years to TRAN who graduated in AY 2011–12; and 2.1 years to TRAN who graduated in AY 2010–11. The annual number of NFRS to whom degrees were conferred between AY 2010–11 and 2014–15, inclusive, ranged from a low of 45 (AY 2011–12) to a high of
212 (AY 2014–15). The corresponding TRAN values were 223 (AY 2010–11) and 300 (AY 2013–14).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study was conducted to achieve three goals. The first goal was to test the hypothesis that international undergraduates attending the University during the recent period of dramatic enrollment growth would have low retention and graduation rates. If this hypothesis were confirmed, it would support the concern of administrators, faculty, and staff that the University’s international undergraduates collectively were struggling academically. A second goal was to measure the time to degree for the University’s international undergraduates who graduated during the five most recent AYs. This measurement could provide further support for the concern about these students’ academic struggles. The present study’s third goal was to identify what reasons were responsible for attrition of the University’s international undergraduates. If these students in fact were collectively struggling academically, then the ones who were not retained and/or did not graduate should have done so primarily (if not exclusively) as a consequence of low GPAs.

To achieve the above goals, the following four questions were addressed. First, for this study’s six cohorts, how many and what percentage of the University’s international NFRS and TRAN were retained in their second fall term? The cohorts’ number of retained NFRS ranged from a low of 49 to a high of 855 and the percentage ranged from a low just under 85% to a high of 94%. The corresponding values for TRAN ranged from 228 to 449 and from 84% to 90%, respectively. These findings indicated that the University’s international undergraduates were retained to a higher degree than what would be expected if 1) these students collectively were struggling academically, and 2) TRAN were inadequately prepared for the University’s academic rigor.

Second, for this study’s six cohorts, how many and what percentage of international NFRS and TRAN graduated from the University? The
cohorts’ number and percentage of NFRS with conferred degrees ranged from a low of 0 to a high of 173 and from a low of 0% (1- and 2-year graduation rates) to a high just under 83% (6-year rate), respectively. The corresponding values for TRAN ranged from 3 to 314 and from just under 1% (1-year rate) to just under 92% (5-year rate), respectively. These findings similarly indicated that the University’s international undergraduates graduated to a higher degree than what would be expected.

Third, what reasons were responsible for the University’s NFRS and TRAN who did not graduate and/or were not retained? What percentage was due to low GPAs (academic struggling)? The two most frequent attrition reasons were leave of absence to serve in the military (South Korean males) and decided not to attend the University (i.e., NFRS and TRAN who submitted SIRs but never attended classes at the University). Poor academic performance was the third most frequent reason. The number of NFRS who were not retained in their second year at the University ranged from 3 to 89, and the percentages ranged from 5.8 to 15.2. Corresponding values for TRAN were 33 to 63 and 11.3% to 16.6%. These findings, like the ones above, are inconsistent with what would be expected.

Lastly, for all international NFRS and TRAN who graduated from the University, regardless of the cohort to which they belonged, what was their time to degree? These students’ time to degree averaged less than 4 years for NFRS and about 2 years for TRAN. By convention, first-time freshmen would be expected to take 4 years (freshman through senior years, inclusive) to complete their program of study and graduate; transfer students would be expected to take 2 years (junior and senior years). The University’s NFRS and TRAN therefore, on average, slightly bettered or met the conventional time to degree. This finding, like the others in the present study, did not confirm expectations.

The present study supported the conclusion that answers to the above four research questions, taken together, disconfirmed the hypothesis that international undergraduates attending the University during the recent period of dramatic enrollment growth would have low retention and graduation rates. Additionally and importantly, this study’s attrition analysis supported the conclusion that low GPA leading to dismissal was neither the exclusive nor primary reason why NFRS and TRAN did not graduate and/or were not retained. Instead, leave of absence for compulsory service in South Korea’s military (Conscription in South Korea, n.d.) and decided not to attend classes at the University (i.e., NFRS and TRAN who submitted SIRs but never enrolled at the University) were the two most frequent attrition reasons these students. The present findings therefore are consistent with previous ones (Dorado & Fass-Holmes, 2016; Fass-Holmes & Vaughn, 2014, 2015) (see also Korobova, & Starobin, 2015; Mamiseishvili, 2012; Meagher, 2014) and support the conclusion that the University’s
international undergraduates generally have succeeded academically rather than struggled.

Concerns among the University’s administrators, faculty, and staff that international undergraduates collectively struggle academically have been accompanied by concerns about widespread cheating (Bertram Gallant et al., 2015; Fass-Holmes & Dorado, unpublished observations; Fass-Holmes & Vaughn, 2014, 2015). These concerns could be interrelated; anecdotal evidence suggests that administrators, faculty, and staff think their international students collectively struggle academically due to English weakness and therefore collectively resort to violating academic integrity policies (Fass-Holmes & Dorado, unpublished observations). Although recent findings do not support the view that cheating is widespread among the University’s international students (Fass-Holmes, in press), the present results possibly could be explained by cheating. Additional research will be necessary to test this possibility.

Two notable limitations must be taken into consideration with regard to the above conclusions. The first is that, since this study focuses on a single university, these findings’ generalizability and interpretation are limited. Studies at other universities will be needed to determine generalizability. The second limitation is that insufficient time has elapsed to measure the graduation rate of the University’s two most recent NFRS and TRAN cohorts (which also are its largest). Analyses comparable to the ones in the present study will need to be repeated for the FA13 and FA14 cohorts over several more years to measure 5- and 6-year graduation rates for NFRS, and 2- and 3-year rates for TRAN.

IMPLICATIONS

The present results have administrative, policy, and theoretical implications. An administrative implication pertains to programs and services intended to optimize student engagement and satisfaction which, in turn, promote retention and graduation. The concept of engagement refers to students’ involvement or interest in learning and their connectedness to their classes, institutions, and each other (Axelson & Flick, 2010). Numerous studies have shown that undergraduates’ learning is enhanced when they are educationally engaged/involved (e.g., Kuh, 2003; Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005), and that engagement is essential for student retention (Astin, 1984; Tinto, 2007). The concept of satisfaction refers to the quality of experience with instruction, curriculum, faculty, other students, the administration, and facilities (Astin, 1993). Satisfaction also is essential for student success (Astin, 1993) and positively associated with retention (Elliott & Healy, 2001; Korobova & Starobin, 2015; Schertzer & Schertzer, 2004). To the extent that international students’ retention and graduation rates reflect their
level of engagement and satisfaction, administrators could decide to maintain (rather than adjust) the level of relevant support programs and services (e.g., Yan & Sendall, 2016). This would be prudent, to ensure that scarce state funding and/or other limited resources are allocated optimally.

Another administrative implication of the present findings pertains to the use of retention and graduation rates for accountability purposes (Gold & Albert, 2006). Results of the attrition reasons analysis raise the question of whether the University, which has substantial numbers of South Korean male students (Dorado & Fass-Holmes, 2016), should be held accountable for the negative impact of these students’ early departure on the school’s retention and graduation rates. This question also would be relevant for the NFRS and TRAN who submitted SIRs but then did not enroll at the University. Although the latter students by definition were not “retained” since they did not enroll during their admit year (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.), they chose not to enroll for at least some of the same reasons why enrolled counterparts would not be retained in the following year—finances, better fit at another institution, location, etc. (Choudaha & Schulmann, 2014; Schulmann & Choudaha, 2014). The University’s retention and graduation rates would look more favorable than those in the present study if these two groups of students (South Korean males; ones who submitted SIRs but did not enroll) were excluded from the rates’ computations.

If universities should not be held accountable for South Korean males, students who submit SIRs but never attend, and/or any other group of internationals whose circumstances are outside of the school’s control, then what policy should be adopted accordingly? One possibility would be to implement a policy which denies admission to all South Korean male applicants eligible for compulsory military service. Such a policy would be discriminatory, however. Another possibility would be to continue admitting qualified South Korean male applicants, but exclude them from retention and graduation rates’ computations. This possibility also would be discriminatory, however, and it additionally could be impractical for higher education institutions with substantial numbers of such students and/or could have implications for compliance with the federal Student Right to Know and Campus Security Act (Cook & Pullaro, 2010). A third possibility would be to continue admitting such students and including them in retention and graduation rate computations, but also compute and report comparison values without them.

A theoretical implication of the present study pertains to student retention models (e.g., Astin, 1984; Bean, 1980, 1982; Tinto, 1975). These models address factors and variables (such as affordability, lack of access to jobs, and transfer to another university) which have been shown to influence students’ decision to leave school prior to completion (Choudaha &
Schulmann, 2014). However, they do not account for international students’ unique challenges—English writing (Benzie, 2010; Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, 2016; Leong, 2015; Lin & Scherz, 2014; Ren et al., 2007), mandatory compliance with federal immigration regulations (Urias & Leakey, 2009), and lack of familiarity with Western academic integrity standards and/or teaching methods (Hanassab & Tidwell, 2002; Sherry et al., 2010; Simpson, 2016). To the extent that the University’s NFRS and TRAN cohorts in this study were affected by these unique challenges, they nevertheless were successful as evidenced by their retention rate, graduation rate, and time to degree. Additional research will be needed to determine the extent to which international students’ retention, graduation, and/or time to degree in fact are affected by these unique challenges. They potentially then could be accounted for in retention models and theories.

In summary, the present study’s findings have administrative, policy, and theoretical implications. The administrative implications pertain to programs and services intended to optimize student engagement and satisfaction and consequently promote retention and graduation, the policy implications pertain to South Korean males and other groups of internationals whose circumstances leading to early departure are beyond a school’s control, and the theoretical implications pertain to the potential effect of international students’ unique challenges on retention and graduation. Despite this study’s limitation to a single higher education institution, it could serve as a model for other American universities to replicate and use in making data-driven decisions about administration, policy, and organizational strategy which affect international students.

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ABSTRACT

In 2011, Aoyama Gakuin University (AGU) started a government-funded degree program (taught in English) to accept international students with limited or no Japanese language proficiency. However, the students faced obstacles in accessing all of the university resources provided. In this article, I investigated Japanese language as an organizational barrier for students accessing to campus resources. I utilized the case study methodology through participatory observation on campus and face-to-face interviews.

Keywords: International Student Services, Internationalization of Japanese Universities, Managing Diversity, Organizational Analysis
The issue of a language barrier when working with international students has been prevalent at AGU since 2011 when I was appointed as a faculty member working directly with English-speaking international students in a government-funded graduate program. As the program faculty coordinator, my primary responsibility was to improve the students’ academic and social experience and ensure the successful completion of their studies by designing, implementing, and evaluating international student service activities. The students spoke of their difficulties navigating AGU without Japanese language proficiency. Since part of the funding agreement between AGU and the grant agency included program evaluation, the author integrated a monitoring and evaluation strategy for programmatic change by systematically collecting and analyzing data for existing organizational challenges. Having employed Lewin’s Force Field Analysis (1951) as an analytical framework, the author set out to investigate the driving and restraining forces that impact international students’ challenges caused by the language barrier at the university. The goal of this study aimed at remedying international students’ difficulty in accessing resources in the English-taught program. At the same time, he questioned AGU’s commitment to internationalization without having a comprehensive vision on improving student services for English-speaking international students.

I first examined existing literature related to the internationalization of Japanese higher education by closely looking at issues related to Japanese language as an organizational barrier for international students. International students spoke of the Japanese language as one of the major challenges for their experience in living and studying in Japan (Hiratsuka, et al, 2016). Lewin (1951) argued that driving and restraining forces exist in the defined field as his theory analyzes organizational changes by examining these forces. Altbach and Knight (2007) argued that internationalization becomes a reform strategy to respond to external forces among universities. Knight (1997) argued the internationalization of higher education is a process which drives the integration of international and intercultural dimensions into research, teaching, and services within university functions. Zha (2004) summarized a different area of issues pertaining to the internationalization of higher education including organizational aspects. Hiratsuka (2016) classified Japanese universities as Type II (Closed Natural) Organization based on Scott’s organizational theory (1992) which explains that a characteristic of Type II Organizations includes internal resource coordination within organizational boundaries to meet the challenge of external realities. However, the current literature on Japanese universities’ internationalization is often limited to the government policies on internationalization and higher education (Hiratsuka, 2016). Several studies pointed to organizational issues such as governance (Murasawa, et al., 2014; Yonezawa, 2013) but did not address internationalization. The only existing
literature on the organizational analysis of Japanese universities’ internationalization process includes organizational dynamics (Breaden, 2012), intercultural conflict resolution in an academic organization (Ottman & Rogers, 2010) and organizational analysis of internationalization on a consortium of internationally-oriented Japanese universities (Hiratsuka, 2016). After reviewing the literature, I concluded that only a limited amount of literature exists that analyzes Japanese universities’ internationalization at the organizational level. The literature review suggests that describing the case of a particular Japanese university to serve as an example of the current status of internationalization in Japan would make a contribution to the field.

The purpose of this article is to present a descriptive case study of Aoyama Gakuin University by identifying the Japanese language as an organizational barrier for international students with limited or no Japanese proficiency to access to university resources. Since limited studies include organizational studies of Japanese universities, this study contributes to three main goals by diagnosing AGU’s structural problem related to the Japanese language as an organizational barrier for international students: 1) developing a program-level strategy to improve international students’ access to university resources 2) influencing AGU’s internationalization policy formation through an evidence-based approach by affirming AGU’s commitment to providing assistance to international students, 3) presenting AGU as a descriptive case of Japanese internationalization in higher education to contribute to the current literature.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This study’s design is qualitative by employing a case study as its main methodological framework (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). In order to increase its quality, the study also followed the general guidance of a qualitative study by Creswell (2014). The study focuses on Aoyama Gakuin University as a case and the unit of analysis is based on decision criteria, common and revelatory, suggested by Yin (2014, p. 51-52). I collected data from three different sources: field notes from direct observation on campus, a focus group with the international students in the program, and in-person interviews with three different AGU departments.

As the Faculty Coordinator of a scholarship program at Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo from 2011 to 2014, I managed a scholarship program, and worked directly with graduate international students in the program. This study comes from my professional practice as an international student advisor. The university at which I hold a faculty appointment as Faculty Coordinator and Assistant Professor, is a private university according to the MEXT classification (2012). In 2011, AGU developed and
opened an English-taught graduate degree program after receiving a request from a government ministry in Japan to fund a graduate degree program for international students. For its preparation, I was involved in a project for assessing the organizational condition of Aoyama Gakuin University; later, I was appointed as the Faculty Coordinator to manage the daily program operation.

Although the Tohoku earthquake in 2011 delayed the first phase of data collection in 2011 (originally planned for March, 2011), I conducted direct observation on campus regarding English accessibility at the beginning of the academic year 2011 under the supervision of a senior faculty member at AGU. From 2014 to 2016, I participated in collecting data for an organizational study funded and supervised by AGU’s Faculty Development Department. First, I collected the data through direct observation by composing the field notes with photos to identify potential areas and locations on campus where possible language barriers existed. The student volunteers assisted me to gather data on the university’s campus facilities, buildings, and services departments. Second, I gathered data by using a focus group of 10 international students, and in-person interviews with three (3) staff from the International Exchange Center (ICE).

This study draws on one analytical strategy and one technique proposed by Yin (2014): a case description development strategy and an organizational level logic model. As a descriptive case study, this study’s analysis focused on a common and revelatory purpose, and the case description served as the main goal of data analysis and interpretation. As a result of the data analysis, I generated a logic model to summatively describe the organizational barriers of AGU in terms of language access. All analysis was conducted in English.

I was certainly aware of some methodological challenges, and made continuous efforts to critically evaluate analytical processes throughout the study to meet the criteria for Case Study and its methodological validities and reliability (Yin, 2014). Needless to say, such qualitative research design comes with its limitations; in order to minimize their impact, specific measures including triangulation and peer debriefing (Creswell, 2014) have been implemented to maintain methodological validities.

RESULTS

Direct Observation Field Notes

The study’s field notes from direct observation demonstrated Japanese language as an organizational barrier in a variety of locations throughout the AGU campus. The result illustrated organizational-wide language barriers that prevent the international students without Japanese reading proficiency from accessing university resources. For example, trash bins have written instructions regarding four different materials. Without
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus Locations</th>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Japanese Notations Only (English Translation by the PI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Campus-Wide      | Trash Bins | びん・缶 (Glass Bottles, Cans)  
ペットボトル (Plastic Bottles)  
燃えるごみ (Combustibles)  
燃えないゴミ (Non-combustibles) |
| Classrooms Signs | 受講上の注意 (Classroom Conducts and Disruptive Behaviors) |
| Emergency Escape Instructions and Map | 非常用はしごの使い方 (Emergency Escape Ladder Instruction)  
非常時の避難経路 (Emergency Exit Path Instruction) |
| Library          | Building Signs | 購買会 (Campus Bookstore)  
一号館〜十七号館 (Building #1~17) |
|                   | Library Homepage | 調べる・さがす (Search Instructions)  
Aurora-OPAC |
|                   | Search Engines | [蔵書検索] (Publication Search)  
選択してください (Function Selections) |
|                   | Xerox Machine Instructions | スタート (Copy)  
ストップ (Stop)  
リセット (Reset) |
| Cafeteria Areas  | Washrooms | 男性トイレ (Male Washrooms)  
女性トイレ (Female Washrooms) |
| (Building #7 Basement Floor and #17 Ground Floor) | Washroom Directions |  
Food Ticket Machines | メニューと食材 (Food Menu and Ingredients)  
返却場所 (Dishes Return Location) |
| University Gym   | Building Signs, Warnings, and Instructions | 大学体育館地下地図 (University Gym Basement Floor Map)  
更衣室 (Changing Room)  
更衣室盗難注意 (Warning Signs for Pick-pockets)  
トレーニングルーム使用上の注意 (Weight Room Instructions) |

Japanese reading proficiency, the international students will not be able to follow the proper instructions for the trash bin. The below table illustrates only the most common examples. Although photos were taken during the direct observation, they are excluded from the table due to space limitations.
Interviews with AGU’s Staff Members

The staff members recognized Japanese language exists as an organizational barrier for international students, and they identified the barrier as a challenge for serving international students.

### TABLE 2:
AGU’s Barriers and Facilitators Recognized by AGU Staff Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Departments</th>
<th>Barriers (Japanese language)</th>
<th>Facilitators (English language)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Exchange Center (IEC)</td>
<td>Automated Interface Units Technology (ICT) Student Services Information University Signs Tests and Exams Crisis Prevention and Management</td>
<td>Communicate to the international students directly by email (not Portal) ICE staff members translate all necessary information Advocacy in administrative meetings to the responsible university faculty and staff Resident Assistant at the dormitory ICE staff members include the crisis management in the international student orientation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cafeteria</td>
<td>Menu and Ingredients Used Dishes &amp; Cups Return Message Boards Emergency Exit Signs Emergency Maps Automated External Defibrillator (AED)</td>
<td>Identification by numbers and pictures (i.e. beef, pork, chicken)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, International Exchange Center (IEC) and Library staff members explained that Automated Interface Units (Xerox machines, student certification machines, and cafeteria ticket machines), Information Communication Technology (university website, university portal) and student services information (dormitory, social events, student ID card, lost & found, fitness center) are all in Japanese; they recognized that the language barrier limits access to services for the international students. The major part of the IEC staff assistance focuses on translating them to the students. These staff members also recognized their function as facilitators who assist the international students when they provide services in English. The interview data verified the existence of Japanese language as a barrier and English language as a facilitator for the English-speaking international students.
Focus Group with International Students

The focus group data illustrated Japanese language as a barrier in two ways. First, the international students confirmed the locations of the barrier at AGU as identified in the observation field notes. Second, they explained their difficulty of overcoming the barrier and expressed their frustration for not being able to access university resources without Japanese language proficiency. During the interview, some international students explained that assistance from individual staff members and students with English proficiency assisted them to overcome the existing barrier and increase access to university resources.

TABLE 3: AGU’s Language Barriers and Facilitators Recognized by International Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Departments</th>
<th>Barriers (Japanese language)</th>
<th>Facilitators (English language)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Affairs</td>
<td>Educational and Social Events and Information</td>
<td>Two staff members’ assistance at the Education Affairs. A staff member at the study room provide verbal assistance to operate equipment ATM (a bilingual operation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Automated Interface Units and their Instructions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>No Sign/Instruction English Journal Subscription Information</td>
<td>One reference librarian provided instruction verbally/written when available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cafeteria</td>
<td>Cafeteria Ticket Machines</td>
<td>The 7th building menu is in English; but still not sure about the dish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Menu in the 17th building</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gym</td>
<td>Operation hours The fitness center machine instruction handout</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Communication Technology (ICT)</td>
<td>University Website University Portal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Clinic</td>
<td>Doctors and Nurses Medicine</td>
<td>Staff from Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE) assistance A local hospital with medical translator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Japanese Language as a Structural Barrier in the Organization

The language barrier exists through the sole use of the written Japanese language on physical and technological structures of the university. International students therefore have no or little access to the university resources and critical information by themselves without reading proficiency in Japanese. As a result, the international students not only lack access to university resources but also sometimes lose out on some benefits available at AGU.

According to the IEC staff, the inability to independently access to university resources frustrates many international students. For example, the IEC staff members spend significant amount of time to explain and answer questions related to university resources by simply translating these structural functions into English for the international students. One of the students described the sense of isolation in their experience at AGU by stating, they are “almost an island here” (focus group, 2014). The Japanese language as a structural barrier, therefore, functions as an instrument of exclusion for the international students in regard to a variety of university services, facilities, and information.

Japanese language also functions as a structural barrier by unfairly contributing to communication breakdown when formal communication channels prevent the necessary university information from reaching to the international students. For example, one of the librarians indicated that the international students can access the major journal database through the library website without any additional costs, and the library even has English instructions available. However, the homepage only appears in Japanese, and one must go through several pages to get to such resources in English. Therefore, one international student explained that he purchased an article for his thesis, and did not know about the subscription available at the university library. Another student explained, “People only speak Japanese, and I am discouraged” (focus group, 2014).

In certain cases, a breakdown in communication can cause safety problems for the international students. Some international students come from places without earthquakes or typhoons. One student struggled to come to attend his class, and found out that the classes were cancelled due to a typhoon. These international students have no way of understanding the weather and emergency information on the university website without the reading proficiency in Japanese. The IEC staff are very concerned with this issue at the university. The IEC staff include some Bousai (防災/emergency preparation) activities in English during the annual international student orientation at their own discretion, but cannot include the larger university emergency plan in English because it does exist. They also cannot provide real-time messages in English during an emergency situation.
English Language Speaker as Relational Facilitator

Although limited in their availability and varied in proficiency, some staff and students speak English to assist international students. When available or accessible, these staff members or students translate information, and provide greater access to services and facilities on campus to the international students. For example, the IEC staff function as a major relational facilitator on campus by providing necessary translation for all university services. A few staff members in the library and the Educational Affairs office also provide general educational and administrative services in English. While their principle for serving international students focuses on answering questions by the international students at IEC, they may not be equipped to answer all questions at AGU. International students expressed their appreciation for assistance no matter how limited, their level of satisfaction with their experience changed positively when the English assistance was available to them. English-speaking students and staff members serve as relational facilitators for the international students on campus.

DISCUSSION

The current concern is the concentrated reliance on only a few departments and individuals on campus to assist English-speaking international students. IEC staff members play a primary role for assisting all AGU international students, but the IEC staff only can assist the international students so much. Some other staff members and students speak English on campus, but their voluntary assistance is not only unfair burden for them, but also is an inefficient way to provide university resources for the international students. The host university, in this case AGU, must provide university resources and services to all students regardless of their language proficiencies once enrolled.

I recognized possible existence of issues related to university members’ competencies for intercultural effectiveness. AGU departments are sometimes unwilling or unable to interact with students from cultures other than Japanese culture. This inability to work effectively across cultures presents a challenge for AGU. The IEC staff recognized that staff members in other departments are often unwilling to interact with international students, and the IEC staff often receives phone calls from the departments for the international students. Unwillingness and/or inability to assist the international students at AGU raises an issue of AGU faculty and staff members’ competencies for intercultural effectiveness.

The study’s rich data left some interesting future possibilities for additional studies. As the original objective of this study focused on analyzing Japanese language as an organizational barrier for international
students, the study excluded data on issues related to cultural barriers and managing campus diversity. For example, through my direct observation and an interview with cafeteria’s dietitian it became clear that 90% of the food menu items included pork products, providing very little options for students who do not eat pork for dietary or religious reasons. Currently, AGU, a Methodist affiliated university, has begun to accept international students from countries with large Islamic populations. Additional studies could uncover further issues related to cultural barriers and managing diversity in order to improve international students’ lives on campus and enlighten the future of AGU’s internationalization strategies.

Interpersonal competencies for intercultural effectiveness often focus on one’s ability to build a bridge across cultural differences, and lacking such competencies among the host university members could function as a cultural barrier. Cultural barriers function as blind spots for the host university faculty and staff. For example, according to the IEC staff, tests and exams were designed in Japanese, and the international students could not answer them. Some courses were taught in English, but the class references and resource materials contain information in Japanese, according to one international student (a student comment in the focus group, 2014). Such cultural barriers possibly may signal the use of exclusive behaviors by the host university members, and may be perceived as prejudicial and/or discriminatory behaviors.

CONCLUSION

While the push for the internationalization of higher education has been driving Japanese universities to establish English-taught degree programs to attract more international students, universities services often do not provide information in English. Indeed, international students at Japanese universities clearly indicated that the Japanese language was one of their major challenges for studying and living in Japan (Hiratsuka, et al, 2016). The students require more assistance to ensure their success beyond simply offering English-taught courses and degrees.

The study provided evidence that the Japanese language exists as an organizational barrier for international students in the government-funded program at AGU through a summative evaluation. This study also provided evidence to articulate the existing organizational problem for the internationalization of higher education, and helped formulate a program-level strategy to facilitate access to the university resources to ensure international students’ success in the program. There is a need, however, for AGU to formulate comprehensive internationalization strategies to further drive university reform in order to effectively manage student diversity.
REFERENCES


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ABSTRACT

Drawn on the sociocultural paradigm, I examined teacher-student communication with emphasis on teacher’s talk and its role on international students’ learning English as a Second Language in an English for Academic Purposes classroom in a global campus in the U.S. Developmental data analyses of class observations, teacher and student interviews, and documents led to finding multidimensional characteristics of Critical Teacher Talk (CTT). I also found evidence of the role of CTT on production-process-affective aspects of learning English as an International Language. The findings further shed insights on the need to train and practice Critical International Language Pedagogy with the triadic principles—transnational culture building, critical caring, and authentic learning—among international higher education educators and teacher-educators.

Keywords: English as a Second Language, English as an International Language, English for Academic Purposes, global education, international higher education, multilingualism, teacher-student communication

Spurred by economic and technological globalization (Stromquist, 2007), colleges and universities worldwide participate strategically in growing internationalization as “process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension in the purpose, function, or delivery of postsecondary education” (Knight, 2003, p. 2). Cross-border international student mobility is a major form of transnational higher education worldwide (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2004). Accordingly, higher
education in the U.S. as a global model for contemporary international higher education encounters new impact on policies and practices as the worldwide trends of accelerating globalization (Altbach & Knight, 2007) and ensuing internationalization (Stromquist, 2007) are expected to continue. In particular, considering international student enrollments in colleges and universities in the U.S. that mark continual records high during the 2006-2015 period (Institute of International Education, IIE, 2015), economic, academic, and cultural benefits of transnational student mobility foresee unprecedented growth (NAFSA, n.d.).

However, it begs a question whether institutions’ and educators’ readiness and success keep pace with the current international student mobility trend. Further, it is worth noting that little mainstream attention is paid to non-degree students including those enrolled in Intensive English programs whereas the majority of the international students study for their academic degrees. Considering the fact that Intensive English for Academic Purposes is ranked the seventh in top fields of study of international students, it is a tall order to include in the strategic efforts to envision higher education practices the need of the neglected population of 49,233 students, 5% of total international students, a 13.3 percent increase from the previous year (IIE, 2015).

Thus, this study aims to explore the key features of successful English for Academic Purposes (EAP) educational practices in class with international learners of English as a Second Language (ESL). The overarching questions that guided this study follow:

1. What is the nature of teacher-student verbal interaction during EAP classroom instructional time?
2. In what ways, if any, does the teacher’s talk influence international students’ learning English?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Language proficiency is understood from the pedagogical standpoint as ‘process’—mediated by a myriad of individual and sociocultural factors—in the continuum of developing “mastery of skills and knowledge” (Ravitch, 2007, p. 173) for a target language, rather than a permanent end-state of a given linguistic ability. Motivated by first and second language acquisition literature on caretaker speech and foreigner talk (Ferguson, 1975), teacher talk, as a conceptual construct, means teacher’s speech adjusted as a function of the proficiency of language learners in teaching and learning contexts (Gass & Selinker, 2008). As such, teacher talk needs to be conceptualized in the perspective of ‘development’ to respond to the multivoiced complexities of learner language (Wertsch, 1991). Previous research on teacher talk has contributed to addressing the ultimate goals of
research on classroom instruction that makes a difference in learning (Chaudron, 1988; Norris & Ortega, 2001).

Still, it is important to note a paradigmatic gap in the research efforts in that previous inquiries were predominantly grounded on a formalist, psycholinguistic epistemology (Eckman, 1994) that views learning solely as an individual cognitive activity measured in ‘product’ or tests. Considering constant, transnational interactivity in new times, this study turns to learning in ‘process’ or ‘participation’ (Robbins, 2003) for further investigation and is drawn on sociocultural perspective that “recognizes the central role that social relationships and culturally constructed artifacts play in organizing uniquely human forms of thinking (Lantolf, 2004, p. 31)”. In so doing, “cognition can be systematically investigated without isolation it from social context.” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 1) Active participation in dialogically mediated zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) leads to learner transition from intermental to intramental psychological planes toward language internalization (Vygotsky, 1978) through “the proximal next stage that may be visible through participation in collaborative activity.” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 20) In this sociosemiotic understanding, dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986) is “the social event of verbal interaction implemented in an utterance or utterances” (Vološinov, 1973, p. 94). Further, the verbal performance of dialogue is an act of intersubjectivity (Rommetveit, 2003) or social identities of interlocutors who engage in a cooperative struggle (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006) as each speaker attempts to make their own meaning or sense (Vygotsky, 1986) but in simultaneous response to another’s sense.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design and Participants

I chose qualitative case study tradition (Creswell, 1998) to develop an in-depth analysis and enriched understanding of the particularity and complexity of the single case of effective teacher talk bounded in the four-week EAP classroom (Stake, 1995). The ESL class selected as an exemplar of successful intensive EAP instruction was located at a public university that was one of the most internationalized universities in the U.S. in terms of student enrollments. Anna King (pseudonym), the teacher, was reputed, among her students and other students of the institute, to be “patient”, “neutral”, and “very good” (student interviews) and successful in her goal to “help them to become better writers in English for Academic Purposes and for work purposes” (teacher interview). Anna, an African-American female in her fifties, with master’s degree in reading specialization, had more than 28 years of ESL teaching experience and directed the intensive EAP program. Anna’s class cohort that met two hours on all weekdays consisted
of 16 international students with diverse backgrounds of nationality, first language, gender, age, personality, and English language proficiency. English was spoken as a lingua franca among the transnational students from Japan, Korea, Taiwan, France, and Turkey. Most of the students shared instrumental motivation to learn English to enter a graduate-level program in the U.S. My dual role as a researcher was to learn about the cultural meanings of classroom dialogue (Spradley, 1980) and to interpret the emerging meanings communicable with the larger audience (Stake, 1995).

**Procedure**

I chose theory-based, purposeful sampling strategy (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to locate and select the exemplary case. To improve trustworthiness, I collected data from different points of time (Stake, 1995) and from multiple sources for triangulation (Mathison, 1988): (a) audiotaped, non-participant class observations and field-notes (Creswell, 1998; Spradley, 1980; Wolcott, 1988), (b) audiotaped, introspective semi-structured interviews (Seidman, 1998) with the teacher and focal students and one retrospective member-checking interview (Ely, 1991) with the teacher after the end of the semester, (c) documents of daily class instructional materials and student work, and (d) my researcher’s log that included annotated field-notes, analytical memos, literature memos, and preliminary category charts.

Upon consent, all observed classes were audio-taped to grasp “the finer details of communicative interaction” (Kasper & Rose, 2002, p. 66). I also took detailed field-notes, adapted from Creswell’s observational protocol (1998, p. 129), to collect not only salient but also less salient but potentially critical elements of non-verbal, contextual data in the classroom discourse (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Spradley’s language identification, verbatim, and concrete principles (1980) guided my note-taking in the field. The protocol interview questions for the teacher addressed such topics as personal backgrounds, the goal of teaching and learning in this class, the topics and styles of the teacher’s verbal communication, and the role of teacher’s talk in general. Similarly, focal students were asked about their learning experience and goal at the institute, success stories and difficulties in this class, the topics of classroom conversation, strategies to solve difficulties encountered in class, and the role of this teacher’s talk in class, and also talk patterns among other teachers.

Also, for theory triangulation, data were constantly analyzed and reviewed with relevant literature. In addition, for methodological triangulation, within my spiral analysis, I used different methods of analysis toward progressive focusing through three developmental stages: Stage One (Preliminary Analysis) with data management and preliminary annotation, Stage Two (Descriptive Analysis) with detailed annotation and analytical
memoing, and Stage Three (Focused Analysis and Naturalistic Generalizations) with continuous categorical aggregation and naturalistic theme generalization through developing category charts.

FINDINGS

Figure 1 (“Key features of critical teacher talk”) depicts the major characteristics of successful verbal interactional practices in the EAP classroom that helped international students succeed in a global campus. The findings suggest that successful teacher-student communication is meaningfully different from everyday talk that is defined as “the ordinary kinds of communicating people do in schools” (Tracy, 2002, p. 5) in that the international students distinguished Anna King’s talk in this class from that in the other EAP classes in which all participating international students enrolled. Four dimensions of the distinctive teacher talk include Comfortable, Dialogic, Mediated, and Purposeful Dimensions.

Figure 1. Key features of critical teacher talk

Comfortable Talk toward Critical Caring

The first area of distinction in Anna’s pedagogic talk is the comfort zone that she created in the EAP classroom. Her supportive talk successfully “initiat[ed] a social space for mediation of collaborative composing” (Miller & McVee, 2012) and helped her international students and herself to co-construct a safe space for dialogic, mediated, and purposeful learning to
occur. Anna realized Comfortable Talk by means of such discursive strategies as (a) sharing teacher’s personal stories, (b) tailoring teacher’s classroom language, and (c) personalizing and using humor. The interdependent discursive strategies contributed altogether to “building a relationship with the students” (teacher interview).

**Making teacher-personal social in critical caring relationship.** Feeling comfortable with a teaching figure in class may have been a culture shock for the international students who came from cultures where they were more familiar with vertical teacher-student power relations. Their teacher, the most experienced authority in the EAP program, was most willingly and openly sharing her personal stories whenever her examples were instrumental in helping the learners toward her goal: education for growth in reality. Real learning took place when, for example, Anna gave personal cross-cultural examples (“While I was in South America”) and talked about local events that were new to her pupils. Also, the open-sharing culture that contributed to changing the teacher-student relationship included frequent conversations about the teacher’s feelings and thoughts about her own growth in this class—“Students present challenges and you LEARN from the challenges and that’s why I appreciate that. I appreciate that about the class, all of you. You know, it’s nice to be able to come into class” (teacher in class).

Building comfort, relationship, and learning was mutual and gradual. According as Anna became more comfortable and built a relationship with her students, more of her “true personality come [came] out” in class (teacher interview). Rapport in the classroom was salient with the increase in her “giving more and more little life hints”, “sharing a little truism, a little life”, or “mothering”. Such critical caring talk reduced power differences and helped “build a RID [relational identity] that is the foundation for further interactions” that, as educational resources, improve learner power, identity, agency, and investment, and learning (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 2000, p. 206).

**Tailoring classroom language toward motivational framing.** Anna’s utterance tailoring was multi-fold. She tailored her language by not simplifying it. It was contrary to well-known foreigner talk (Ferguson, 1975) that many native speakers of English would do in their casual or pedagogic conversation with speakers with other language backgrounds. Also, Anna often provided implicit corrective feedback upon students’ developmental errors—“I eat medicine.” Instead of explicit negative correction, she referred to the intended answer as “a better one”—“Oh, you could say that [eat]. And I would use take, to take medicine.” Anna was mindful of selecting words to motivate the students. When all her students
regarded English grammar as “confusing” and “difficult”, Anna chose to use “challenging” rather than “difficult” to motivate student development:

[If the students say it’s difficult] they don’t think they can learn it….You rise because of the challenge….They should challenge themselves. Go to the next level….So, think about that I talk about and go to the next level. Take yourselves higher. Did you come to stay at the same level? No! Go to the next level. And most of them do, most of them. I’m happy to see [change], after that speech [laughs]. (teacher interview)

The teacher’s mindful tailoring of her speech led to framing (Goffman, 1974) the ways the students saw the multi-discursive learning context. Routinized in class, the teacher’s motivational behavior (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013) influenced the diverse learners’ behavior to make resilient efforts and achieve the goal of multilingualism.

**Personalizing and engaging humor toward authentic languaging.**

Personalizing was “the first way to get the students to have the relationship with you and to know that the teacher cares.” (teacher interview) To do so, Anna called on them as individuals (“How about the next one, Michael? Anybody else, Miki?”) and used students’ real names in the examples to practice a new sentence structure (“It’s easy for Cynthia to pass the TOEFL or for me to pass the TOEFL, okay?”). Anna’s talk used humor with meaning potential (Halliday, 1978) as in their grammar problem solving game: “This is a big one. Ying, Ying doesn’t get it? It goes to somebody else. I’m gonna ask you, Yuko. Go ahead for seven dollars. [whole class laughter]” Numerous incidents of humor followed by shared laughter strengthened my first impression of the class: “Class of Smiles” (analytical memo). Through personalized languaging (Swain, 2006), Anna activated shared local knowledge (Widdowson, 1998) of the class and localized language the meaning of which the students could readily infer as it was personal and authentic. Shared humor, as the response and respect to each other, shed insight into symmetry in classroom power and the high level of engagement in class (Mariage, 2001).

**Dialogic Talk toward Empowering Inclusion**

Anna’s classroom discourse exemplified genuine dialogue as “communication between simultaneous differences (Clark & Holquist, 1984, p. 9)”. As a “non-authoritarian, authoritative” leader (Morson, 2004), Anna “attempted to comprehend the complex factors that make dialogue possible. (p. 9)”; then she was attentive to students’ emergent needs as “a good friend and advisor” (student interview) and sought to make possible “reciprocal”
dialogue (student interview) by (a) answering with sensitivity, (b) sharing roles, and (c) respecting plurality.

**Answering with sensitivity for student development.** Genuine dialogue in this class related to notably sensitive *answerability* (Hestenes, Cassidy, & Niemeyer, 2004; Holquist, 2002; Wertsch, 1991). In other words, Anna “worked very hard to listen” (teacher interview) to her students and, reciprocally, she was “totally understood” (student interview) by them. Anna’s sensitivity even responded to students’ unsaid utterances in anticipation of them (“prolepsis”, Rommetveit, 1979)—“Michael, what were you gonna say? You have looked at me.” Through referential questions, prompts, revoicing (O’Connor & Michaels, 1993), acknowledgment, follow-up, and confirmation, Anna’s seamlessly responsive talk (Cassidy & Buell, 1996) created “temporary framework for construction progress” (Cazden, 1983) or *scaffolding* (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) and led to peripheral learners’ transformation into full participants in the interactive learning environment (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Anna not only scaffolded student development in the cognitive dimension but also made affective utterances to empower them to challenge and feel successful and “confident” because “confidence [is] the key to the student’s being able to do well” (teacher interview).

**Sharing roles for empowerment.** Anna transferred control and shared ownership of ideas and process with the students to engage and support their participation (Berry, 2006). In this class, knowledge or skills were not deposited in learners’ passive minds as in “banking education” (Freire, 2000). Rather, Anna continued to be “opening up the floor to everyone” (teacher interview) in order not to “allow someone to dominate the class”. The students became significant “part of that plan” because “this [class] is, after all, your [students’] class.” Students as significant contributors received credit for their contribution and decided lesson transitions and points of discussion (“I wanna go back to something /// Younghoon does ask me this now and Hyunsun asks me also”). Numerous incidents of students’ and teacher’s uptake in this class indicated the level of engagement and signaled active learning (Ferdig & Roehler, 2003-2004). Further, as co-teachers, students checked answers with and taught their peers (“You can go and listen to Ying and Yuko”) according to Anna’s belief in peer learning and student agency toward learning (Roth, 2002): “[Students] learn something quickly from their partners // The partner explained it in a better way” (teacher interview).

**Respecting plurality towards real pedagogy.** Unlike desired reality, transnational students often live and study in an assimilatory, either/or
world. Further, language learners’ competency to recognize or produce prescriptively accurate structures is often mistakenly considered to be the sole indicator of learning. By contrast, Anna’s talk drew on true plurality of Bakhtinian, both/and epistemology that celebrates cultural-specific relations over universality (Clark & Holquist, 1984; Holquist, 2002): “We’re learning formal grammar in here but when you go to the real world outside the classroom, you’re gonna hear this, and this, and this, and this. That’s one thing. But also, there are multiple ways to say something and that’s the grammar class is all about.” (teacher interview)

Mediated Talk toward Multimodal Expansion

Anna’s talk-in-interaction was mediated by available concepts and cultural entities (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). She designed multimodal elements including language modes, prior knowledge and experience, and temporal and spatial elements toward her students’ New Learning (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008).

Oral and written language modes as meaning-mediating resources. Oral language constituted the linguistic and audio elements of multimodal learning (New London Group, 2000). For linguistic design, Anna tried different sentence structures—statements, questions, or non-inverted questions—to make her intention understood, paraphrased using synonyms to facilitate students’ understanding, and analyzed the structure of student’s utterance using grammar terms. For audio design, Anna read aloud the problem, thought aloud her private speech for modeling, asked students in pairs to read aloud, and “gave meaning to the sentence” (teacher interview) by changing voice tone. To promote visual learning, Anna referred to the textbook essay to “show them [students] a lot of model essays” (teacher interview), pinpointed the sentence or paragraph on the book, and wrote down examples on the board to see because it was “important for the language learners to see what we’re talking about” and “[writing] on the board [will] direct their attention // Their seeing it and reading it hopefully will lock it in.” (teacher interview)

Prior knowledge and experience as meaning-mediating resources. Anna used students’ prior knowledge and experience to mediate social learning (Vygotsky, 1978), first, by intertextualizing knowledge and experience from familiar to unfamiliar, and then by distributing knowledge and experience from social to individual. Students’ familiar knowledge and experience from other EAP classes, their lessons from previous weeks, and back in their countries were available designs to build on for New Learning (New London Group, 2000). Thus Anna’s intertextualizing beyond mere juxtaposition of texts (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993) created “richly
textured opportunities” (Goldenberg, 1993) for mediated development through spontaneous/familiar concepts toward scientific/grammatical ones (Vygotsky, 1978). Further, Anna’s talk expanded distributed knowledge (Gee, 2004) in this class community through shared feedback (“Those are good, Cynthia. Alright, everybody, let me have your attention for a minute, Everyone!”), student answer revoicing, and pair languaging (“With partners, don’t do it by yourself”). Such distributed processes promoted opportunities for individual externalizations of their subjective knowledge and experience in the social space toward internalization (Chen & Hung, 2002).

Time and space as meaning-mediating resources. Anna redesigned time and space as “the forms of the most immediate reality” (Clark & Holquist, 1984, p. 59). Her explicit spatial redesigning was at work when she kept the open door as a welcome sign and arranged mindful seating (“Alert! Alert! Two Japanese students sitting together….Red light is on. Rang, rang, rang, rang”). Anna designed temporal elements when managing timed agenda, keeping time during small-group work, revisiting a certain topic at different times to “review something every day you did the day before or a week ago” (teacher interview), and maintaining sufficient wait time to elicit students’ contribution. In the concrete ways of redesigning, time and space added values of meaning-making potential (Clark & Holquist, 1984).

Purposeful Talk toward Conscious Cultivation

Anna’s talk-in-interaction was a dynamic action toward the conscious goal of learning (Robbins, 2003). Through her talk, Anna sought to cultivate a new classroom culture with learning rituals, strategic processes, and explicit noticing intervention.

Building a learning ritual. As Anna affirmed during the interview, “There’s something done every single lesson.” Repeatedly, she reminded the students of the sitting rule, made sure to ask questions before making lesson transitions. This way, Anna’s verbal scaffolds were “rhythmic repetition” (Tusting, 2000) so that the pattern was recited as a “cycle” in the community of learners. Due to the synchronized rituals, Anna’s lesson was reputed to be the “organized” one in the institute, which resulted in her students’ “confidence in the lesson, in the teacher and also in themselves” and, further, “inspires them and encourages them to work harder” as a “cohesive group” (teacher interview). Students felt “comfortable” with their signature rules because “the purpose of the rules is [was] to help people”; therefore “they [the rules] worked well” (student interview).

Cultivating a strategic process. Strategy instruction was the conscious part of learning designing. Anna told the students problem solving strategies,
gave them such learning tips as writing to learn to write (“You really need to write some of these yourself to really understand it”) or using a checklist to review their own writing process, guided them to learning such resources as a useful website, and provided them with mini lessons. One exemplar mini lesson was that of “tolerance hat” that emphasized the need for tolerance of ambiguity:

To learn grammar, you must have tolerance for ambiguity, and we talked about what that meant. Tolerance, high tolerance of ambiguity. You have to be able to // stand something that you can’t understand. Get to tolerate that you don’t understand it. Don’t expect to get it first. First time we go over the book, you might be confused. It’s after you work through it and work through the sentences. I explain it more. You work some more and then you get it. It’s not always like math (laughs) …. It’s not one plus one is two. (laughs) It’s more like one plus one is sometimes two, sometimes two and a half (laughs) and sometimes it’s not two at all (laughs)…. Grammar, learning a language is not always precise. There’s a lot of ambiguity.

This type of strategic learning lessons added insights on the interpersonal dimension of scaffolding (Stone, 1993) in that Anna helped the students to “reduce their frustration” that they often felt about developmental errors and to understand each other better thus “build cohesiveness among the classroom” (teacher interview).

**Promoting explicit noticing intervention.** Instructional intervention at the point of need is a crucial element in effective instruction although every error should not be pointed out for correction unless it interferes communication as advocated in focus-on-form instruction (Doughty & Williams, 1998). Anna maintained the optimal level of verbal intervention when correcting students’ errors in terms of form or meaning and identifying their weakness areas on which they needed to work. Her interventional scaffold was not a discrete-item structural drill but provided guided treatment. Anna guided the students to avoid being obsessed about the structure but to make “a story” for communication (“To make sense, you have to have meaning. You can’t put it in any old sentence….So, what’s the story?”).

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

This study explored the lived experience of international language students in the U.S. with focus on successful EAP classroom interactional discourse in general and the effective educator’s classroom language in particular. The
implications of the study call for critical dialogue on the current footing of international higher education and future directions.

**Toward Accomplishing Equity and Excellence in International Higher Education**

A central purpose of American higher education is known as fostering the preparation of talented young people as the nation’s human capital; principles of equity and excellence should guide national and institutional commitment to realizing the goal (Bowen, Kurzweil, & Tobin, 2005). Toward equity, not only American students with diverse sociocultural backgrounds but also an increasing number of international students who also constitute the current student body of American higher education need to be included in every consideration and implementation of policies and practices. Rational response to equitable international higher education should rid business practice of viewing international students as mere revenue sources that, in fact, may not lead to additional income (Cantwell, 2015). Thus, toward excellence in leading contemporary international higher education, it is a tall order to reexamine and improve the quality of every diverse student’s educational environment and experience on the global or internationalizing campus.

**Toward Understanding English as an International Language as Multilingual and Multicultural Competencies**

The present times of globalization, internationalization, and transnationalism necessitate all speakers’ achieving an advanced proficiency in world languages and multilingualism as part of their global citizenship and competencies for global civic engagement and economic prosperity in a global society (Brutt-Griffler & Kim, 2016; Committee for Economic Development, 2006). The contemporary context propels multilingual and multicultural education as a local and global imperative to debunk the hegemonic ideology of English-speaking monolingual supremacy situated in a multilingual society (Shohamy, 2006) and also to build the critical communicative competence repertoire among speakers of all languages including transnational student population. In this regard, multilingual international students in intensive English programs—5% of total higher education international student body (Institute of International Education, 2015)—are growing assets in global knowledge economy. Thus, a new conceptualization of teaching and learning English as an International Language (EIL) should not limit the focus on the gate-keeping language tests but take into account the multilingual learners’ dynamic language and identity development that can be understood in the students’ in-class production, participation patterns, and affective dimension as shown in Anna’s EIL class.
Toward Realizing Critical International Language Pedagogy

Grounded on the findings, this study proposes new directions on international language education that I term as Critical International Language Pedagogy (CILP). CILP repurposes the primary medium of instruction in that an effective educator’s classroom language plays a critical role in learners’ acquiring world languages as a source of learner input (Gass & Selinker, 2008), a motivator of transnational languaculture (Agar, 1994; Risager, 2006), and, a semiotic toolkit to mediate language learning and identity development (Vygotsky, 1978). Three intertwined principles of CILP that utilizes teacher’s effective classroom verbal communication—that I term as Critical Teacher Talk (CTT)—as the main mediator are: (a) Transnational Culture Building, (b) Critical Caring, and (c) Authentic Learning. CILP intends to reform the core of the educational practice rather than seeking curriculum revisions on the surface (Bruner, 1971), by making deep change in the microculture of the multivoiced classroom community (Wertsch, 1991) where dynamic bilingualism/multilingualism (Garcia, 2011) as assets and rights is a celebrated norm and goal and distributed power relations are collectively created and practiced. CILP is also built on the modeling-dialogue-practice-confirmation components of caring pedagogy (Noddings, 2005) that denotes an effective educator’s conscious, relational capacities conducive to redesigning available multilingual, multimodal resources (New London Group, 2000). Importantly, CILP pursues multilingual and multicultural education for authentic purposes to live a transnational life in an interconnected world by embodying and empowering all transnational learners’ internally persuasive languages and cultures (Bakhtin, 1986).

REFERENCES


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Support Services at Spanish and U.S. Institutions: A Driver for International Student Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

Many institutions of higher education are promoting campus internationalization as a core principle through international student mobility and, as a result, have expanded rapidly in enrollment. To effectively serve this growing population, many campuses have had to strengthen their student support services. However, while many have well-developed programs for students in general, not all services are designed to specifically cover the needs of international students. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview on research conducted on the topic of international student satisfaction with university support services as a means to ensure a positive student experience. It also provides a new research approach for comparing how support services for international students are structured at Spanish and U.S. institutions.

Keywords: support services, satisfaction, international students, assessment

Over the past 50 years, many institutions of higher education around the world have seen record-high enrollments of international students on their respective campuses. Globally, the number of students enrolled in tertiary education outside of their country of citizenship increased more than three times, from 1.3 million in 1990 to nearly 5 million in 2015 (OECD, 2015). While we must carefully differentiate between the two types of mobility involved, degree-seeking mobility and credit mobility, there is an overall increasing interest in students going to study abroad. The presence of
international students on university campuses can be seen as a major benefit in providing campuses with diversity, pluralism and opportunities for cross-cultural learning and engagement (Wille r, 1992) but this continued growth in enrollment is calling for a closer look at the needs of this population and its level of satisfaction with university services.

While international student enrollment is a key strategy and often the measure for comprehensive internationalization at many institutions, it is important that the support services offered match the needs of this population. Doing so allows for the wider university community to benefit from the global perspective these students bring along with them and maintain an inclusive climate that supports the academic and personal growth on campus (ACE, 2015). As Choudaha (2016) points out, a majority of institutions still struggle to allocate adequate resources and expertise needed to meet the university expectations and experiences of their high-paying international students, potentially leading to lower levels of satisfaction and a negative impact on future recruitment. It is therefore imperative for student affairs professionals and support staff to provide essential services to this community and help move “the internationalization of higher education from vision to reality” (ACE, 2015).

This paper discusses the role of support services for international students as an important driver in the internationalization efforts of a university and provides an overview of assessment tools that institutions in Spain and the U.S. are using to measure international student satisfaction. Since support services can be a key factor in attracting and retaining international students, we offer a strong argument for why universities need to better understand the level of satisfaction of these students with the support services they offer.

A review of existing literature was conducted on support services for international students as well as the most-widely used tools and measures by institutions to assess the satisfaction of international students with campus services. Moreover, a quantitative survey focused on international student satisfaction with support services at selected Spanish and U.S. universities was launched. In doing so, it was also important to identify the context of student mobility relevant to universities in both countries. Due to a lack of literature or comparable study addressing similar questions in a Spanish and U.S context, it was important for us to reflect on the first main difference between both countries—the definition of credit mobility. In Spain for instance, credit mobility, which is described as temporary mobility in the framework of ongoing studies at a “home institution” for the purpose of gaining credit, is the most common type of mobility for international students (Kelo, Teichler, & Wächter, 2006). On the other hand, in the U.S., most international students participate in degree mobility programs, which is described as learning mobility for a degree
purpose, even if only a part of the program is studied abroad (Maunimo
Project, 2013).

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES: MEANING AND IMPORTANCE

According to several national and local sources such as the UK
International Higher Education Unit report (Archer, Jones, & David-
on, 2010) and the Australian Education International report (2015) elabor-
ated by International Education Association, ISANA, most students who have
been abroad for a period of their studies will recommend their stay to their
peers. In fact, international students look more satisfied with the stay in the
country abroad than with the quality of their studies abroad (ESNsurvey,
2013). However, while most international students recommend their
experiences abroad, there are a few other aspects to consider in order to
improve student satisfaction on campus. Three of the most important
concerns about studying abroad are: the academics--professors, lessons in
different languages, methods used; city and culture--where the city is
located, how is the atmosphere there; and university services--
accommodation, counseling, information desk, integration activities
(Studyportals, 2013). Figuring out the best way to meet the needs of
international students is not an easy process (ACE, 2015). Even
international students at any single institution face different issues and might
need a diverse set of support services.

In their report on international student support in European Higher
Education, Kelo, Roberts, and Rumbley (2010) suggest that student services
have a potentially important role to play in terms of attracting and retaining
international students, as well as building momentum for future recruitment
of high-quality students. Additionally, the feedbacks of international
students have to be assessed in order to identify their needs and provide the
best support service to increase their satisfaction. Providing programs and
services to more international students is becoming central to the work of all
students’ affairs professionals at the university, not just those who work in
the international office (ACE, 2015). One could therefore argue that support
services and international student satisfaction can be achieved if all
stakeholders at the university work together to enhance the campus
internationalization process, which “has become an indicator for quality in
higher education” (de Wit, 2011). In other words, the satisfaction of
international students with provided services could be one of the key drivers
for campus internationalization.

Diverse studies and reports have agreed with the fact that
international students might have different needs depending on their length
of studies abroad. In the report on International Student Lifecycle by the
Higher Education Academy (2015), best practices are gathered and
categorized by different phases of experience or periods of time. For
example, issues before arrival or pre-arrival information, arrival support, induction and welcome, learning in the classroom (academics) and learning in a new environment or life outside the classroom and the completion and return (cultural reverse shock). It is therefore key to emphasize the importance of support services in the satisfaction of international students as they are not only influenced by their academic or learning experience in the classroom. According to the last report from i-graduate (2015), student satisfaction is not necessarily correlative with the quality of the programs being taught. They also mention that the analysis is intended to shed light on international student experience, rather than course quality, which it is related to different support services for international students.

One of the well-received services by international students occurs in their very first days at their new institutions. Such programs are usually called orientation programs, welcome days or induction days. According to Evans et al. (2009), the transition to university can be exciting, unfamiliar and challenging for domestic and international students. They arrive to a new culture, environment, climate and usually a different language. For that reason, many universities offer a variety of support services, such as orientation programs.

There are different types of services that universities provide to their international students. The Academic Cooperation Association report (2015) states that the most important support service areas identified by students included information and orientation, integration activities with local students, the institution, and/or surrounding community, language support, other practical considerations, including assistance with visas and other administrative procedures; housing; support for families; and career and internship guidance (Kelo et al., 2010). From a different perspective, the American Council on Education (2015) recommends four key areas to provide the best student experience - welcoming international students, adjusting services and programs to meet their needs, facilitating integration between international and other students, and assessing students’ experiences. Depending on the phase international students are in, their needs and service perception might change. A favorable level of satisfaction is important in all phases of their international student lifecycle.

These first few days are critical for international students to engage and integrate with the university, the new culture, environment and new friends. There are different orientation models that have proven to be effective but the successful ones usually involve a collaboration of support offices across campus and participation by their staff. As such, it is crucial for all stakeholders within their university to understand the importance of internationalization and be provided with relevant training and knowledge in order to be able to provide the best services possible to international students. The REACT project (2013), funded by the European Commission,
has developed a project to include and integrate all members of the staff in the internationalization process. Their aim was to put together a compendium of good practices to better understand the needs of international students. The main objective of the REACT project was to provide tools for improving staff members’ skills in regards to supporting foreign students, broadening horizons and administrative staff’s perception of international students’ needs, opening and sensitizing them to their problems, as well as making people aware of the necessity to improve their knowledge of foreign languages, the role of training in cultural differences and student-client care.

The continued growth of mobility numbers in terms of students willing to study abroad has pushed many universities to focus not only on the academic aspects of the student experience but also on the needs that international students might have concerning services and matters related to their stay and comfort. In that sense, it is argued that the European higher education must recognize that student services represent a powerful tool for enhancing the quality and sustainability of the internationalization agenda, not to mention the overall competitiveness of the sector (Kelo et al., 2010).

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SATISFACTION TOOLS

In an effort to identify a group of providers that offer a survey instrument for assessing student satisfaction, we found that both Spanish and U.S. institutions use a variety of assessment tools that focus on campus support services. Below, we present five of the most-widely used tools:

**International Student Barometer.** The International Student Barometer (ISB), developed by the company i-graduate International Insight company, offers a tool that tracks and compares the decision-making, expectations, perceptions and intentions of international students from application to graduation, including the scope of support services (i-graduate, 2015). It enables institutions to make informed decisions to enhance the international student experience and drive successful recruitment and marketing strategies.

**Ruffalo Noel Levitz.** Ruffalo Noel-Levitz is focused in a survey for international students only in the U.S., asking them to rate their satisfaction with key areas of student life and learning, as well as the importance of each of these issues (Noel-Levitz, 2015). The data reveal what these students value and how they compare to domestic students. These results can help campuses not only understand how to attract international students to their institutions, but how to keep these students satisfied and guide them to graduation.
StudyPortals. StudyPortals is the global study choice platform. Their first priority is to have the most comprehensive information on study opportunities all over the world. They have analyzed the satisfaction of international students with a unique insight into what students think about studying abroad, gained by reviewing the comments made by international students on the student experience exchange platform.

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The NSSE survey, launched in 2000 and updated in 2013, assesses the extent to which students engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development (NSSE, 2015). The questionnaire collects information in five categories: participation in dozens of educationally purposeful activities; institutional requirements and the challenging nature of coursework; perceptions of the college environment; estimates of educational and personal growth since starting college; and background and demographic information.

QS Student Satisfaction. The QS Stars university rating system (QS Top Universities, 2015) evaluates an institution against over 50 different indicators and awards universities between one and five + stars over eight wider fields, as well as an overall rating. One of the indicators measures overall student satisfaction with the university as well as its quality of teaching.

On a national level, governments across the world have launched initiatives to assess and evaluate the quality of education. The Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, in partnership with the International Education Association, carried out a project as part of the Study in Australia 2010 initiative. The project aims to present principles of good practice for enhancing international student experience outside the classroom. The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA), UK’s national advisory body serving the interest of international students and those who work with them, launched a comprehensive report and guide for international students in relation to their mobility status and support services, such as accommodation information, along with a webpage that contains a wealth of information and practical guides for students and staff.

COMPARING BOTH PERSPECTIVES: SPAIN AND U.S.

Spain Perspectives
In Europe and especially in the Spanish context, the Erasmus program keeps the mobility record and their well-known position as an exchange program. This type of mobility has grown significantly in the last
years. According to the European Commission report Erasmus Figures and Facts (2013), more than 3 million students went abroad for a part of their studies in the 2012-13 academic year. Spanish mobility has been famous for the last years to be the first country with the most incoming and outgoing students under the Erasmus program, according to EC data from 2012-13. Credit mobility is predominant at Spanish institutions as compared to the U.S., where most international students are degree-seeking. According to the Strategy for Internationalization of Spanish Universities (2014), Spain receives 2.5% of international students studying worldwide, as compared to the U.S. that has 16.5% of the market share.

In October 2014, the Spanish government launched a Strategy for Internationalization of Spanish Universities 2015-2020, which includes the following objectives: gather together staff with international experience, raise the number of mobile students (incoming and outgoing), provide internationalization at home for those students who do not study abroad, increase the attractiveness of the universities and therefore the attractiveness of the campuses, create welcome services (support service for arrival, stay and departure) and identify the potential demand sources for university products and services as well as intensify the Spanish presence as a supplier of university services in other parts of the world. Beyond the directive to formalize the internationalization process at Spanish institutions, these objectives also point to the importance of identifying the needs of international students that can in turn provide them with a satisfactory stay during their program.

Along with service provision and student satisfaction, it is also important to take into account the influencers that impact in the international student experience. Studyportals’ 2013 study entitled Key Influencers of International Student Satisfaction in Europe states that no Spanish institutions appear in the Top 20 of European universities rated for the level of their international student satisfaction. This is a key factor for institutions to consider as they set their strategic priorities for attracting and retaining international students on their campuses.

Most Spanish universities are set up to have an international relations office with admission, enrollment, and general administrative responsibilities. Co-curricular activities and extra-curricular activities are not centralized in one office at universities but mainly organized by volunteer-based student organizations. There is a strong sense of collaboration and co-ownership at Spanish universities in how support services are provided. Responsibility is spread across the institution as opposed to one dedicated office.

While some institutions use general feedback-oriented surveys that were developed in-house to measure student satisfaction, few use well-grounded benchmarking assessment tools such as the International Student
Barometer (ISB) or QS. There is also no assessment carried out nationally on student support services and international student satisfaction as they relate to the internationalization of Spanish universities (Kelo et al., 2010).

**United States Perspectives**

The number of international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities has increased drastically over the past 50 years and enrollment continues to grow. According to the Institute of International Education, 974,926 international students studied in the U.S. in 2014-15, representing a 10% increase from the previous academic year (Open Doors Report, 2015). This makes the United States the premier destination for international students, from a degree mobility standpoint, and their presence on university campuses brings to administration a whole new set of responsibilities and challenges for providing effective support services.

As such, attention is increasingly being drawn to the role of U.S. universities in providing support services to international students particularly in the form of a welcoming campus environment, sufficient infrastructure and resources for learning (Burdett & Crossman, 2012). As Choudaha & Hu (2016) point out, international students “often receive less despite paying more” for their educational experience, and their integration and acculturation to the larger campus and local community has become an issue and challenge at many U.S. universities.

Increased immigration regulations and compliance requirements implemented by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in recent years have created a need for more services for international students. Most colleges and universities in the U.S. have specialized offices dedicated to assisting students with navigating complex rules and regulations, in additional to providing cultural programming and engagement opportunities. These services, often referred to as a one-stop shop, along with the need to survey students, are essential to the initial and ongoing success of international students and scholars (Wang, 2007). University support services are important for international students’ successful lives in the host university and society (Cho & Yu, 2014).

It is common for institutions of higher education in the U.S. to centralize support services for international students through one office, unit or department. Such offices, often named Office for International Students and Scholars, Office of International Services, or Office of Global Programs, serve as the designated office at the institution to provide support on immigration and student advising, cross-cultural adjustment, housing, English proficiency, and opportunities to integrate in the campus and local community, to name a few. The role of international student advisors and personnel is critical in sustaining the mission of these offices and ensure a
positive experience for students as they provide assistance across different cultural, social and academic expectations (Dalili, 1982).

In their study, Lee, Abd-Ella and Burks (1981) developed 12 categories to assess the needs and satisfaction of international students at colleges and universities in the United States. These categories were grouped into sections labeled as academic needs, student support services, and psycho-social needs. Lee et al. found that perceived importance exceeded satisfaction for all the categories. Munoz and Munoz's study (2000) focused on the current support services provided at a Southern postsecondary U.S. institution to international students, such as admission information, immigration advising, orientations for new arrivals, personal counseling, housing assistance, contact family program, and social activities. They found that international students agreed that they had received substantial support from the international office for their most important needs. However, they were not as interested in increasing the variety of services provided by the office but mostly in improving the quality of these services.

Table 1: Survey categories to assess support services at Spanish and U.S. institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>1. Location of institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Number of enrolled international students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Percentage of international students at institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support services</td>
<td>1. Name of designated office for support services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Organizational structure of office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Number of personnel employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Types of support services provided by office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>1. Development of assessment tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Process evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Data quality and effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness</td>
<td>1. Ability to implement findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Challenges involved with implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Impact of changes on support services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are several research studies on assessment that was developed internally and conducted at U.S. colleges and universities to measure international student satisfaction with campus support services, namely at Iowa State University (Korobova, 2012), Delaware State University (Ikwuagwu, 2010), University of Southern California (Wongpaiboon, 2008),
Claremont University (Otsu, 2008), and Kent State University (Nieman, 1998). Each one of them highlights the importance of assessing student satisfaction as an international recruitment, retention and student experience tool at their respective institutions.

In addition to the previous findings, the authors conducted a pilot survey to assess and analyze issues related to support services. The pilot study contextualizes both Spain and U.S higher education. A limited sampling of 40 institutions from Spain and the U.S. were invited to participate in a 15-item, anonymous online survey. A response rate of 68% was achieved (15 institutions from Spain and 12 from the U.S.), representing different types of institutions ranging from privately to publicly-owned, small to large student population, low to high percentage of international student enrollment, and different reporting and organizational structures. Survey items were chosen carefully to provide an overview of and assess the main types of support services used in both countries. The survey was developed around 4 primary components—demographics; type of support services; effectiveness; and usefulness.

A scare body of literature specific to our research interest draws attention to the importance of this pilot study. Our findings reveal how support services are organized and how student satisfaction is assessed at these universities. As discussed in the results section later on, we found that not all universities use a standard assessment tool or an external service provider to measure support services and international student satisfaction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The comparative perspective in assessing international student satisfaction on university campuses highlights the importance of how terms are being defined globally. While this paper only looks at support services at institutions in two countries, it identifies multiple differences that need to be addressed. Results presented are based on the literature review done and the preliminary findings on the pilot study.

The biggest difference was in mobility type and mobile student numbers in global terms. While Spain is the premier destination for credit mobility in Europe, the U.S., on the other hand, is primarily host to degree mobility seeking students. The definition of terms used in Spain versus the U.S. is another challenge. In the U.S., an international student is defined as one who holds a non-immigrant visa to study in the U.S. This excludes visiting scholars, employees, permanent residents, refugees, asylees and other immigrant visa holders. Contrastingly, in Spain, all the students from other countries studying at Spanish Universities are defined as international students. They include short-term, transfer students who participate in programs like Erasmus Mundus (Project Atlas, 2001).
Support services provided by institutions in each country were defined by and aligned with the type of student mobility. In the U.S., while some international student support offices also include enrollment management functions, most focus on providing immigration and employment advising services, and programs that promote academic success, international understanding, acculturation sessions and campus and community engagement. Support service offices in Spain are primarily set up to provide services on admission, enrollment, and other administrative issues and, in some cases, health and accommodation information. Language support service was also a common and important service offered to not only international students but also for Spanish students planning to study abroad, a service not widely available across U.S. institutions.

It is common for U.S. institutions to have centralized offices on their campus to serve their international student community. The staff members of such offices have the mission, responsibility and accountability to provide support services to international students. In Spain, however, there is more of a collaborative and co-ownership approach in how support services are provided, where responsibility is shared across the institution as opposed to one specialized office.

How institutions in Spain and the U.S. were assessing the level of international student satisfaction with support services is still unclear as many survey instruments and assessment tools were developed in-house and not available to the general public. Many U.S. universities measure the general satisfaction and engagement level of their students but few instruments focused specifically on international students. Results from the pilot survey showed that 66% of participating institutions (60% Spain, 75% U.S.) used an assessment tool of some sort to measure the level of international student satisfaction with support services on their respective campuses. Most instruments were developed in-house. Others used external services such as the International Student Barometer. 33% of support offices found their assessment tool to be effective in providing important feedback to university officials and were, in turn, able to implement necessary changes based on the received recommendations. These changes occurred in the areas of customer service, student advising, programming and outreach and educational training. When asked what challenges were faced in development and deployment of their satisfaction surveys, several offices indicated issues around the definition and goals of the survey and ensuring that survey items were aligned to these goals. Length of the survey, response rate, language barrier and data analysis were other constraints mentioned.

While it is clear that service quality and general satisfaction studies were common at some institutions, others were doing very little to seek feedback from their students as a way to improve support services. Those actively surveying their students were using different assessment tools to
measure level of satisfaction. That said, there was a limited number of options, in terms of assessment tools, available and many of them were specific to a specific country or audience. Many institutions also chose to develop their own survey instrument and conduct their data analysis in-house.

Table 2. Comparative framework: Spain and U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SPAIN</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Predominant mobility type</td>
<td>Credit mobility</td>
<td>Degree mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premier destinations</td>
<td>First country in Europe in receiving international students</td>
<td>First country in the world in receiving international students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of</td>
<td>Students from countries other than Spain studying at Spanish</td>
<td>Students studying in the U.S. on a non-immigrant visa. This</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International student</td>
<td>Universities. This includes short-term, transfer students who</td>
<td>excludes visiting scholars, employees, permanent residents,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(adapted from Project</td>
<td>participate in programs such as Erasmus Mundus.</td>
<td>refugees, and asylees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlas, 2001)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global mobility numbers</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of University</td>
<td>1. Admission (acceptance letters)</td>
<td>1. Immigration and visa compliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ranking order)</td>
<td>3. Language support</td>
<td>3. Cultural adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Practical information</td>
<td>4. Employment options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Community resources</td>
<td>5. Community resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of</td>
<td>Decentralized</td>
<td>Centralized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>services</td>
<td>Collaborative and co-ownership approach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment tools for</td>
<td>Mostly developed in-house</td>
<td>Mostly developed in-house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>international student’s satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To further explore how institutions of higher education, both in Spain and in the U.S., are assessing the level of international student satisfaction with university support services on their campuses, the authors
are devising a research study, that will be deployed to a larger number of institutions in both countries. They hope to contribute to further literature on this topic by presenting findings that support a better understanding of what assessment tools institutions are currently using to assess the satisfactions of international students with support services on their respective campuses.

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How Tinto’s Theory Differs for Asian and Non-Asian International Students: A Quantitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Literature suggests that international students from Asian countries might differ in the way they can be supported in their efforts towards completing their degree. Using the 2004/09 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, the authors investigate how social and academic integration relate to the college persistence of Asian and non-Asian international undergraduate students at U.S. postsecondary institutions. Four logistic regression models revealed that Asian and non-Asian students differed in the way academic and social integration were related to persistence, depending on their year of undergraduate study. These findings signal the importance of year of study and cultural background in thinking about how to support student degree completion.

Keywords: academic integration, persistence, social integration undergraduate international students.

International students experience unique struggles in their efforts towards completing a degree (Schulte & Choudaha, 2014; National Association of Foreign Student Advisers, 2014). International students are used to a different educational system and have to adapt to engaging in an unfamiliar learning and teaching model (Owens & Loomes, 2010; Rientjes, Beausaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet & Kommers, 2012; Zhou & Zhang, 2014). Furthermore, international students in the U.S. face difficulties in studying in English, as this often is their second language (Arkoudis & Tran, 2010).
Moreover, students have to adjust to a new living environment (Zhou & Zhang, 2014). Settling into a foreign college community and culture might lead to disorientation and culture shock (Kell & Vogel, 2008). This makes international students vulnerable to the feeling of (cultural) loneliness and social isolation (Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2003; Sawir, Marginson, Deuments, Nyland & Ramia, 2007; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). These challenges international students face make them vulnerable for dropping out prematurely (National Association of Foreign Student Advisers, 2014).

While international students experience unique struggles in completing their degree, it is of great value for institutions to prevent them from dropping out. International students contribute to the American higher education in at least two ways. First, they bring in financial resources, as most international students receive the majority of their funds from sources outside of the United States. In 2015, international students brought 30.5 billion U.S. dollars to the country’s economy (Institute of International Education, 2016). Educationally, international students help to improve educational quality by providing both international and domestic students with the opportunity to communicate and collaborate with culturally diverse peers and thereby develop intercultural competencies that are necessary to function in today’s globalized and international workforce and society (DeJaeghere, 2009; Gibson, Rimmington, & Landwehr-Brown, 2008).

The loss for institutions financially and academically, it is worthwhile to investigate what factors can support an institution if international students drop out is substantial and worth investigating. According to Tinto’s Theory of Student Departure (1987), whether a student persists or drops out is strongly related to the students’ academic and social integration. A higher degree of integration would lead to greater educational and institutional student commitment and therefore lower dropout rates. Tinto’s theory of student departure was tested on different student populations, including international students in the U.S. (Mamiseishili, 2012). While there are important insights on international students and what factors support students to succeed, most of the time no distinction is made between their ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The U.S. had the highest rate growth in 35 years to a record number of 974,926 international students in the academic year 2014/15. The top three countries of origin of international students in the U.S. are China, India and South Korea, making up more than half of the international student population (Institute of International Education, 2016). Asian students have different ways of integrating into a new campus community, suggesting that different factors relate to their college persistence compared to Western students (Heggins, & Jackson, 2003; Li, Faye, Bradley, & Lan, 2015). As international students increasingly come from Asian countries (Institute of International Education, 2016), it is worth studying how this specific group
can be supported in in their efforts towards completing a higher education degree. This study’s goal is to provide more insight as to how Asian and non-Asian international students differ in academic integration, social integration and persistence. Moreover, as the direction and strength of the factors influencing dropout behavior may change over time (Nora, Barlow & Crisp, 2005), we are interested in how differences between Asian and non-Asian students are present in different phases of their undergraduate experience.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this study is constructed from two strands of thought. First, it draws on literature of how Asian students differ from non-Asian students in their cultural background, leading to different ways of integrating socially and academically. Second, previous studies will be described that indicate how international students’ relationships differ between social integration, academic integration and persistence. This theoretical framework suggests the hypothesis that academic and social integration relate differently to persistence for Asian students compared to non-Asian students.

Academic and Social Integration of Asian Students

Students from different parts of the world may have different ways of adjusting and integrating within academic and social environments, due to their cultural habits and values (Guiffrida, 2006). Due to significant disparities in language, culture, and communication styles between most Asian countries and the U.S., Asian students in particular, have extra challenges integrating within their new social and academic environments (Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002). We expect that Asian students differ in the way their academic and social integration relates to persistence. In order to better understand differences between Asian and non-Asian students, Asian students’ distinct cultural background must be explained.

The most important distinction between Western and Eastern cultures is the scale of collectivism and individualism (Triandis, Chen, & Chan, 1998). Western cultures, for example the U.S., have a tendency to focus on independence, competition and emotional detachment from family. Eastern cultures, including Asian countries, articulate more values like interdependence and group harmony. While students with a Western cultural background are motivated more by individual goals, Asian students tend to value their individual goal as subordinate to collective ones (Triandis, Chen & Chan, 1998). This hypothesized contrast is not categorical: individual students will always express a mix of both individualistic and collectivistic motivations and both these traits can coexist rather than being mutually
exclusive. However, for Asian students it is typical that such motivation often has a collective, rather than individualistic and competitive, nature (Kember, 2000).

The cultural background of Asian international students is reflected in the way Asian international students integrate academically and socially at their new campus environment. Asian students often seek more help from family and social resources rather than from professional resources when experiencing challenges in transitioning into a new academic environment (Heggins & Jackson, 2003). Heggins and Jackson (2003) suggest that this might have to do with the cultural stigma and shame around emotional expression, which makes it less likely for Asian international students to tap into services that can help them make academic improvement (Li, Faye, Bradley, & Lan, 2015). Moreover, the language barrier is mentioned as an important challenge that Asian students experience in integrating academically (Li, Faye, Bradley, & Lan, 2015).

International Students' Persistence

According to Tinto’s Theory of Student Departure (1987), the more students are academically and/or socially integrated into the university, the more likely they are to persist in their college education. A higher degree of student integration into social and academic environments leads to educational and institutional commitment, lowering dropout rates (Tinto, 1987). Tinto's Theory of Student Departure is a widely acknowledged theory and is often used as a framework to study persistence. However, a previous study, relating international students’ social and academic integration to study persistence, showed that Tinto's model is not entirely applicable to international students (Mamiseishili, 2012).

Using data from the Beginning Postsecondary longitudinal Study of 2004-2006 (BPS:04/06), Mamiseishili (2012) revealed that academic integration was positively related to persistence, supporting Tinto’s model of student departure. For social integration however, a negative correlation to international students' persistence was found: international students with a higher social integration were less likely to persist (Mamiseishvili, 2012). While this previous study provides insight into how social and academic integration relates to persistence for international students in the U.S., not much is known about how these relationships are present for students from different cultural backgrounds. As international students have varied cultural backgrounds and integrate differently, more needs to be known about specific student cultural groups and how the relationship between academic and social integration and persistence is different for those with different cultural backgrounds.

This study provides a foundation for critical examination on how Tinto's model of student departure may be applicable to students with an
Asian background (Guiffrida, 2006). Indicated by the difference in social and academic and social integration of Asian students, we hypothesize that the relation between these types of integration and persistence are different for international Asian students in comparison to their non-Asian peers. By investigating how academic and social integration relates to persistence for Asian and non-Asian students specifically, Tinto's model should be tuned to the student’s cultural background so that international students, each with their own cultural heritage, can be optimally supported in completing their degrees.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

In order to investigate the similarity and difference between Asian and non-Asian students in respect to the relationship between their persistence and academic and social integration, national data set of international students was used.

**Data Source**

This study utilizes data from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:04/09). This dataset "collected information about U.S. students’ education and employment in the 6 years since they first enrolled in postsecondary education" (Wine, Janson & Wheeless, 2011, p.iii). National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) surveyed the same first-time beginning students at three points in time: at the end of their first year (2003-04), third year (2005-06) and six years (2008-09) after entry into postsecondary education. We limit the BPS data to students representing our population of interest.

**Sample.** Of the 16,680 undergraduate students in the BPS:04/09 dataset, 170 were international students of which 44% identified as Asian, 26% as white, 12% as Hispanic, 14% as African and 4% as more than one or another race. Of the Asian students, 40% was male and 37% female. Of non-Asian international students 49% was male and 41% female. The average age of the first year students is 20 years for Asian students and 21 years old for non-Asian international students. Most students were planning on getting their bachelors degree, 19 of the non-Asian and 23 of the Asian international students were planning on getting an associate degree. Concerning international students' financial situation, 43 of the 90 non-Asian international students received financial aid; this was only the case for 26 of the 77 Asian students. However, Asian international students receive help from parents almost as often as non-Asian international students.

**Variables.** As dependent variable, a measurement of persistence tree and six years after enrolment was used. We created a binary dependent
variable indicating whether a student persisted or not. Students who attained a degree, or were still enrolled at any institution in the U.S. in 2009, were defined as ‘persisters’ (coded as 1). The students who did not earn a degree and were not enrolled in 2009 were defined as ‘non-persisters’ (coded as 0). Persistence was measured by the end of the third year and six years after enrolling in postsecondary education.

Independent variables in this study include (i) group membership (i.e. Asian students or non-Asian students), (ii) academic integration (AI) and, (iii) social integration (SI). Academic integration is measured by items that asked how often students (i) participated in study groups, (ii) had social contact with faculty, (iii) met with an academic advisor, and (iv) talked with faculty about academic matters outside of class. Similarly, social integration measured by items that asked how often students: (i) attended fine arts activities, (ii) participated in a sport club, and (iii) participated in school clubs. For all of these variables, students have reported the frequency of participation; never (coded as 0), sometimes (coded as 1) or often (coded as 2). The scale on academic and social integration was computed by adding the scores on the corresponding items. Social and academic integration was measured in the first year (2004) and the third year (2006).

Existing literature suggests that the two most important predictors of persistence are grade point average and intent to persist. Both factors are positively related to persistence (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993). Therefore, these two factors were included in the model to control for any confounding influence. Due to our sample size, we included only these two most impactful covariates. As the BPS:04/09 used a stratified multistage sampling method with unequal probabilities of sample selection, weights were applied in order to correct for oversampling. By including the weights, the data is representative for the population of international undergraduate students in the U.S. Missing values and questions that were legitimately skipped by students were coded as missing.

**Data Analysis**

Four logistic linear regression analyses were used to examine the relationship between the level of AI, SI and group membership (Asian and non-Asian) and the status of persistence in different college phases. The following equation is the baseline for all of the four models:

\[
\log \left( \frac{P(\text{Per})}{1-P(\text{Per})} \right) = \beta_0 + \gamma_1 \times GPA + \gamma_2 \times Degree + \beta_1 \times AI + \beta_2 \times SI + \\
+ \beta_3 \times Group_{\text{Asian}} + \beta_4 \times Group_{\text{Asian}} \times AI + \beta_5 \times Group_{\text{Asian}} \times SI + \\
+ \text{Error}
\]

The outcome variable is the natural logarithm of the odds that a student would persist (e.g. completed their degree or continued their education at the similar or another institution). \(P(\text{Per})\) stands for the
probability of persisting of a given student. Independent variables were academic and social integration (AI and SI), measured by a survey of research participants at the third and sixth year after enrollment, and group membership ($\text{Group}_{\text{Asian}}$). Two interaction terms were added into the model to capture the differences between Asian and non-Asian students. Finally, two covariates, grade point average (GPA) and Degree plan (Degree) were added in these models to rule out their confounding impact.

The separate models for different years in college allow us to see how AI and SI in different years of undergraduate enrollment relate to persistence and if the relationships in the different phases are distinctive for Asian compared to non-Asian students (Table 1). Equation (1) was used as the regression model to analyze the data set. In Model 1, we investigated how AI and SI in the first year of study relate to students’ persistence three years after enrolment. In Model 2, we examined the relationship between AI and SI measured in the first year and persistence at the sixth year after students’ enrollment. In Model 3, we explored how AI and SI in the third year of study predict persistence at the end of the third year of enrollment. Lastly, in Model 4, the relationship between AI and SI in the third year of study and students’ persistence by the end of their sixth year was investigated. The fourth model allows us to examine how AI and SI relate to Asian and non-Asian students' persistence throughout their college years. Table 1 summarizes the details of the models.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Four Models to Predict Persistence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RESULTS**

In the first regression analysis for Model 1, we examined how the relationship between AI and SI measured in the first year and persistence after 3 years was different for Asian and non-Asian students. Results of this model made it clear that AI did not predict the outcome variable in a significant way for non-Asian students ($p > 0.05$). The relationship between SI and persistence was statistically different between Asian and non-Asian students ($p < 0.05$). For the former, given all other variables equal and an SI of 1, being an Asian student resulted in a decrease of .893 in the log of the odd of persisting in comparison to a non-Asian peer. In the odd ratio metric, one can say that, controlling for other variables and when SI is 1, the odd ratio between the persisting odds of Asian and non-Asian students is .409.
The fact that these odds ratios were lower than 1 for a positive SI, suggests that the more socially integrated an Asian student was at the first year, the less likely he/she would persist by the end of third year, in comparison with a non-Asian student of the same GPA, Degree Plan, AI and SI. For more detailed information, see table 2.

Table 2. Results of Logistic Regression for Model 1 when Persistence was measured at year 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coef.</th>
<th>Linearized Std. Err.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>3.38*</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree plan</td>
<td>.637</td>
<td>.272</td>
<td>2.34*</td>
<td>.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI at year 1(β₁)</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.308</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>.978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI at year 1(β₂)</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>.262</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>.891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian (β₃)</td>
<td>.993</td>
<td>1.065</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>.364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI *Asian (β₄)</td>
<td>.299</td>
<td>.394</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>.458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI*Asian (β₅)</td>
<td>- .893</td>
<td>.368</td>
<td>-2.43*</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant (β₀)</td>
<td>-4.157</td>
<td>1.641</td>
<td>-2.53*</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < .05, two-tailed. ** p < .01, two-tailed

In the second regression analysis for Model 2, it was observed that the relationship between SI in the first year and persistence after the sixth year was also significantly different between Asian and non-Asian students (p < 0.05).

Table 3. Results of Logistic Regression for Model 2 when Persistence was measured at year 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coef.</th>
<th>Linearized Std. Err.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree plan</td>
<td>.441</td>
<td>.244</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>.088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI at year 1(β₁)</td>
<td>.369</td>
<td>.207</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI at year 1(β₂)</td>
<td>- .407</td>
<td>.226</td>
<td>-1.80</td>
<td>.089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian (β₃)</td>
<td>-508</td>
<td>.992</td>
<td>-0.51</td>
<td>.615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI*Asian (β₄)</td>
<td>-.273</td>
<td>.309</td>
<td>-0.89</td>
<td>.388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI*Asian (β₅)</td>
<td>.881</td>
<td>.396</td>
<td>2.22*</td>
<td>.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant (β₀)</td>
<td>-3.055</td>
<td>1.742</td>
<td>-1.75</td>
<td>.097</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < .05, two-tailed. ** p < .01, two-tailed

Nonetheless, results of this analysis indicated that highly socially integrated Asian students were more likely to persist six years after enrollment than non-Asian students of the same level of academic and social integration,
GPA and Degree Plan. Controlling for other variables, an Asian student of an SI of 1 would have a higher probability of persisting or completing a degree after six years, than a non-Asian student of the same level of social integration. Again, in this model, AI seemed not to predict persistence at year six for both groups of students. Similarly, the connection between SI and the outcome variable for non-Asian international students was not statistically significant. For more detailed information, see table 3.

In the third regression analysis for Model 3, we investigated how the relationship between SI and AI in the third year and persistence after 3 years differed for Asian and non-Asian students. For non-Asian students, the more academically integrated they were in their third year, the more likely they were to persist by the end of that year (p < 0.05). When those students were compared to their Asian peers, the link between AI and persistence at the third year for Asian students was significantly different from that of non-Asian students (p < 0.01). With an AI of 1 and all other variables being equal, an Asian student was less likely to persist in relation to a non-Asian student with the same characteristics. As for social integration, the interaction effect of SI*GroupAsian was also significant (p < 0.05). However, the positivity of the coefficient for this interaction term indicated that at the same level of GPA, Degree plan, AI and a positive SI, being Asian increased his/her chance to persist after year three over that of non-Asians. In short, for non-Asian students, AI measured in the third year was positively related to persistence measured at the same year.

Table 4. Results of Logistic Regression for Model 3 when Persistence was measured at year 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coef.</th>
<th>Linearized Std. Err.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>2.28*</td>
<td>.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree plan</td>
<td>.361</td>
<td>.357</td>
<td>1.01*</td>
<td>.0328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI at year 3(β_1)</td>
<td>.886</td>
<td>.323</td>
<td>2.74*</td>
<td>.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI at year 3(β_2)</td>
<td>-.186</td>
<td>.320</td>
<td>-0.58</td>
<td>.570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian (β_3)</td>
<td>10.892</td>
<td>3.594</td>
<td>3.03**</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI*Asian (β_4)</td>
<td>-3.251</td>
<td>.908</td>
<td>-3.58**</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI*Asian (β_5)</td>
<td>3.022</td>
<td>1.114</td>
<td>2.71*</td>
<td>.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant (β_0)</td>
<td>-1.071</td>
<td>2.772</td>
<td>-2.55*</td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < .05, two-tailed. ** p < .01, two-tailed

On the other hand, SI did not significantly predict persistence for non-Asian students. It was also noted how the measure of an Asian student’s AI and SI from this year, when related to persistence after three years, was significantly different from the relationship for non-Asian students. Given everything else being equal, the more Asian students integrated
academically in the third year, the less likely they were to persist by the end of that year when compared to their non-Asian peers. On the other hand, when other variables such as AI, GPA and Degree plan were held equal between Asian and non-Asian students, more socially integrated Asian students in year three were more likely to persist after three years in college than non-Asians. For more detailed information, see table 4. In the fourth regression analysis for Model 4, we predicted persistence measured in year six by AI and SI measured in the year three. This relationship was not different for Asian and non-Asian students. The more academically integrated non-Asian students were in their third year, the more likely they were to persist or complete a program after six years (p < 0.05). Meanwhile, SI was negatively related to persistence of non-Asian students in this model (p < 0.05). However, there were no significant differences between Asian and non-Asian students in the relationship between AI and SI at the third year and persistence over a six-year time-span. For more detailed information, see table 5.

Table 5. Results of Logistic Regression for Model 4 when Persistence was measured at year 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coef.</th>
<th>Linearized Std. Err.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>2.81*</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree plan</td>
<td>.743</td>
<td>.310</td>
<td>2.40*</td>
<td>.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI at year 3(β₁)</td>
<td>.714</td>
<td>.256</td>
<td>2.79*</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI at year 3(β₂)</td>
<td>-.739</td>
<td>.277</td>
<td>-2.67*</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian (β₃)</td>
<td>.847</td>
<td>1.192</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>.489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI*Asian (β₄)</td>
<td>-.413</td>
<td>.301</td>
<td>-1.37</td>
<td>.191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI*Asian (β₅)</td>
<td>.237</td>
<td>.318</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>.468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant (β₀)</td>
<td>-5.425</td>
<td>1.938</td>
<td>-2.80*</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < .05, two-tailed. ** p < .01, two-tailed

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicated that some aspects of the relationship between academic and social integration and persistence differed for Asian and non-Asian students, while other aspects were similar. The difference between the two groups of students depended on the year of the undergraduate program in which the variables were measured. These results have implications for how we perceive the role of social and academic integration in Asian and non-Asian international undergraduate students at U.S. postsecondary institutions. Moreover, this study shows the importance of taking into account the cultural background of international students and
the importance of not assuming homogeneity in this vastly diverse group of students.

**Academic Integration**

Academic integration in the first year seemed to not be related to the odds of persisting for both Asian and non-Asian students. For both groups, academic integration measured in the first year was not a significant predictor of persistence after the third and sixth years. However, when looking at academic integration measured at year three, this variable positively predicted persistence for non-Asian international students at year three and year six. Moreover, a difference in the relationship between Asian and non-Asian students was apparent when persistence was measured at year three. Given every other variables equal at this year, being an Asian student was less likely to persist by the end of this year than being a non-Asian one. For non-Asian students, these results were in line with previous studies; however findings for Asian international students on the relationship between AI and persistence seemed to contradict existing literature of student persistence (Tinto, 1987; Mamiseishvili, 2012).

There could be a few explanations for this observed difference between Asian and non-Asian students. First, it could haven been the case that Asian students who were not doing well, were approached by faculty with the advice to integrate more academically. For non-Asian students, it might be more common, and less of an indicator of academic difficulties, to integrate academically. Conversely, Asian international students might integrate more often when they experience academic difficulties, which also make them more likely to drop out. Another explanation could be that Asian students received their resources in different places than their peers and academic staff. None of the items in the dataset we used captured the possibility that students might have sound academic help or advice from their family, which is common for Asian students (Heggins& Jackson, 2003). As Asian international students experience traditional values centred on their social community of friends and family (Triandis, Chen & Chan, 1998), they might be more likely to use those resources for support (Heggins& Jackson, 2003). Therefore, Asian students might not experience the same negative effect of not integrating as Western international students.

Future research should investigate how Asian students can be supported academically. As this study points out, academic integration of Asian students might not have the same positive effect on persistence experienced by non-Asians. Follow-up research should further investigate how postsecondary institutions can provide opportunities for Asian students to develop academically in a way that supports their persistence.

**Social Integration**
In terms of social integration and persistence, differences between Asian and non-Asian students were found when examining social integration in the first and third year. For all the students, the more socially integrated they were in their first year, the more likely these students were in persisting after the sixth year. However, the relationship between SI and persistence was significantly different for Asian and non-Asian students in three out of the four models. When SI and persistence were measured at the same year or with a gap of five years, Asian students were more likely to persist than non-Asian students, controlling for other variables. When SI and persistence were measured two years apart, Asians were found to be less likely to persist than their non-Asian peers, holding the other variables constant. These findings on social integration and persistence contradicted with the study on international students by Mamiseishvili (2012) but are in line with the original model on student persistence (Tinto, 1987).

One explanation for the difference in the relationship for Asian and non-Asian students, between social integration and persistence could be that these variables do not relate in a linear way. It could be that social integration is beneficial to persistence, as explained in the model of Tinto (1988), until a certain threshold. Above a certain amount of social integration, it may be that the integration is at cost of academic performance, and this is related to a lower likelihood of persistence. To further explain the relationship between the extent of social integration and persistence, more research is needed where the amount of time students spend on social activities is taken into account. Also, this study only had information about the social integration of international students relating to participation in fine arts activities, sports clubs, and school clubs. Future research should provide more clarity in the different types of social integration and their effect on college persistence.

Time points during undergraduate education

The year of the college degree in which the variables were measured appeared to be essential for how social and academic integration relate to persistence and how this is different for Asian and non-Asian students. As already argued in a previous study, the direction and strength of the factors influencing dropout behaviour may change over time (Nora, Barlow & Crisp, 2005). While there are not many differences between the persistence of Asian and non-Asian students predicted by academic and social integration measured at the first year, there is a significant difference in predicted persistence beyond three years when academic and social integration is measured in the third year. The difference between Asian and non-Asian students in the relationship between academic and social integration and persistence faded away when the two sets of variables were measured with 3 to 6 years in between. These results signified that the point
in time across six years of undergraduate study is essential in researching how academic and social integration relate to persistence and how this relationship is different for Asian and non-Asian students.

The fact that the point in time following enrolment impacts the difference in the relationship between integration and persistence between Asian and non-Asian students can be explained by the unique challenges Asian students face during their time abroad. Compared to Western international students, Asian students experience a relatively large cultural difference when coming to the U.S. For example, they experience a greater language barrier in integrating academically (Li, Faye, Bradley & Lan, 2015). As international students adapt over time, the challenges that Asian students face in their first year of study might be very different from the challenges they face later on in their degree. This might alter the way in which social and academic integration explains the persistence of Asian international students. Therefore we suggest that it is important for future research on persistence of international students to take into consideration their unique stages of challenges in their degree. Follow-up studies would be needed to shed light on the nature of student persistence for Asian students at different years of study in colleges and universities.

**IMPLICATIONS**

Although this study relied on a nationally collected data set and used appropriate statistical models, it has a few salient limitations. First of all, the group of Asian students consists of a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. As in the main conclusion of this study, this argues that international students are highly diverse in the factors that impact persistence, these subtleties can also apply to the group of Asian students. Even though literature clearly indicated that Asian students differ from non-Asian students, it can be questioned what the variance is within the group of Asian students. Thus, treating them as a single group does not give a clear picture of the diversity within the group. Future research is needed to investigate the differences between Asian students, for example, from different countries. Second, this study relied on multiple regression analysis as the single statistical approach. Even if this method provided a snapshot of how the independent variables predicted the outcome variable, it did not prove causal relationships or directional relationships between the dependent and independent variables. In order to address these limitations, some future directions for this study will be discussed in the next paragraph.

The limitations suggested a few future directions. First of all, another data set about this topic should be analyzed using similar approaches in order to confirm or disconfirm the findings of this study. It is also recommended that qualitative studies might be needed to obtain insight into the factors that help Asian students persist in American higher
education. Second of all, follow-up studies are needed to further explore the relationship among AI, SI and persistence along time by using more advanced statistical technique such as structural equation modeling (SEM). Using latent variables and growth models under an SEM framework might provide other ways to examine and analyze this kind of data set. Once those follow-up studies are conducted, a fuller understanding of the persistence of international Asian students can be achieved. This understanding would help students, their families, and institutions, as well as policy makers, to make better decisions regarding how to support international students with Asian cultural backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

In summation, this study revealed that the relationship between social and academic integration and persistence was different between Asian and non-Asian international undergraduate students. Equally importantly, the difference varied with the points in time at which the variables were measured. Even though further research has to provide more understanding of Asian students’ persistence, the findings of this study emphasize the importance of institutions accounting for international students’ cultural backgrounds in order to provide support services that optimally support their persistence. It is hoped that these insights inspire follow-up investigations that look more deeply into challenges faced by international student and how these are unique for students from different cultural backgrounds.

REFERENCES


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Exploring Sense of Belonging among Black International Students at an HBCU

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ABSTRACT

This study elucidates the experiences of HBCU (historically Black colleges and universities) students who are racially Black, but differ in nativity and nationality from their Black American peers. The purpose is to examine Black HBCU international students’ sense of belonging on campus. This study engages qualitative individual interviews with ten Black international HBCU students and utilizes the constant comparative analytic process. Findings revealed Black international HBCU students’ perceptions of race and nativity shape their university experiences as they sought to maintain national identity while adjusting to the HBCU environment and engaging in cross-cultural interactions with Black Americans. Recommendations include embracing a heterogeneous perspective when developing services, programs, and research studies related to the experiences of Black students.

Keywords: International Students, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Sense of Belonging, Qualitative

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are defined by their principal mission of educating African Americans and these institutions have been recognized for their success in fostering African American student satisfaction, achievement and retention at higher rates than predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007; Palmer, 2010; Perna, 2001). However, since their origination, HBCUs have also provided access to diverse populations outside of the African American community. Extant literature illustrates the experiences of these populations, particularly focusing on White students, faculty, and staff at
HBCUs (Conrad, Brier, & Braxton, 1997; Jackson & Daniels, 2005; Peterson & Hamrick, 2009).

I use the terms Black international student and foreign-born Black student interchangeably. Additionally, I use the terms African American student, native-born Black student, and Black American student interchangeably. Another student demographic who attend HBCUs are those who racially identify as Black, but are not native-born Americans. The national origin of these students is typically – although not always – from Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, or the Caribbean (Kent, 2007). Despite shared race, Black international students often have differences in culture, ethnicity, and language from native-born Black Americans (Kent, 2007). Though much literature on HBCUs and Black HBCU students is situated within a historical context that stems from slavery in the United States and later, the Civil Rights movement; this is not the heritage of all Black students who attend HBCUs, particularly those of whom are foreign-born. Still, studies on Black college students often combines native- and foreign-born Black students as a single demographic or does not include foreign-born Black student data at all (George Mwangi, 2014; Massey, Mooney, Torres, & Charles, 2007). Consequently, the experiences of Black international students as they transition and adjust to the college environment are not extensively acknowledged in research.

**PURPOSE OF STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to examine Black international students’ sense of belonging at an HBCU and the factors impacting their sense of belonging. Understanding this issue is significant to these students’ ultimate academic success as numerous scholars link academic and social sense of belonging to overall student satisfaction and retention (Tinto, 1993; Tovar, Simon, & Lee, 2009). In addition, this study’s findings elucidate intragroup dynamics and cross-cultural interactions within the HBCU environment. Throughout history, HBCUs have shown consistent interest in Africa and the Caribbean through hiring of faculty and enrollment of students from these regions as well as through participation in study abroad/exchange programs (Awokoya & Mann, 2011). Over the past 25 years, 21% of all foreign-born Black students received PhDs from HBCUs (Baskerville, Berger, & Smith, 2008). However, in their study on HBCU students Awokoya and Mann (2011) found, “particularly within the context of HBCUs, the within-group diversity as it relates to ethnicity, class, language, and national and geographic origin are often minimized in conversations about the Black student population,” (p. 24). Although there has been a strong and consistent foreign-born Black presence at HBCUs, there is a dearth of empirical research regarding their educational experiences at these institutions. This
study elucidates the experiences of HBCU students who are racially Black, but differ in nativity and nationality from their Black American peers. The research questions for this study are:

- How do Black international HBCU students describe their sense of belonging on campus?
- What factors impact Black international HBCU students’ perceptions of sense of belonging?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper is framed using the concept of sense of belonging. I first define and review research on this concept within the postsecondary context. Next, I present literature that examines sense of belonging among Students of Color and international students.

College Students’ Sense of Belonging

Higher education scholars have developed a large body of research examining how students experience sense of belonging and the factors impacting sense of belonging, leading to a number of definitions of the term (Strayhorn, 2012). However, for the purpose of this study, I use the definition as advanced by Hurtado and Carter (1997), which suggests sense of belonging is an individual's sense of identification or positioning in relation to the college community that reflects upon the individual’s mood, emotions, and attitude. This definition considers both cognitive and affective factors impacting students’ experiences (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Research on sense of belonging in higher education is often emphasized within the areas of retention and persistence. For example, in his seminal theory on student departure, Vincent Tinto (1993) concluded that students’ level of integration into a university’s academic and social systems, perceived shared values with the institution, and commitment to the institution reflects a sense of belonging and “fit” within the campus environment. Students are at greater risk of attrition if they perceive a lack of fit “with the social and intellectual fabric of institutional life” (Tinto, 1993, p. 50) or if they are “unable to establish...personal bonds that are the basis for membership in the communities of the institution” (p. 56). Conversely, higher levels of sense of belonging or fit increase the likelihood of student satisfaction and persistence at the institution.

Several studies since Tinto’s early work conclude that students’ sense of belonging is highly influenced by perceived rapport from peers and faculty (Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow & Salomone, 2003; Strayhorn, 2008; Thomas, 2014). Meaningful interpersonal relationships, systems of support and resources, and feelings of being accepted and valued, have all been cited as instrumental to sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn,
Extant research provides a wealth of evidence that an increased sense of belonging in college is associated with positive psychological, academic, and persistence outcomes (Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Strayhorn, 2012).

Students of Color and Sense of Belonging

While Tinto’s focus on student integration is often cited in contemporary research on collegiate sense of belonging, it is also criticized for placing too much onus on students, rather than on institutions, for developing sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Strayhorn, 2008). This is particularly relevant for Students of Color at predominantly White institutions (PWIs), whose successful adjustment to college life is often predicated on how welcome they feel by their institution (Guiffrida, 2005; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005).

Scholars have engaged in research focusing specifically on sense of belonging for Students of Color, the results of which suggest that hostile campus racial climates are associated with lesser sense of belonging and interactions with peers, as well as lower rates of persistence and degree attainment (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Johnson et al., 2007; Maramba & Velasquez, 2012; Santos, Ortiz, Morales, & Rosales, 2007). Interactions with peers from different racial/ethnic groups also impact perceptions of racial climate and subsequently affect students’ sense of belonging (Hurtado et al., 1999). Positive cross-racial/ethnic interactions often result in greater openness to diversity as well as gains in critical thinking and academic engagement for both White students and Students of Color (Milem, 2003; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001). Research illustrates that Students of Color often engage across racial difference in developing peer groups (Antonio, 2001). In their study on interracial interaction in college, Hurtado, Dey, and Treviño (1994) found that Students of Color were more likely than White students to interact across race and the interracial interaction for Black students was most often related to social activities. Additionally, Maramba and Velasquez (2012) found that increased learning about one’s racial/ethnic group had a considerable positive impact on Students’ of Color sense of belonging and interpersonal relationships with other racial/ethnic groups.

African American students who attend HBCUs versus PWIs demonstrate different outcomes socially and academically, which connects to sense of belonging (Davis, 1991; Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002). Institutional culture related to community building, peer engagement, and faculty interaction are all factors found to positively impact the experiences of African American students at HBCUs (Davis, 1991; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Palmer & Gasman, 2008). African
American HBCU students also have higher GPAs and report greater campus engagement and satisfaction in their educational experiences, particularly when compared to their peers at PWIs (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002). In contrast, research demonstrates that African American students at PWIs often feel isolated, experience a hostile racial climate, and are less academically integrated on their campuses (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Research suggests HBCUs provide students with an opportunity to engage in African American culture. In their study examining the experiences of Black students at HBCUs and PWIs, Fries-Britt & Turner (2002) found students “had gained a good sense of Black culture, experienced a degree of cohesiveness with it, and appreciated how effective the community could be when it works together.” (p. 320). Thus, HBCUs can provide an environment where African Americans can experience a shared identity with peers and confidence in this identity. Yet, researchers also recognize that not every student attending HBCUs are African American (Closson & Henry, 2008), but scholarship has not extensively examined the experiences of Black HBCU students who are not American and may not identify with Black American culture.

**International Students and Sense of Belonging**

Research on international students often focuses on psychosocial factors (psychological well-being, homesickness, loss of identity) and sociocultural factors (cultural norms, intercultural contact, communication) related to the adjustment process (Tseng & Newton, 2002; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001; Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Belongingness has only recently been extended to studies on international student adjustment. For example, Glass and Westmont-Campbell’s (2014) quantitative study found that sense of belonging increased cross-cultural interaction between international and host country students, and enhanced international students’ academic performance. Additionally, the researchers found that discriminatory experiences had a negative impact on belongingness among these students, while participation in co-curricular activities had a positive effect (Glass & Westmont-Campbell, 2014). However, the students sampled were from PWIs and only seven percent of the sample identified racially as Black.

Several scholars conclude that to effectively engage with the campus community, it is important that international students interact regularly with native peers and professors (Glass, Kociolek, Wongtrirat, Lynch & Cong, 2015; Hendrickson, Rosen & Aune, 2011; Ying & Han, 2006). Conversely, Ward and her colleagues (2001) suggest that it is important for international students to have a peer network of other international students, which can provide mutual support and understanding as well as alleviate homesickness (Ward et al., 2001). Overall, it appears
that international students adjust more positively if they have social networks comprised of relationships with other international students (unicultural or multicultural networks) as well as with native students, staff, and faculty (bicultural networks) (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Lin & Yi, 1997). When international students are not able to achieve a sense of belonging in their campus environment, outcomes can include anxiety, hostility, lowered self-esteem, social withdrawal, and depression (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Zhang & Goodson, 2011).

Scholars have examined sense of belonging among international students and among Students of Color, highlighting within both populations that factors such as cross-cultural interactions, engagement with faculty, self-identity, and peer groups contribute to sense of belonging. Still, there are few studies that explore the experiences of Black international students at HBCUs, where these students share racial sameness but have differences across ethnicity, nationality, and nativity from their African American peers. The current study addresses this literature gap.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

I utilize a multi-participant descriptive case study approach, which is appropriate given my interest in how Black international students attending an HBCU perceive their sense of belonging and how contextual conditions impact their sense of belonging (Merriam, 2009). This study relies upon students’ in-depth descriptions of their lived experiences (Merriam, 2009).

**Research Site and Sample**

Data were collected from students enrolled at Heritage University (pseudonym), a mid-sized, HBCU in the mid-Atlantic region, in which approximately five percent of the student population is comprised of international students, the majority originating from the Caribbean and Africa. Ten students participated in this study. Each of the participants racially identified as Black and was classified as an international student. Participants originated from Nigeria, Kenya, Jamaica, Haiti, Senegal, Trinidad, Ghana, and Eritrea (see Table 1 for student characteristics).

**Data Collection**

Participants were recruited who met three criteria: 1) an undergraduate or graduate student at Heritage University; 2) an international student; and 3) racially identifies as Black. I used open sampling, allowing any individual who met these criteria to participate. Open sampling is recommended for early stages of qualitative research to gain a diverse sample (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), reflecting the nature of this emerging study. Several strategies were employed to recruit participants. A
recruitment email was sent to the international students office in addition to presidents of campus organizations likely to engage Black foreign-born students (e.g. Caribbean student organization, African student organization). Participants were also asked to recommend others eligible for this study as means of snowball sampling (Small, 2009).

Table 1: Student Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Year in School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stacy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Trinidad</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jake</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>3rd year transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This study employed 1:1 semi-structured, in-depth interviews lasting 60 to 90 minutes. Because the research questions emphasize how students described their sense of belonging and the factors that impacted their sense of belonging, the interview protocol included questions focused on students’ perceived sense of belonging, collegiate experiences and transition to college; interactions with faculty and classmates inside and outside of the classroom environment; and students’ perceptions of their race/ethnicity, culture, and nativity/nationality as well as whether race/ethnicity, culture, and nativity/nationality impacted their college transition. The semi-structured nature of the interview protocol allowed me flexibility to omit some questions, add additional questions, and change the ordering of questions as needed during the interview in order to better grasp how participants made meaning of their experiences (Yin, 2003). All participants were asked permission to record the interviews for later transcription and all participants were assigned pseudonyms.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Data analysis occurred in three stages throughout this project, using Merriam’s (2009) constant comparative method of case study analysis. I uploaded interview transcripts to NVIVO 10, a software program that I used to code and manage all of my data. I first engaged in multiple reads and comparative examinations of the data (Creswell, 2008). Through this process I initially developed a set of inductive codes primarily relating to
how students described their transition to college, perceptions of their collegiate experiences, and impact of their social identities on their college experience. While a deductive approach was used to identify sensitizing concepts from the conceptual framework and sense of belonging literature prior to data collection, an inductive approach was also adopted allowing me to remain open to new and emerging themes throughout the course of the analysis (Merriam, 2009). Thus, some codes were developed from the literature and others were developed in-vivo from comments made by participants.

I next engaged in member checking to increase the trustworthiness of my initial coding scheme (Krefting, 1999). Member checking involves testing the interpretations of the data that I developed with the research participants (Krefting, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I conducted formal member checking with the students as a follow up to their interview. During the coding process, I provided students with their individual coded transcripts as well as my initial coding scheme to gain their feedback. The participants were asked to read through the documents and comment upon my codes and preliminary findings. I used their reactions and suggestions to refine my coding system before moving into further analysis.

Both during my initial coding process and after initial codes were developed, I engaged in comparing and connecting emerging codes and categories (Merriam, 2009). I used NVIVO 10 to group together data by code in order to reassemble the data and view patterns and themes within and across the narratives. Through this process and comparing across the different narratives, I refined my coding system, reduced my number of original codes, and connected the remaining to larger categories. Lastly, I began to pull together themes and develop a storyline (Merriam, 2009). During this process, the three primary themes that emerged across the data were 1) students’ perceptions of Black Americans prior to matriculation; 2) students’ perceptions of themselves and their perceived campus “fit;” and 3) campus climate and interactions with HBCU peers.

In addition to member checking, I used reflexivity to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of my data. Reflexivity served a variety of purposes in my research. It aligns with my epistemological position and methodological approach (social constructivism), which requires the researcher’s “self” to be present in the study (Charmaz, 2006). Additionally, reflexivity provides another form of credibility and trustworthiness to research data because it allows researchers to be conscious of how their background can influence how they collect and interpret data (Krefting, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I primarily engaged in reflexivity through memo writing, in which I would include my own personal reflections. I processed reflexivity by reflecting on my researcher identity, considering the researcher/ participant relationship, and reflecting on my social
positioning (Krefting, 1999). When I study the experiences of Black immigrants, my own ethnicity/nativity often becomes more salient as I have one parent who is a Black immigrant. Additionally, as an undergraduate student I spent time attending college in another country. In some ways, I shared similarities to the students regarding my race, heritage, and college experiences. It is possible that my identities and experiences helped me to more quickly build rapport with students in recruiting and conducting interviews. Yet, it was also important to approach this study knowing that participants would have experiences that would differ from my own. Keeping this at the forefront was the fact that I am also an outsider researcher to these students as an American-born individual who did not attend an HBCU. While this outsider identity provided a level of distance from my participants that helped keep their narratives at the center, it was also a challenge because I do not have personal experience with the HBCU context and had to learn that context through the process of this research study. Both my insider/outside identities shaped my research design and interpretations; thus, I sought assistance through member checking to reflect on these factors and remain aware of how they might influence my work.

FINDINGS

Findings illustrate how Black international students in this study described their sense of belonging at their HBCU and the factors impacting their sense of belonging. Three primary themes emerged across students’ narratives. One theme reflects how students’ perceptions of Black Americans prior to matriculation impacted their initial transition and sense of belonging on campus. Additionally, students’ perceptions of themselves and their perceived “fit” with the campus appeared to impact how they described their sense of belonging. Thirdly, students described their campus engagement and interactions.

Pre-College Perceptions Impacting Sense of Belonging

Students were socialized into perceptions about Black Americans before ever coming to the United States. This exposure came from the media as well as from family and friends in their home countries, some who had been to the United States. Unfortunately, much of this socialization fostered negative perceptions. Therefore, students’ beliefs about Black Americans prior to enrolling in college appeared to make them cautious in their initial transition to campus. For example, most students described negative pre-enrollment perceptions of Black Americans with some examples being “close-minded,” and “having a defeatist mentality.” Monica stated that much of what she knew of Black Americans was what she saw on television, which was a portrayal of this group as “having high rates of
incarceration and government assistance and lacking ambition.” Most participants described negative portrayals of Black Americans in the media. These images portrayed Black Americans one-dimensionally and left some participants feeling a need to differentiate themselves from these stereotypes once in the United States. Peter explained that prior to attending college, family members told him to “Make sure people know I am from Trinidad because Black men are often mistreated in the U.S.” For Peter as well others in the study, the pre-college perceptions they had about Blacks in the United States left them feeling cautious about this population as well as feeling a need to distinguish themselves from Black Americans as a protective measure due to the U.S. racial climate.

While students primarily discussed negative preconceptions about Black Americans, this was also complicated by what some participants described as a “hip hop” culture in which Black Americans through music and clothing were perceived more positively as “cool” and “resistant to the mainstream.” However, this perception was also situated within a one-dimensional context. Only three students specifically stated positive pre-enrollment perceptions of Black Americans such as being “creative,” “self-expressive” and “having courage to try to change their community/environment for the better.” Some students noted that prior to coming to the United States, they were aware of the race-related struggles that Black Americans faced and named particular issues such as police brutality, discrimination in the workplace, and “unusually high incarceration rates that can’t just be a coincidence.” However, only Jessica described feeling a sense of solidarity over these issues with Black Americans, primarily due to the negative treatment and stereotypes she experienced because of being Haitian. Other participants expressed that prior to coming to the United States, while they could feel a level of empathy towards the experiences of Black Americans, they did not feel personally connected to U.S. racial issues.

**Sense of Belonging, Sense of Self, and Campus “Fit”**

Students described their perceptions of self-identity, particularly regarding their race, ethnicity, and nationality as impacting their perceived level of fit at their university. While students shared racial-sameness with their Black American peers, each expressed feeling more connected to their ethnic identity/nationality than to their Black racial identity. For example, Stacy explained “I am Jamaican first and Black second…even though everyone here [at her HBCU] looks like me, the second I open my mouth people realize I am not from here [the U.S.] and that sets me apart.” As an international student, Stacy’s nationality is more salient in her university environment and her Jamaican accent identifies her as different from her native-born peers. Similarly, Monica expressed perceptions of her own

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- 1024 -
Black identity in relation to what others may perceive, “I look the same, but I’m also different.” When asked to expound upon this statement Monica further explained that most people assume she is African American until they learn her name or hear her accent. Still, both Stacy and Monica described some comfort in “blending in” with their fellow Black American peers on their HBCU campus, which differed from their experience off campus where they were a racial minority in the United States. Yet, these students as well as other participants verbalized that blending in racially on their campus did not automatically create a feeling of belonging at their institution because internally these students still felt they stood out or were different due to their nationality and nativity status.

As a transfer student, Kelly had a different experience of fit related to her social identities, stating that because almost everyone at her HBCU is Black, she is less aware of her race than she was when she attended a predominantly White institution (PWI) before transferring to an HBCU. At the PWI, she felt that because there were so few Black students, she was seen as “the Black girl” among her peers, but now at an HBCU almost everyone is Black and so her peers see her as “the Kenyan/African girl.” While both perceptions are forms of labeling, Kelly felt the HBCU environment acknowledged her cultural heritage in a way that she appreciated, rather than identifying her predominantly through a racial label she found less salient.

While students were the racial majority at their HBCU, some struggled with the notion of being a racial minority in the United States because they came from predominantly Black countries. Students’ perceptions of race were based on their home-country context, and those who had not examined issues of race in the U.S. expressed confusion or dissonance regarding the dominance of race in U.S. society. Rose expressed that African Americans “talk about race constantly” and that she did not see race as such a major definer of her identity before coming to the United States. Instead students discussed other social identities that were more salient to them based on the systems of their home country. These included religion, gender, class, and ethnic group/tribe. Most students came from predominantly Black countries or countries where Black people were not considered a minority in number. Different perceptions of race and racial issues in the United States occasionally created tension with or distance from Black American peers when racially charged incidents arose in the U.S. media. For example, Jason explained,

When that whole thing happened in Ferguson [shooting of Michael Brown, an unarmed Black teenager, by a White police officer] I felt like most of my [Black American] classmates thought the police
officer was wrong. But I wasn’t so sure and that made things tough between me and my [Black American] roommate for a while.

Jason’s experience was not unlike those of other participants who expressed a desire to better understand forms of systemic oppression that exist in the U.S., but felt they lacked a way to ask questions or express doubt with their Black American peers and faculty without causing offense.

However, some students believed that being at an HBCU provided an opportunity to share their culture, beliefs, and perspectives with their native-born peers as well as learn more about Black American culture, beliefs and perspectives. Sam expressed this in stating that showing respect for and learning about African Americans and their history makes African Americans more inclined to do the same regarding his culture. Other participants made similar statements such as “I’m here to learn, not just from my professors, but also from the other students,” and “I think if I’m open, they’ll [students] be open too.”

**Sense of Belonging and Student Engagement**

Participants described the general campus climate as positive. Peter emphasized, “Yes, for me being accepted is automatic because I have established myself as a student first and my cultural identity is simply a part of who I am and does not determine what I can contribute to this community.” However, he also expressed that due to the large number of African Americans at his institution and because many activities and events revolve around this population at an HBCU, not getting involved in these activities would result in “…missing out on a lot socially.” Most participants emphasized that their time as HBCU students was primarily focused on obtaining a good education and a good job in the future and less about getting involved on campus. Jessica explained, “I have to work extra hard because English is not my first language, it’s my third language so schoolwork takes me a long time. I can’t screw up because of partying a lot or joining too many groups.” Rose also expressed that focusing on her academic work meant sacrificing a social life, “I left my husband and child back home [Ghana] to get my degree, so although I’d like to get more involved at school, I have to be focused on my academics.” None of the participants held formal leadership positions on their campus, although some participated in student organizations and/or attended school events outside of the classroom. The support services office for international students provided trips into the local community and social events geared towards international students.
Students also described engaging in ethnic/cultural practices and having predominantly foreign-born friends. Some discussed the importance of connecting with a cultural or religious organization in the local community that was not campus-affiliated. Monica explained, “As an African student, I feel like I have more in common with Africans and can just be myself around them…they understand what I am going through and who I am without me having to explain.” Some students voiced that they could more easily relate to peers who were from their own culture or who were also dealing with culture shock/transition to the United States.

Participants expressed that similar to the messages they received from the media about Black Americans, some of their Black American peers stereotyped international students based on stereotypes they had been exposed to as well. Jennifer explained, “I feel like some of my American classmates think that we [Jamaicans] are really stuck up, which is just not true.” Kelly also emphasized that some of her African American friends were surprised by how metropolitan some parts of Africa are, stating, “TV in America only shows the poverty side [in Africa] and my [American] classmates have said they don’t learn much about Africa in school before coming to college.” The narratives from Jennifer and Kelly highlight that while the international students within this study had stereotypes about Black Americans, their Black American peers also had stereotypes about them. Peer engagement had the capacity to help mitigate these stereotypes, but as aforementioned many of the international students in this study described having social groups primarily comprised of other international students.

While participants perceived stereotypes between themselves and their African American peers, each explained that overall they felt respected by African American students and faculty at their university and that being foreign-born did not have a negative impact on their college experience. Findings also suggest that for most participants, their pre-college perceptions of Black Americans shifted over time and with engagement at their HBCU. Specifically, eight of the participants expressed their perceptions of Black Americans have changed in a positive way since attending an HBCU. Stacy stated “Attending an HBCU has helped me to see that Black Americans have a strong community and here [Heritage University] treat each other like family.” Similarly Sam explained, “Being at [Heritage University] I realize now that my previous thoughts about African Americans were mostly just stereotypes. The [African American] students at my school work hard and want the same thing I do, to be successful.”

Overall, stereotypes students were exposed to about Black Americans often led to initial distancing from these peers and feelings of uneasiness on their HBCU campus as emphasized by Jake, “I had heard all of these stories about Black people in America and when I first got here
[Heritage University] I didn’t want to say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing…it was hard.” Jake’s preconceived notions about Black Americans before coming to college later impacted his behavior and sense of belonging once he arrived, which made his initial college transition more challenging. However, the data suggest that over time, in addition to an evolving and more positive perception of Black Americans came a greater sense of belonging among students in the study. As aforementioned, Stacy began to see her campus as a community and family. Similarly Jason expressed, “Now that I’m in my second year, I feel more comfortable here and a lot of that is because of my international and American friends.” For the participants, sense of belonging was tied to moving beyond stereotypical perceptions and messages about Black Americans that they were socialized around before coming to the United States.

DISCUSSION

Findings demonstrate international Black students at HBCUs can experience challenges and improvements to their sense of belonging relative to their own perceptions and self-identity as well as their campus environment and interactions. Over time these students often felt greater sense of belonging as a result of positive campus experiences, but still appeared to see themselves on the periphery of mainstream campus culture. Because literature suggests, “belonging needs take on increased significance in environments or situations that individuals experiences as different, unfamiliar, or foreign,” (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 10), understanding these students’ experiences and perceptions may be critical to their ultimate success in college.

Stereotypes and racial identity were discussed as an initial barrier to belongingness on campus. The students interviewed each had negative preconceptions about Black Americans before enrolling at their university, which for many led to initial distancing and a lack of making deep connections with their African American peers. While research shows that positive socializing and connecting across difference can increase sense of belonging (Glass et al., 2015; Milem, 2003), for participants this may have been hindered by early stereotypes. Separation was reinforced when participants did not relate to Black Americans’ perception of race as a central part of their identity and experience. When Students of Color behave in ways that are not considered congruent with their race or distance themselves from their racial community, sense of belonging can be negatively impacted (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007). For participants, their nativity and nationality were most salient in how they defined their identity, which is a theme found in much of the literature regarding Black immigrants (Fries-Britt, George Mwangi, & Peralta, 2014; George Mwangi & Fries-
Britt, 2015; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Overall, although the participants “looked like everyone else” at their university due to racial sameness, they saw themselves as different.

A second reason for an initial lack of sense of belonging was a lack of campus engagement. Students reasoned that they were involved less in social activities due to feeling a responsibility to themselves and their families to be academically successful and obtain a U.S. college education as international students. However, literature highlights that campus involvement can actually enhance academic outcomes (Strayhorn, 2012). Participants’ heavy academic focus may reduce their ability and/or desire to participate in other areas of college life and feel part of their college culture. Students may appear “invisible” to many at their university because although they are racially the same as most of the student population, they lack social engagement with parts of their campus environment. Unfortunately, this invisibility may lead to the needs and voices of these students going unheard by the broader campus community.

Participants often sought out friends who were also foreign-born and did not frequently develop close relationships with African Americans. The students stated that they felt more comfortable in groups with foreign-born peers; yet, this lack of cross-cultural communication and interaction can reinforce tension and stereotypes (Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Jackson, 2010). In addition, unlike African Americans who may choose an HBCU because they want to be among others of the same race, only two of the research participants gave this as a reason for attending their institutions. One of these students, Kelly, purposefully sought out African American peer groups and found that through informally engaging with these individuals, they were also able to learn about each other. Kelly also believed that her student experience and personal growth was enhanced by these interactions. Kelly’s experience highlights that engaging with native-born Black peers may help foreign-born Black HBCU students become more engaged with their university and alleviate stereotypes. This is also reinforced in the literature, which suggests that Students of Color and international students can experience greater sense of belonging when engaging across difference (Glass et al., 2015; Milem, 2003; Whitt et al., 2001).

Although most of the participants did not have close relationships with Black American students, each believed it was important to learn about Black American culture while in the United States. Being at an HBCU appears to have increased participants’ interest in this and over time alleviated some of the negative assumptions they had about African Americans prior to enrollment. Still, while being in a majority-Black environment provides them with exposure to Black American culture and thus the opportunity to learn about it; none of the participants spoke of
formal measures that their university took to intentionally engage them in cross-cultural interactions or dialogue with African Americans. It appeared that much of the onus to engage cross culturally fell upon the students, rather than through interventions at the campus level. Harper and Nichols (2008) suggest, “Many educators and administrators erroneously assume the mere presence of diverse student populations will compel them to interact with and learn from each other’s differences” (p. 212). If foreign-born Black students primarily engage with other foreign-born students and are not engaged in meaningful interactions with African Americans, these two sub-populations may not optimize opportunities to learn from one another.

The ability to engage across difference is not completely predicated by students. Campus climate plays a predominant role in whether students can engage across difference in a positive manner (Hurtado et al., 1999). As aforementioned, despite suggesting a positive campus climate, most participants expressed they did not feel part of the African American community and culture on their campus and thus remained outsiders as HBCU students. This is despite their racial sameness with Black American students at their institution, whom their university is committed to serving. Awokoya and Mann (2011) suggest that HBCUs may gloss over the intra-group differences and dynamics on their campuses. However, higher education researchers have begun to highlight the heterogeneity within the Black college student demographic (George Mwangi, 2014; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Harper & Nichols, 2008; Stewart, 2009) and the interview data reflects the importance of this agenda. The students in this study want to learn more about Black American culture; yet, some do not want to risk removing themselves from the comfort zones they have created with other foreign-born students. This is an issue that HBCU administrators and faculty can address in order to create a campus climate that provides opportunities for Black international students to become more engaged at their institution and pursue opportunities for cross-cultural interaction with Black American students.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Higher education practice and research often emphasize the college recruitment of international students and it is only in recent years that U.S. higher education is turning to a focus on the retention and success of these students (Choudaha & Schulmann, 2014; Lee, 2010). Yet, even within this research, much of it centers on predominantly White institutions (PWIs) and international students of Asian descent (George Mwangi, Peralta, Fries-Britt & Daoud, 2016; Lee & Rice, 2007; Olivas & Li, 2006). By focusing on sense of belonging, this study considers how international students experience higher education beyond enrollment and pushes scholarship
forward on these experiences by centering on diverse institutional types and students (HBCUs and Black students from Africa and the Caribbean). Through this study, I share the narratives of Black international students, a demographic still little acknowledged in higher education research. It is important for higher education institutions to recognize and accommodate this growing population of students who are an integral part of campus communities. Without this understanding, colleges and universities may not be providing these students with the tools and resources needed for them to be successful in their educational endeavors and personal growth. This is especially important for HBCUs, an institutional type cited as working to increase its global profile and foster stronger internationalization strategies (Pitre Davis, 2013).

It is important that practitioners embrace a heterogeneous perspective when developing services and programs for Black students (George Mwangi & Fries-Britt, 2015). Awokoya and Mann (2011) suggest HBCUS do not emphasize intragroup differences among their Black population. Yet, while many Black students attend HBCUs to build relationships with other same-race individuals or to explore their racial identity (Perna, 2001), there are also HBCU students, such as the foreign-born Black students in this study, who do not fully relate to the African American community at their institution or feel part of a shared Black experience (at least initially). Thus, these universities should continue to be intentional in working to understand and identify the needs and perceptions of this sub-population in order for students to attain college success and satisfaction. In addition to national origin, it is also important that practitioners acknowledge the diversity of religion, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and other characteristics of their Black students in order to build community, instead of assume community, among this student population at HBCUS or at other institutional types.

It is important for higher education practitioners to be intentional in providing opportunities for foreign-born Black students and native-born Black students to interact with and learn from one another. The students in this study stated they were interested in sharing their culture and learning about African American culture. Yet, without formal processes for this, it appears international students might remain in peer groups with other foreign-born students in order to maintain their comfort zone or due to stereotypes Black native- and foreign-born students have about one another. Without this interaction, these stereotypes and tensions will likely continue to exist. Strategies that universities can utilize to increase cross-cultural communication include 1) pairing Black international students with an African American student “cross-cultural partner;” 2) developing formal events where both groups can have dialogue about student issues, intragroup dynamics, and/or the African Diaspora; 3) reframing curriculum on Black
studies and history to also reflect/integrate a global or diasporic perspective; and 4) encouraging and supporting collaborations between Black diaspora student organizations (e.g. Black Student Union, Caribbean Student Association, and African Student Association) on events that can create greater dialogue and learning from each other. Creating greater within-group peer engagement at HBCUs and other higher education institutions for Black students may assist in intentionally alleviating some of the initial tension and social distancing described by participants in this study.

I suggest future researchers use a heterogeneous lens when studying the experiences of Black students in higher education and engage in research related to Black student intragroup dynamics. Researchers should continue to complicate the historically perpetuated concept of in-group sameness within this demographic (George Mwangi, 2014; George Mwangi & Fries-Britt, 2015) study suggests there is much diversity and dynamism as well as tension and stereotyping within this population that can be explored. It should not be assumed that Black students would find commonalities or engage with other Black students because they are of the same race. Instead, researchers should explore how Black students define their multiples identities and how campuses can create inclusive environments to support students’ identities and needs. HBCUs are ideal sites to explore this issue because of their higher proportion of Black students than at predominantly White institutions. However, research on intragroup dynamics and diversity within the Black student population can and should be explored within other higher education settings as well.

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Realities and Realizations: Reflections on a Social Work Exchange Program between the United States and China

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ABSTRACT

China has a long and complex history of political, economic, and educational shifts that have resulted in and from changing cultural values. Over time, the significance and format of social work education in China has changed, as has the need for professionally educated social workers that can support the ever-evolving social needs of China. To this end, some Chinese schools have begun to partner with schools in the U.S. to support the professionalizing of social work in China. This article presents the reflections of faculty and students involved in an exchange program for Chinese students to study in a U.S.-based master of social work program. Expectations, realities, needs, and recommendations of both faculty and students are discussed.

Keywords: cultural exchange programs, international social work education

The social work profession in mainland China has had a turbulent history, affecting social work practice and education in China. Changes to China’s economy, and resultant social problems, have led Chinese universities to place greater emphasis on training a new generation of social workers. In a number of cases, Chinese universities have reached out to American universities to learn about U.S. social work practice. The purpose of this paper is to reflect on the first year experiences of faculty and students involved in an educational exchange program between the Chongqing
Technology and Business University (CTBU) in Chongqing, China and Widener University in Pennsylvania, United States.

**History of Social Work and Social Work Education in China**

According to Fang (2013), the history of social work education in China has run parallel to the economic and national changes that have influenced the way social welfare problems have been defined and addressed. Originally, social problems in China were addressed using a “clan-based model,” whereby villages and ancestral family organizations managed local social welfare needs (Shu, 2013, p. 18). From the 1920s through the 1940s, social work as a profession expanded, with over twenty universities creating social welfare departments (Liu, Sun, & Anderson, 2013; Shu, 2013).

After 1952, social work programs, and consequently social work education programs, in China were considered to be “serving the capitalists” (Liu et al., 2013, p. 180); as a result, social work fell out of favor. In the early 1980s, new policies were developed to modernize and industrialize China, leading to a resurgence of social work education programs (Fang, 2013; Feng, 2013; Shu; 2013).

One of the challenges facing social work education programs in China has been “the task of indigenization” (Liu et al., 2013, p. 192). Because the social work profession has waxed and waned in China, current Chinese social work educators lack professional experience and curriculum development experience, and struggle with providing practice opportunities for their students (Lui et al., 2013). Although China has made progress with reestablishing social work education, there remains a need to support China’s efforts to create culturally contextual social work programs that incorporate Chinese values.

**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

**Program for Educating Social Work Students**

During the Fall 2015 semester, five CTBU students participated in two distance-learning courses in social work (one policy course and one practice course) from their Chongqing location. As part of the two online introductory courses, two Widener University faculty members traveled to China to provide five days of intensive learning to finalize course content and prepare the students for their Spring semester in the U.S. During the Spring 2016 semester, three CTBU students traveled to the U.S. to participate in three campus-based policy and practice courses at Widener University. The goal of this one-year exchange was to bridge undergraduate coursework taken in China in a variety of substantive areas, with future graduate coursework to be taken in the U.S. in social work.
Faculty Expectations versus Realities

Faculty prepared for the Fall 2015 courses according to the format and methods used in their parallel U.S.-based courses. Almost immediately the faculty realized there would be difficulties using typical U.S. instruction techniques to educate the CTBU students. For example, although the students were adept at using technology, they were not accustomed to accessing course materials, such as syllabi and assignments, online, to viewing the PowerPoint presentations being used to instruct or to being required to upload papers or participate in message board discussions. In addition, due to the Chinese government’s restrictive internet access policies, certain systems of communication and course tools, such as Skype and YouTube videos, were not available. Also, while the students were able to verbally communicate in English, they needed significant support with their writing skills.

Faculty Narrative. We (the U.S. instructors) found the experience of teaching in China to be enlightening. The high value that Chinese citizens place on education was evidenced by the ambitious and extensive coursework taken by our students, by the hospitality and respect shown to us by both students and faculty, and by the level at which students engaged the material we were presenting. We were honored with several meals that included not only high-level CTBU administrators, but also government representatives. Additionally, the students were serious and engaged in the coursework, balancing both their intensive time with us with examinations and lectures in their other courses. The campus and surrounding neighborhood were active with student activities and academic studies from early morning until late into the evening. In fact, during the week, students would attend class with us from 2 pm to 7 pm each day, share meals with us as often as possible, and take us to local sites, all so they could learn more about social work and American culture, as well as practice their English.

Both the policy and practice courses were designed to introduce students to social work as practiced in the U.S., as a precursor to the students’ matriculation into a U.S.-based program and internship. Understandably, many of the Western ideologies, values, and theories that predicate social work education in the U.S. were novel to the Chinese students. Also, because many U.S. social welfare policies are based in the history of migration and modernization in the U.S., the students did not have background knowledge and experience to contextualize their new learning. For these reasons, our educational content had to attend not only to the “what” and “how” of U.S. social work, but also to the far more abstract and elusive “why” of U.S. social work.

In addition to course content related issues, the students had different learning style needs than those around which our courses had been
designed. It became apparent that the students communicated and learned in a collectivist (i.e., shared learning) format, where they communicated both in English and Chinese with one another to interpret and discuss the concepts taught in the class as well as to facilitate the completion of the course assignments. To address this difference, we replaced individual assignments with group assignments. For example, initially the practice course required each student to record a video of themselves conducting an initial client assessment. The assignment was modified so that all students participated in a single role-play that they created to demonstrate interviewing skills, family dynamics issues, and conflict resolution skills. Indeed, during one class session, the students designed and carried out several role plays, alternating the roles of client and social worker.

We made other program adjustments. For example, although graduate social work students at Widener University are required to complete a writing module to learn academic writing skills, faculty determined that weekly group tutoring sessions would provide more individualized writing support for the CTBU students during their time in the U.S. The students faced considerable challenges with completing their writing assignments; assignments that might take their American counterparts one hour to write, could take five or six hours for the CTBU students to complete. In retrospect, writing assignment expectations for the CTBU students may have been unrealistic, given the actual time they needed to acclimate to an American university environment, learn English, and develop formal English writing skills.

**Student Expectations versus Realities**

The students expected to learn social work skills within a U.S. context that they could implement in their own country, with the hope of helping China create better policies to support its social welfare needs. The students’ expectations centered on becoming more proficient in English and building their social work skills. American life turned out to be very different than what they had expected. They found they were able to spend time with actual clients in the field, role-play social work situations in classes, visit a variety of social service agencies, and meet state politicians. While some expectations of learning about client interactions and practicing English were realized, the students discovered that studying in the U.S. was very different than in China. In the U.S., the students found they had more freedom to express their thoughts in class and opportunities to collaborate with their classmates. Having limited oral English skills led to some frustration when attempting to understand others and be understood. Two of the female students were roommates, which gave less opportunity to practice English in their dormitory. Because of this, the expectations of
becoming more proficient in spoken English were not met to their satisfaction.

**Student Narratives:** The following are excerpts from the students’ perspectives:

American life is totally different than I expected. This is a different country and culture from China. I met diverse people, they gave me thoughts about their lifestyle. We shared their experiences and learned how to have a conversation with clients. In class, we used role-play to practice real conversation situations. We helped each other to improve our skills when meeting with clients. I also visited some agencies to learn how organizations work, which really helped me a lot. I went to Harrisburg to advocate for laws that affect social workers, which was a new experience. In China, I did not have opportunities to talk with senators and lawmakers. It was really cool.

Another student wrote:

I feel that when studying in China, people are really concerned about your scores on exams. In China we have different evaluation standards than in the U.S., and our daily behaviors are also important. In China, every class has an exam, and you have to memorize all the theories and write them down. In the U.S., some of our classes don’t have final exams. In the U.S., it seems that what professors care about most is whether the student captures the skills or ideas. So while the Chinese way of learning emphasized using exams to evaluate the students, classes in America focus on helping the students to learn and professors use diverse ways to evaluate the students.

In addition, the classes in college are more in China than the U.S. My major was public administration in China, and we used to have eight or more classes every semester, although the social work major students may have more field work, one friend of mine who studied social work also complained about the heavy coursework.

In China we always have more than 60 students in each class, so the professors always lecture and many students don’t have the chance to ask questions or answer the professor’s questions in class. In the U.S., students are free to speak their own thoughts in class, which would sound incredible in China. Because of the huge number of
people in one class in China, the professor can’t help everyone. The professors don’t know many of the students’ names.

**IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The general consensus of both faculty and students was that the program was a mutual learning experience. While expectations were different from realities, the experience provided opportunities to learn from one another. The students hoped to learn more policy development and direct social work practice skills, but also used the opportunity to help their U.S. student peers understand the policies and values that guide Chinese systems of welfare management. In terms of learning style, it was clear that cultural elements impacted the learning experience, which required adjusted expectations. The faculty allowed the students to work together on projects and assignments as this enabled them to use their native language and facilitated better understanding of concepts. This collective learning process better suited the collectivist value of Chinese culture than the individualistic drive for grades that is common in the U.S. education system. This adjustment in learning format for projects and assignments also enabled the students to share their values and policy practices in China with the American students thereby enhancing global awareness of social welfare issues.

Based on this initial cultural and educational exchange experience, it seems clear that a successful exchange program requires that both faculty and students be able to adjust their expectations. Three main recommendations for supporting Chinese students in learning at the higher education level emerged. First, course assignments and content delivery may need to be adjusted to accommodate both language and learning style barriers; however, these accommodations need not alter the essential elements of the course, rather they may illuminate underlying assumptions in teaching methods and systems of content delivery that may actually benefit native English-speaking students as well. Second, faculty may need to dedicate more time to explaining and helping international students understand some fundamentals of course content which are often based in assumptions of previous learning. For example, in this program, the essence of social work is predicated on U.S. social welfare and policy development, cultural values and societal needs. These underlying values and needs and concomitant policies will be different when based in Chinese culture. Therefore, educators must make adjustments in delivering content that is based in an assumption of common background, understanding or value bases. Lastly, programs will need to provide support for academic writing, understanding the subtleties of language and social interactions in order to assist students in their adjustment to learning in the U.S. However, it is imperative that educators explain these supports and provide them in a
manner commensurate with the values of the students so as to avoid any embarrassment or fear of inconvenience that may deter the students from seeking the support they need.

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The Plagiarism Polyconundrum

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ABSTRACT

Plagiarism hinders student success because it shortcuts genuine writing practice and incurs penalties when discovered. Although students are aware of its potential consequences, plagiarism continues. This article reflects on the polyconundrum of empathizing with the many hindrances to student writing while deploying strategies to reduce plagiarism and improve academic essay skills.

Keywords: documentation, international students’ written English, plagiarism, research writing, student success

For international students in particular, solid English writing skills matter. Mastering spoken and written English increases global employability and earning power (Pandey & Pandey, 2014; Rawlings & Sue, 2013, p. 31). Learning to write in a second language is hard, and plagiarizing only delays the learning. Yet plagiarism is as common among international students as domestic (Duff, Rogers, & Harris, 2006). I believe its prevalence is due in significant part to problems that nonnative English speakers encounter when they seek a degree at a native-English-speaking university. In this article, I present several problems that I myself did not predict when I first started teaching international students. I also present my solutions.

REFLECTION ON THE ROOTS OF STUDENT PLAGIARISM

Over the years, I have learned that plagiarism has many roots: cultural confusion (Duff, Rogers, & Harris, 2006; Evans & Youman, 2000; Hu & Lei, 2015; Mundara & Chaudhuri, 2007), second-language frustration (Baty & Caulcutt, 2005), limited resources for help (Hennebry, Lo, & Macaro, 2012, pp. 225–226), the growing culture of Internet copying-and-pasting (“Web Plagiarism Keeps Rising,” 2003; Kim, Hwang, Lee, & Shim,
2016), the ineffectiveness of plagiarism penalties as a deterrent (Sutherland-Smith, 2010), perceived lack of plagiarism policy enforcement (Austin, Collins, Remillard, Kelcher, & Chuia, 2006, p. 5), and an attitude of acceptance toward plagiarizing among students (Austin et al., 2006).

My discovery of these roots has helped me devise strategies to address plagiarism to a much greater degree than in the past. For example, in addition to use of electronic detection devices, I describe plagiarism in my syllabus and incorporate reminders during the preparation period for each writing project. Our university librarians pinpoint plagiarism in their research training sessions. When I catch plagiarism, I apply penalties and remediation on a case-by-case basis. To assess student views of plagiarism, I have students write short in-class essays about what plagiarism is and whether they think it should be punished. (They do, though their ideas of fair punishment differ.) Undoubtedly, my students understand all about plagiarism, yet it still occurs.

I have passed through sundry reactions toward plagiarism: shock in the face of deception, embarrassment at my insensitivity to cultural differences, compassion for students’ life struggles, disgust at having to play detective, discouragement when plagiarism recurs, and ultimately, a pragmatic peace because I finally realized what plagiarism really is.

Plagiarism is a broad-spectrum solution to a host of problems. Since problems are inevitable, the temptation to plagiarize is here to stay. Having accepted that reality, my discouragement in the face of plagiarism has evaporated because I am no longer striving toward an unreachable outcome. My effort now is to keep updating my awareness of the problems so I can keep refining my antiplagiarism efforts.

IDENTIFYING ISSUES & SOLUTIONS

For second-language learners, some issues are predictable. Grammar and vocabulary are the most obvious; students may study for a decade or more to master those elements (Min, 2013; Park, 2009). Other problems are not predictable, such as the occurrence of phrases like “men are a sorry lot,” which appears in a translation of Niccoló Machiavelli’s “The Qualities of the Prince,” but not in second-language manuals or online translation tools – along with countless other idioms and cultural references that are bothersome for domestic students but a stumbling block for internationals. In the list below, I detail several unexpected issues and my solutions.

Issue 1: Concepts of how to express one’s original ideas in writing are not universal. Although international students might memorize the basic steps of U.S.-style or British-style expository writing from a textbook or website, this knowledge only partly prepares them for a larger reality: that U.S. or
British academic essay structure (thesis, supporting points stated directly and succinctly without digression from the thesis, summative conclusion and final point) may differ drastically from customary essay structure in other languages and cultures (Hu, 2014; Kaplan, 2001). Second-language students may memorize their culture’s traditional texts to a degree that would astound American students (Hu, 2014), or they may have translated countless unrelated sentences into English exercise books during their language studies, yet have had little practice producing complete American or British-style academic essays (Fedderholdt, 2001; Reid, 1997).

Academic essay structure is hard enough for domestic students. It requires that the writer accrue information on a specific topic, decide exactly which main point to make, and then select only the relevant elements of the acquired evidence to support that main point. For nonnative English speakers, the reading task alone can be intimidating. The subsequent decision-making process that leads to a thesis can seem confounding. Only with sustained practice can anyone know for certain if one has produced a workable thesis, a relevant piece of evidence, and a valid concluding idea. The longer and more complex the paper, the more challenging this whole scenario and the easier it is to choose plagiarism when an actual paper comes due.

**Solution to Issue 1**: Frequent review of the structure and goals of an academic essay throughout a semester develops student familiarity with the academic writing format, boosting students’ confidence that they can write acceptably.

**Issue 2**: Imperfect grammar should not invalidate a well-structured essay. I once thought I should call every grammar problem to a student’s attention. Gradually I realized that if my feedback focuses too heavily on students’ grammar and mechanics without crediting their ideas, my students feel demeaned (Séror, 2011, p. 126). Negative feeling reduces students’ motivation to push themselves to produce original work. Furthermore, if I act as though perfect English grammar is the priority in writing, I put students in an impossible position, because they cannot possibly achieve that perfection.

**Solution to Issue 2**: One of the most important steps I have taken in teaching international students is identifying what Reid (1997, p. 23) calls “error gravity”—that is, I work hardest on elements of writing that are most likely to impede sense, such as word choice, verb tense, and word order. Mastering these along with academic essay format enables students to assemble an effective paper. In later professional life, when they want to present original research in English, they will have the skills to wrestle their
evidence and documentation into order, and work with colleagues and editors to address grammar and mechanics.

**Issue 3:** *Writing depends on long-established habits of word use.* Creating one’s own texts requires, not just a good bilingual dictionary, but intricate knowledge of how words interact in various contexts (see Min, 2013). For example, if *exercise* means *practicing specific skills*, as in a grammar exercise, what does a student do with the phrase *exercise moderation*? Creating texts also requires an inward bank of customary word use; no one in the United States ever says “grass-cutting machine” instead of “lawnmower,” or “general people” instead of “general population,” yet to a second-language student trying to express a simple, daily concept, these phrases might seem reasonably equivalent. Deployed in an essay, students’ creative phrasing causes reader confusion.

Both single words and common phrases may thus present important barriers to second-language writers. For students who learned English from nonnative speakers, or who started learning English in their late teens, there are few word habits to draw upon (Min, 2013). During in-class assignments, I see my students pondering dictionaries and translation tools, trying to pin down idioms or discern between adverbs like *much* and *very* while struggling with article and preposition usage (“In one hand, it is much difficult to buy a land in New York. In other hand, a property is big value in future”). The extra time these students invest in a 500-word essay may be hard for domestic professors to imagine.

**Solution to Issue 3:** During in-class composition, I encourage questions about word usage. Also, I identify potentially confusing words and phrases when I assign texts. During lecture, I spotlight those words and phrases and ask, “Is this usage familiar to you?” Getting students comfortable enough to admit they don’t understand is a journey in itself; I tell them that my best friend is the student willing to say, “I don’t get it,” because if one student voices it, a dozen others are thinking it. Gradually, students themselves identify points of confusion, which we resolve together. Students are more likely to write original work when they are confident that they understand what they have read, and can use new vocabulary in a paper.

**Issue 4:** *Which types of copying constitute plagiarism?* For international students, one phrase swimming in an ocean of print looks a lot like another. For example, copying the phrase “burn the midnight oil” would not be plagiarism because that phrase functions as a single word. But if an international student writes, “Activists burned the midnight oil in fight for civil right, because injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” how does the student know that the last (commonly quoted) eight words are
from Martin Luther King, Jr.’s, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” and must be credited?

In fact, isn’t there an accepted societal usage of powerful word groups that would not be branded plagiarism? In everyday conversation and writing, do we credit the U.S. Declaration of Independence for the words “all men are created equal”? Rarely. Why? Because we all know the source; we mentally credit it, and don’t feel the need to keep recruiting it (though I coach my students to do so when they write). Isn’t that the same as using conventional cultural wisdom in one’s written work, as is customary in many nations (Duff et al., 2006, p. 675)? How are international students supposed to discern between accepted wise words and plagiarism?

Solution to Issue 4: I give my international students the information to correct such problems as they arise.

Issue 5: Multiple mundane barriers to writing exist. Typing is an example of a mundane yet troublesome barrier. Students accustomed to a non-English keyboard may find English-language typing dauntingly laborious. Forced by time constraints to choose between assignments in their majors and producing original writing, chancing a copy-and-paste may seem a sensible strategy.

Then there is transportation. Students often live in clusters far from campus. During long rides in carpools or on public transport, little homework can be accomplished, making the time-consuming process of good writing even less surmountable.

Also, family expectations intrude. Family may arrive from several thousand miles away and expect a tour of the city on the day my class meets. International students must scout for housing, negotiate car rentals, handle student visa bureaucracy, and maintain GPAs. Combine these difficulties with arduous family communication across up to 12 time zones, and making sure all work is original may seem overwhelming.

Solution to Issue 5: I listen intently when students describe problems, but remind them that I cannot grade them on what they would have done if these problems did not exist. I then ask for a reasonable plan to revise or complete plagiarized or missing classwork, which usually results in honest papers.

Issue 6: Academic documentation. In my experience, many international students struggle with documentation. They can figure out how to put American-style quotation marks around copied material, but knowing when to cite sources in the text can be confounding. Some students think only direct quotes require in-text citation; when they don’t cite paraphrased sentences or data, professors may believe the students have plagiarized. In
reality, the students have picked up on some aspects of the citing picture and missed others.

Further hassles: (a) Discerning which documentation elements belong in an in-text citation and which in the reference list only comes with supported practice. (b) Author names are tricky: Systems of surname and given name vary confusingly among cultures. Even the (supposedly trustworthy!) online reference formatting tools have trouble with names; for example, the site from which I obtained the article by Kim, Hwang, Lee, and Shim (2016) had formatted the reference list entry as Kyong-Jee, K., Jee Young, H., Dong-Wok, L., and Min-Sung, S.—even though their names were listed Western-style as Kyong-Jee Kim, Jee Young Hwang, Dong-Wok Lee, and Min-Sung Shim at the end of the “Letter to the Editor” that they wrote for the English-language journal Medical Education Online. (c) Conventions of capitalization and punctuation vary between British and American English. Many nonnative speakers have learned British English, and students from non-English-speaking European nations have their own norms of capitalization, confounding standards of correctness. It Doesn’t Help That Electronic Reference Formatting Tools Apparently Use The “Capitalize Each Word” Toggle That Is A Feature Of Microsoft Word In Their Treatment Of Titles; or that the formatting programs occasionally list unsigned articles as (for example) “New York Times, The.”

**Solution to Issue 6:** As university librarians know, documentation is a comprehensive scenario that requires ongoing professor support, not one or two brush-up sessions. Scheduling ongoing segments of class time for documentation practice helps avert plagiarism by making documentation feel possible (Gourlay & Deane, 2012, pp. 24–26).

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

One unvarying tactic with which I address the issues I have named is to designate several lecture hours per writing project as writing laboratory time. Second-language students often feel uncertain whether they are using English effectively, and the assurance of immediate feedback from me as they gather evidence and develop a thesis affords them much-deserved support (see San Miguel, Townsend, & Waters, 2013, pp. 24–25; also Séror, 2011).

Though these strategies help, I am ever watchful. Students’ in-class work, recorded in Blackboard, affords me samples of each one’s writing that I compare to out-of-class assignments. Sharp contrast in grammar competency between out-of-class and in-class work puts me on alert. If I cannot find electronic evidence of plagiarism, I interview the student. Sometimes a writing coach wrote the paper, making it original and not
susceptible to electronic detection. “All the ideas are mine,” the students say. I then point out that learning to present ideas in written form is the purpose of the class, and it is not my job to grade their writing coach (or their big sister, etc.). Other times, the student had taken the paper to a writing center or to a competent friend, who helped edit too much. (Defining “too much help” is a topic deserving further research.)

If students truly commit what Owens and White (2013) term dishonest plagiarism, I enact our university’s plagiarism reporting procedure. This protocol does not normally result in immediate failure, but does establish a record against which future plagiarism attempts may be measured and penalized.

Addressing plagiarism is vital. Demanding that students write their own texts not only makes them into trustworthy researchers. It also trains them to truly assess what they know and don’t know, and to embrace the reflective, recursive process required to ensure that their writing meets professional standards. Keeping student writing honest presents a challenge, but to whatever level we professors achieve that goal, we have accomplished a vital service.

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Working with International Students in the U.S. and Beyond: A Summary of Survey Research by NCDA International Student Services Committee

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**ABSTRACT**

The career development process is one of the most important aspects of the international student experience. Providing comprehensive and culturally competent services requires institutional efforts that utilize best practices developmentally throughout the college experience and beyond. This article is based on the work of the International Student Services Committee of the National Career Development Association, especially the surveys conducted with international students, career development professional and employers. The authors focus on three major themes from the surveys: knowledge about work authorization options, impact of cultural differences on job search, and specialized career services for international students. Discussing these major themes, the authors report on best practices and future implications for supporting international student career development in the U.S. and beyond.

**Keywords:** International students, career development, career services, higher education
There are nearly 975,000 international students in the U.S. who study at the postsecondary level (Institute of International Education, 2015). Given the increasing presence of international students as well as their financial, academic, and cultural diversity contributions, higher education institutions recognize the importance of international recruitment efforts. However, there is limited institutional emphasis on the international student experience beyond recruitment. College students and their families are increasingly questioning the return on investment of a college education, which is often measured by successful attainment of a satisfying job upon graduation. This is also true for international students. However, they often face additional systemic obstacles along their career development paths.

Most studies in the literature about the experiences of international students focus on their different learning styles, academic engagement, English proficiency, adjustment issues, psychological well-being, and discrimination (e.g., Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Le & Gardner, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007; Mori, 2000; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). These experiences are relevant to the career development of international students, as they have potential impact on students’ college experience, as well as their intellectual and mental capacity to prepare for life after college. On the other hand, there are only a few studies that directly explore international student career development. They show that students are most concerned with work experience, the decision to stay in the U.S. versus going back to home country, job search skills, interviewing skills, and immigration regulations (Spencer-Rodgers & Cortijo, 1998; Shen & Herr, 2004; Arthur, 2007; Crockett & Hayes, 2011). These studies inform us about the important practical challenges of pursuing and maintaining opportunities.

Given the fact that only 34.6% of H-1B visas (which allows non-resident foreigners to work in the U.S. for 3 years with another 3-year extension possibility) are granted to F-1 status international students (Ruiz, 2013), job search is a major area of concern. Moreover, not all international students prefer to find jobs in the U.S., and it is another unique challenge to engage in job search and transition back to one’s home country or another country after several years of education in the U.S. Thus, there is need for a more comprehensive understanding of the international student career development process, as well as best practices to support this student population.

In order the address these gaps, the National Career Development Association (NCDA)’s International Student Services Committee (ISSC) conducted surveys with random samples of students (n= 1422), career development professionals (n=373), and employers (n= 84) between 2012 and 2015, which will be described in the next sections followed by a discussion on implications, best practice recommendations, and future
directions for research. The details of the survey methods and extensive reports on findings can be found in the full reports (NCDA-ISSC, 2015).

**FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY PROJECTS**

The survey projects revealed significant findings across the three surveys that may help to explain the barriers that impact international students, career services professionals, and employers. These common themes from the survey results encouraged the authors to contrast between actual barriers and perceived barriers.

First, there is a definite gap in knowledge among international students, career services professionals and employers when it comes to work authorization options in the U.S. More than one third of international students and more than two thirds of career services professionals who participated in the surveys, reported a lack of knowledge on work authorization topics such as Optional Practical Training (OPT) and Curricular Practical Training (CPT). Similarly, more than half of employer respondents reported that their lack of knowledge on work authorization was the major obstacle for hiring international students, and they perceived it as too complicated a process. Moreover, despite the seeming lack of knowledge, less than one in five employers reported wanting more information from the NCDA-ISSC about the process and benefits of hiring international students. Work authorization significantly impacts the career development of international students. Both international students and career services professionals need a more accurate and complete understanding of the process in order to facilitate an effective exploration of career possibilities and set realistic career goals. Employers’ lack of knowledge and misperceptions about the work authorization process, on the other hand, may cause many qualified candidates to be dismissed in the initial screening process of job applications.

A second common theme reported by all three groups encompasses the cultural differences that seem to have both positive and negative implications for job and internship search experiences of international students. Among the most significant concerns reported by career services professionals were cultural adjustment (39.3%) and language proficiency (35.4%). They also reported challenges in helping students manage expectations from their families and others in their home countries, as well as a need for culturally sensitive career assessment tools appropriate for use with international students.

Unlike career services professionals, however, employers and students were not as concerned about cultural issues impacting the job and internship application process. In fact, some employers indicated cultural differences did not have as profound of an impact on the hiring decisions as
work authorization status. When asked about the differences between international and non-international students, employers mentioned international students’ professionalism and career orientation as positive aspects of cultural differences. Furthermore, employers emphasized how hiring international students enhanced diversity in the workplace and showcased a commitment to inclusivity.

The areas that employers perceived as challenging cultural differences were international students’ interviewing styles and communication skills. Employers were open to providing constructive feedback on cultural issues such as English language proficiency, nonverbal behaviors such as eye contact, supporting one’s arguments with strengths-based examples and storytelling, and other interviewing skills that may stem from different cultural and educational practices. Employers’ expectations for international students in the job search include their ability to interview skillfully to demonstrate their strengths and discuss their immigration status confidently. Similarly, career services professionals believe international students need to improve their use of the English language. On the other hand, fewer students identified language proficiency and cultural issues as barriers in the job search.

The difference in perceptions of cultural differences and their impact on job applications may stem from the different perceptions on what makes a candidate qualified in a job application versus the interviewing process. For example, many international students identified relevant skills and background as the primary requirement for succeeding in the job search. They also reported that personality and extracurricular activities were deemed more valuable in the U.S. compared to their home countries. Such differences may have an impact on international students’ career preparation and articulation of qualifications in job application materials and interviews. Thus, it is important to help international students recognize what employers look for and value in qualified candidates. Furthermore, international students should integrate and market their strengths, in particular their cross-cultural experiences, into job applications and interviews. For example, more than half of the employers identified cross-cultural competency, adaptability, and language skills as differentiators for international candidates. With improved use of language and a more comprehensive articulation of personal and professional experiences, international students can help employers recognize their unique potential.

A final noteworthy theme is the growth in expertise, partnerships and career programs that demonstrate strengths and best practices on the part of career services professionals and their organizations. The survey with career services professionals showed that more than half of career services centers offered customized programs for international students, and 93.5% collaborated with international student advising offices. Furthermore,
a quarter of career services centers had a staff member dedicated to working with international students. The hopes and needs to have such specialized professionals are dramatically increasing across the U.S. These findings support the significant needs of not only international students but also career development professionals who seek more knowledge and resources to support them effectively. At this point, however, a striking finding from the surveys point to a need for more strategic work by career centers: the majority of international students reported either having no or limited knowledge of career services prior to coming to the U.S., and more than half of the respondents never utilized career services on their university campuses. This finding highlights the importance of career services departments proactively reaching out to international students earlier in their academic careers in the U.S.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The findings suggest that higher education institutions and career centers should provide more information and resources to international students, career services professionals, and employers. First, students need earlier and greater understanding on the ways in which they can use career services. More awareness is needed on how to best prepare themselves for internship and job applications by making informed decisions about their academic programs (e.g., knowing which career fields allow longer durations of work authorization in the U.S.), realizing the benefits of extracurricular activities (e.g., cultural adjustment, developing language and communication skills, building connections), enhancing their network in both the U.S. and outside the U.S. to have multiple career alternatives and opportunities, and learning about work authorization options and paperwork deadlines, all of which will ease their communication with employers in job application and interview processes.

Second, career services professionals need additional professional development on work authorization options and application procedures to better facilitate the career planning process of international students. They should reflect on potential misperceptions and biases on this topic, and collaborate with others (e.g., international student advising offices, institutional or local immigration attorneys) to educate themselves and their students. Effective delivery of career information, which meets the diverse needs of international students, is an important area of multicultural career counseling minimum competencies (NCDA, 2009). Thus, educating themselves about the unique challenges of international students, advocating for their students’ rights to choose and apply for employment based on their interests, values and skills, and referring them to appropriate support resources when needed are significant aspects of culturally competent
practices. Similarly, it is also important for career services professionals to better identify both strengths and areas of growth while working with international students, and integrate them into a more holistic assessment of each individual student in order to personalize his/her career goals in accordance with cultural expectations, systemic constraints, and multiple opportunities in the U.S. or beyond. For example, career counselors should not overfocus on job search in the U.S. and recognize that not all international students seek to stay in the U.S. Career services professionals should help international students explore their genuine interests and values by also becoming aware of the potential peer, family or other environmental influences on their career decisions. When students decide to pursue career opportunities beyond the U.S, career services professionals should be able to help them prepare for a new cultural transition. The continuous pursuit of professional development is recommended to improve their multicultural career counseling competency to help international students navigate cultural transitions and uncertainty around global career opportunities.

Third, more employers should be encouraged to learn about work authorization options in order to demystify the perceived complications of the application process. Thus, they can consider the valuable skills and experiences that international students can bring to their organization. The NCDA-ISSC suggests greater communication and collaboration between international students, employers, and career services professionals. To exemplify such efforts, in addition to the survey projects, the committee gathered best practice examples from innovative career centers. The Immigration Bridge Program, launched by the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University, is a proactive partnership between the Kelley School, the IU Office of International Services, and a top immigration law firm. The program helps international students navigate the H-1B visa process, while offering economical legal services to employers who hire international students and need guidance through the H-1B visa process. The initiative does not guarantee a visa sponsorship, visa, or employment, but does help improve the situation for students being recruited both on and off campus. The program was the winner of the 2014 NCDA Service to International Students Award. Other examples include the creation of LinkedIn networking groups for international students and alumni, organizing international student conferences, and encouraging career services centers with knowledgeable employer relations teams that strive to diversify the employer pool with companies open to international candidates.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As indicated by the findings of the surveys, there is an urgent need for practitioners, researchers, and employers to engage in next steps. First,
career services and higher education professionals can increase their understanding about the systemic issues faced by international students in the job search process. Systemic issues may include restrictive immigration policies regarding employment, job opportunity limitation for international students based on geographical location in the US, and discrimination or lack of awareness from employers. Further, career services and higher education professionals should have a greater understanding about the career development needs of international students on their campus before implementing “one size fits all” programming. This information can be obtained through surveys or focus groups with international students. With a better understanding of systemic barriers and international student needs on their campus, career services and higher education professionals can advocate for international students to their institution or with employers.

Additionally, evidence from our survey suggests there is a mismatch of information about international students’ career development among career services practitioners, employers, and the students themselves. Heightened collaboration between the three parties should be fostered in order to demystify and streamline the complex process of international students’ career development, job search process and work authorization options.

Importantly, admissions and recruitment professionals who work with international students should provide sufficient and complete information to international students about the challenges inherent in the career development and job search process. Perhaps institutions can maintain more detailed records of their international student career outcomes in order to allow prospective international students to make an informed decision about the ability for the institution to support them in their career development. This type of transparency may be unheard of in current recruitment or admissions practices due to the potential it could deter international students with intentions to immigrate. Yet this transparency and commitment to accountability by institutions will ensure ethical practices among admissions and recruitment professionals, which will likely also contribute to less confusion and anxiety among international students in their job search process.

To conclude, the authors believe that the NCDA-ISSC is a best practice example that integrates several implications such as the importance of collaboration between career development practitioners, student services units, and institutions. In this regard, the NCDA-ISSC has not only conducted original research and maintained a resource guide, the committee has also spearheaded a new NCDA award for innovative career development services for international students. A diverse group of more than 20 committee members, which also includes past international students, currently work on writing and resource development projects. The ongoing
work of the committee members strives to close the gap between research and practice by integrating their career services experiences across the U.S. and around the world.

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Food Identity and its Impact Upon the Study Abroad Experience

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ABSTRACT

Study Abroad programs go to great lengths to prepare students for living and working in environments unlike their own. While much of the preparation focuses on the challenges of university life, travel, safety and the like, this paper suggests that an early and thoughtful discussion of “food identity” will provide students with the tools necessary to become more insightful of the culture of their host country. Since eating is vital, regional foods provide a wonderful opportunity for entering into the culture of another. By exposing students to such factors as the malleable, political, gendered and deliberately constructed nature of food identities, students become more cognizant of the complex histories of other people and places, through the portal of their food.

Keywords: Food history, identity, gender; political ideology, study abroad

Educators involved with study abroad programs spend much time preparing students for the challenges of living, working and studying in other countries. While this process exposes them to the many ordinary difficulties of daily life, it does not fully provide them with the necessary ways to understand more deeply, the culture for which they have been newly thrusted. One way to remedy this void is to orient students to the food culture of their new home and more specifically, the food identity of its people and history. Undoubtedly, students go abroad for a variety of reasons and with variant levels of interest in their new found locations. What they do share in common, however, is their need to eat and thus, food becomes a more facile conduit for learning about and understanding the culture of their host countries. By exposing students to the idea of food identity, its changing nature, its historic connection to occupation, migration and trade,
its use by political forces as a tool of manipulation and its revelations about gender, students will have a stronger and more mature appreciation of the history of their respective countries. In a world that presently faces great challenges in terms of ideological, religious and cultural differences, such a learning outcome may prove invaluable to the students’ educational experience.

PAST STUDIES AND DISCUSSION

Most scholars agree that there has always been an association made between food and the cultures of different people, especially within anthropological studies. However, the concept of “food identity” as a separate and unique entity becomes fully developed in the 1980’s when amongst social scientists “…the notion of identity was taken up, to which food was directly and intimately linked” in a way that looked at food’s “…classification and consumption, but also the preparation, the organization, the taboos, the company, the location, the pleasure, the time, the language, the symbols, the representation, the form, the meaning and the art of eating and drinking” (Scholliers, 2001, p. 7). As the food historian Massimo Montanari concludes:

Like spoken language, the food system contains and conveys the culture of its practitioner; it is the repository of traditions and of collective identity. It is therefore an extraordinary vehicle of self-representation and of cultural exchange – a means of establishing identity to be sure, but also the first way of entering into contact with a different culture… (Montanari, 2006, p. 133).

How then can we use food, and in particular, food identity as a reliable port of entry for our students’ understanding of another culture? The answer lies with the recognition of several important factors inherent to the essence of all food identities; namely, their malleable nature, their creation by internal and external forces, their use as a means of political manipulation, and their association with gender identity. While these four factors are certainly not the only dimensions contributing to food identity, they serve to express concepts that are both familiar and accessible to students. For this reason, an early “pre-departure” discussion of these four factors can help equip our students with the necessary tools for a more sophisticated understanding of food identities, as well as a greater appreciation for the way in which food reflects the historic evolutions of peoples and places. Such an outcome will likely enhance our students’ journey towards becoming more responsible world citizens.
The Malleable Nature of Food Identities

First, students must come to appreciate the adaptive nature of all food identities in response to changing circumstance. Through contact with other peoples and cultures, whether by trade, good political relations, migration, occupation or military defeat, food identities change in ways that reflect these new associations. John Dickie’s Delizia, a comprehensive work on the food identities of Italian city states, provides ample examples to prove this point. Regarding food changes by occupiers and conquerors, he notes that many are surprised by the seemingly “un-Italian” nature of a food like couscous which appears in the Sicilian diet but is often thought of as a food from the Middle East. As Dickie notes, its presence dates back to Muslim control of the island during the 9-11th centuries and has since been long blended as part of the Sicilian diet (Dickie, 2008, pp. 15-16).

Similarly, traditional eating habits of the Romans included staples of bread, oil, wine and small birds but soon adapted to include larger, roasted game meats, upon Germanic conquest of the Empire. In both examples, food identities changed to reflect the new cultural influences of their occupiers, as the seamless adoption of various food habits bore witness to an early example of globalization.

The Internal and External Creation of Food Identities

Given the malleable nature of food identities, it seems reasonable for states to attempt to shape their own in a way that projects a desired image of its people, culture and history. This effort can be seen as an “internal” creation of a food identity. History provides examples of this when a city or state develops a unique and noteworthy food product, symbolic of regional pride. This can be seen in the 14th century, with the city of Parma and its creation of a most extraordinary regional cheese. Noted for its unique texture and flavor, its undisputed value could be seen in the many attempts by others to copy it! (Dickie, 2008, p. 31) Nonetheless, citizens of Parma took great pride in being able to identity its own “parmesan” cheese by its appearance and taste, and protecting it by uncovering all impostors seeking gain in the market. Ultimately, what began long ago as a source of regional pride, insisting upon authenticity of city and creative process, can now be seen with the modern “Denomination of Protected Status (DOP)” labeling, which provides product protection under the law (Dickie, 2008, p. 31). Such regulation is meant to recognize and safeguard the place of origin of these food products, along with the historic traditions involved in their creation. This same phenomenon can be seen with the proprietary regional control over the production of the champagne, which allows only sparkling wine made in the region of
Champagne, to be called “champagne.” The French have gone to great lengths to legally ensure that the Italians and the Spanish label their sparkling wines “prosecco” and “cava,” respectively and that Champagne is always and only associated with Champagne, France!

While many of these early “internal” efforts to effectively protect and advance the reputation of a food product have continued today, not all places have had the luxury of internally developing and protecting their food identity. On the contrary, many places have had an “external” identity imposed upon them by others. As Dickie notes, these imposed identities are often uncomplimentary and difficult to remedy. One of the most striking examples of an imposed negative food identity can be found in the food history of the Neapolitan people. During the 19th century, Naples suffered from a reputation of being a dirty, disease ridden city. Its infamous “lazzari” street people were reputed to be filthy, slovenly and commonly seen eating the dirty street food of macaroni with their hands (2008, p. 150). This unseemly sight prompted the derogatory label of “maccheroni eaters” (2008, p. 151). Unfortunately, foreign visitors and some Neapolitans writers did much to enhance this reputation. In a work entitled *The Bowels of Naples*, Neapolitan native Matilde Serao describes Naples’s other street food, pizza, as “…made from a dense dough that burns but does not cook, and is loaded with almost raw tomatoes, garlic, pepper and oregano,…” which when sold, “…the boy will stay there almost all day, while his pizza slices freeze in the cold, or turn yellow in the sun as the flies eat them” (Dickie, 2008, p. 189). This unappetizing image is matched by an 1877 Tuscan writer’s commentary on Neapolitan people and their food habits: “…If they were left alone to roll around in their own filth, and given cheap snails and maccheroni to eat, then they will never ask what kind of government is running their country” (Dickie, 2008, p. 192). Ironically, overt attempts were made to remedy this negative food identity with the likes of a visit by Queen Margherita of Italy, whose arrival was meant to send a message that the city’s food was safe and its streets free of cholera. As legend purports, she tried three different versions of a pizza and liked best the one with tomatoes, mozzarella and basil, since labeled pizza Margherita! (Dickie, 2008, p.186) While some remain suspect of the origins of this story and the supposed letter of appreciation sent by the Queen to Pizzeria Brandi, it serves to reinforce the lasting power of negatively imposed food identities upon cities and peoples and the great efforts made to remedy these unfavorable reputations.

**Food Identity as a Political Tool**

Throughout history, political entities have made deliberate attempts to shape food identities in ways that promote a desired message or image of
the state. This is best demonstrated with the example of Mussolini and Fascist Italy. In 1925, Mussolini made a proclamation called “The Battle of the Grain,” by which he encouraged Italians to be fully self-sufficient and reliant on Italian grown grains. With the exclamation “Italians, Love Bread,” Mussolini attempted to reshape the Italian food identity away from any food source that was not locally grown or produced, in order to reassert Fascist strength and autonomy (Dickie, 2008, p. 244). Great effort was made through national campaigns to propagandize Italian love of vegetables and not meat, with a preference for all things lean and simplistic. Ironically, this message was designed to cover up the vast food shortages throughout Italy, suggesting instead that the Fascist man needs less to eat and thus, prefers a more austere diet!

The Germans chose a slightly different tactic with their grain shortages in WWII. Instead of suggesting that Nazi soldiers were of such a superior bodily constitution that they required less food, like the Italians, the Germans opted to launch a propaganda campaign that exalted the virtues of rye grains over wheat. Under the guidance of the Ministry of Agriculture, posters were put up throughout the country proclaiming “Eat rye bread. Color is not nourishment. Rye bread makes cheeks red” (Jacob, 2007, p. 363). Better health would be the promise made to deflect attention away from domestic and imported wheat shortages. Interestingly, after the war, when all things German were associated with ruin and death, a different attempt was made to manipulate the public perception of German food. Instead of promoting traditional foods that were in good supply, attempts were made to change the outward appearance of German food and project instead, a food identity that was part of a global community. In an article entitled, “Promise of More. The Rhetoric of (Food) Consumption in a Society Searching for Itself: West Germany in the 1950s,” Michael Wildt argues that in an effort to “internationalize” its recipes and become part of “a family of nations,” Germany set out to rename many of its traditional foods in an effort to disassociate them from a German past (Wildt, 2001, pp.69-70). Wildt notes that traditional cabbage became “Swiss cabbage,” with diced meat dishes now being called “Portuguese meatballs” or “steak a la Lyonnaise” (2001, p. 69). These efforts were all done to reshape the German food identity in a way that would not remind those eating its food of Germany’s recent past.

Food and Gender Identity

It will not come as a surprise to many people, including our students, that food has always had some association with gender. In fact, many may not be surprised to know that much of “feeding work,” like the planning, acquiring, preparing, cooking and serving of food is still largely
done by women throughout the world (Guptill, Copelton and Lucal, 2013, p. 31). However, what may be of some surprise is how closely linked the feeding work of women is connected to their identity. By this, food and all that its production entails, becomes a source of self-worth and value for many women of various cultures. Recognizing this connection is imperative to understanding and appreciating the essential way in which food work shapes the identity of women, across time and place. Without such an appreciation, our students may walk away with an inadequate understanding of a foundational element of their host country’s essence.

A subtle way to expose students to this connection of gender and food identity is through the short stories of Jumpa Lahiri’s The Interpreter of Maladies. These extraordinary stories of family love, loss and personal disconnect provide students with a lasting sense of how food plays a supportive and defining role for women within Indian culture. No story demonstrates this better than “Mrs. Sen’s,” the story of a young professor and his wife who comes to the United States for Mr. Sen’s newly acquired appointment in a mathematics department. While Mr. Sen views this opportunity with excitement and purpose, Mrs. Sen feels dislocated, uncertain in her new role as a wife in America. This becomes painfully apparent to the reader when Mrs. Sen interacts with the mother of Eliot, the young boy she watches after school. Unlike Mrs. Sen, Eliot’s mom is a single-mom who works full-time and dedicates little time to cooking. Mrs. Sen, on the other hand, goes to great length preparing food for both her husband and Eliot, paying special attention to the quality of the utensils and ingredients used in its preparation. Nostalgically, Mrs. Sen tells Eliot that in her homeland, whenever there is a special occasion, women gather and spend the whole night preparing food with their special blades, talking and laughing with each other. Her value as a wife manifests itself with an ordered house, a loving family and meticulously prepared foods. No such equivalent seemed to exist here. What Eliot’s mom viewed as “…so much trouble,” Mrs. Sen saw as “No trouble at all” (Lahiri, 1999, p.118). In a new land that seemed to value little of what she did, Mrs. Sen was lost. Directing the attention of our students to stories like these will help facilitate a greater understanding and sensitivity to the many cultural variations associated with food identity and gender, especially those that show little similarity to their own.

**CONCLUSION**

It is important for our students to remember that as they travel, they will be invited to participate and share in the meals of others. In doing so, they must recognize that with each of these invitations, comes an opportunity for a deeper understanding of the people and places for which they are guests.
Taking advantage of such an opportunity requires our students to recognize that the food identity of each culture is in part, the product of its geographic location, political and social history, and all corresponding class, religious and gender distinctions that constitute the long narrative of a people. In recognizing these factors, our students are likely to come away from their study abroad experience with a more comprehensive understanding of their host country. By familiarizing themselves with some basic facts about food identity, our students will be provided with an invaluable tool set that will allow them to understand better the rich and complex nature of a place through the portal of its food.

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From Isolation to Inclusion: Learning of the Experiences of Chinese International Students in U.S.

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ABSTRACT

I examined the experiences of Chinese international students in higher education and inquire about American domestic students' perspectives on the trend of increasing numbers of Chinese international students in their institutions. In this paper, I also aim to provide suggestions on encouraging multiculturalism and inclusive academic settings within higher education.

Keywords: diversity, higher education, Chinese international students, American domestic students, inclusion, integration, multiculturalism

International student enrollment in the U.S. has drastically grown over the past few years. “Despite the negative impact of the 2008 financial crisis, the total enrollment of international students in the U.S. increased 42 percent between 2008 and 2014” (Ortiz & Fang, 2015). This increase was most likely created by institutions accepting more international students as a means of keeping up the budget during a time when domestic support (i.e. state/federal funds, donations, etc.) were comparatively low due to the economic downturn. During the 2010-2011 academic year, the international student population contributed $20.23 billion to the U.S. economy and, during the 2014-2015 academic year, it increased to $30.5 billion, which came from international students paying for their living expenses, shopping, school tuition, traveling, etc. Out of these international students, Chinese international students represented the majority. In fact, China has been the largest source of international students studying in the United States (Open Doors Report, 2015). In the 2014-2015 academic year, Chinese international students escalated to 304,040 (out of 974,926 total international students).
Besides economic benefits, an increased international presence represents a sign for diversity, which is usually considered to be a highly positive aspect of an institution of higher education. From this aspect, an increasing number of Chinese student enrollment helps these institutions accomplish this goal. However, there can be both positive and negative impacts on various aspects of an institution. For instance, a higher Chinese international presence can put a strain on employee workload, lead to cultural or language-related misunderstanding in classrooms, make student demographics appear lopsided, or even make other student populations feel intimidated by the overwhelming Chinese population on campus. With the increasing numbers of international students appearing in American institutions, especially the influx of Chinese international students, are these institutions considering whether its institutional employees (faculty, staff/administrators) and American domestic students are really ready for this phenomenon? Can Chinese international students seamlessly fit in and be accepted into their host institutions? What challenges do these international students encounter? How do their American domestic peers view the influx of Chinese students on campus? In an effort to answer these research questions, this study intends to hear the experiences of Chinese international students in U.S. higher education and inquire about the American domestic students' perspectives on the trend of increasing numbers of Chinese international students at their institutions.

There are a number of publications that have detailed Chinese students’ experiences in American higher education and how their expectations had or had not been met (Yuan, 2011; Valdez, 2015; Barg, 2013; Yan & Berliner, 2010; Griner & Sobol, 2014; Wan, 2001; Wei et al., 2007). Yuan (2011) stresses that “most Chinese reported that they did not have much interaction with Americans. This may be due to their insufficient English and cultural differences, which consequently increases their uncertainty and anxiety when interacting with Americans” (p. 153). This finding connects to that of Valdez (2015) in which Chinese students “also struggled with identity. The concept of double consciousness helps to illustrate the internal identity conflict of being Chinese and being ‘Americanized’” (p. 198). However, these studies are only taking into account the perspectives of the Chinese international students but neglect the opinions and perspectives of domestic students.

Another group of studies highlight the interactions between Chinese international and domestic American students (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002; Cruickshank et al., 2012; Leask, 2009; Arkoudis et al., 2012). For instance, Hail (2015) asserted that “Some Chinese students complained that host country students want to talk with them about China but exhibit misinformed, prejudiced and offensive views of Chinese current events” (p.
Both of these two groups of literature have their limitations of not looking at the phenomenon holistically.

**METHOD**

For this study, I interviewed selected Chinese and American students. Interviewees of the first group were male and female Chinese international students who were enrolled in academic programs in U.S. higher education, born and raised in mainland China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan, and came to study in the U.S. The second group of interviewees was domestic American students, both male and female, in U.S. higher education. A smaller-sized snowballing method of participant recruitment was used. Sixteen Chinese international students from three different institutions were recruited. Eight are female, of which five were undergraduate students and three were graduate students; and eight were male, of which four were from a community college, one was an undergraduate student, and three were graduate students. For the second group, seven American students from one institution were secured, two female and five males.

Each interview was conducted for about 30 to 60 minutes. Some short follow-up phone interviews or email inquiries occurred when additional information was needed. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed for further use and analysis.

**FINDINGS**

**From Chinese International Students**

**Motivations and Expectations.** Chinese students reported a variety of reasons to study abroad in U.S. higher education. First and foremost is the quality of higher education in the U.S. compared to that of China. The interviewees believed that the U.S. would provide a better academic environment, with more academic freedom and independence (i.e. the ability to openly choose a field of study), more resources for their studies, as well as more academic maturity. Tied with this, the reputations and rankings of U.S. institutions as well as the potential opportunities that would be presented after receiving degrees from the U.S. is another major reason that Chinese students are seeking higher education in the U.S. In addition, students wanted to experience life abroad and American culture; they wanted to see how the 'real' America compared to their preconceptions; they wanted to experience a place with cultural diversity to which they had not been previously exposed. Pursuing an education in the U.S. represented an opportunity to broaden their world view, another great advantage besides the education that they would receive. Moreover, other motivators for studying...
abroad included parental pressure, which is perhaps more amplified in China compared to the U.S. Finally, more than half of the interviewees mentioned that they wanted to eventually immigrate to the U.S. in the future. All in all, the interviewees felt that the advantages of studying abroad in the U.S. certainly made the complicated admissions process and comparatively high cost well worth it.

**Challenges.** Despite the benefits of studying abroad, the challenges that international students experience are worthwhile to be addressed. As for the Chinese undergraduate students I interviewed, they reported homesickness. In China, they were used to “obeying” their parents and life was “designed” by the parents’ visions; in school, they were taught to listen to and closely follow what their teachers said. All they had to do was memorize class content and there was no need for discussions. In fact, open classroom discussions were not encouraged at all by teachers. Therefore, it took them quite a while to get used to openly speaking up in the American classrooms. One of the most prominent challenges faced by both undergraduate and graduate students is the linguistic/language barrier. Their English is good enough to pass the TOEFL or the GRE tests and receive good scores, but they found numerous times that they were not able to be articulate when they tried to express some deeper thoughts during class discussions as there had been many instances of meanings being lost in translation or they had found themselves unable to deliver what they really wanted to express.

However, social challenges the interviewees have encountered made many of them feel that no matter how much they try, the issues still exist. Some participants stated that they had experienced some of their American domestic peers positioning themselves with superior or prevailed attitudes. For example, multiple Chinese international students who were interviewed reported that they were not being taken seriously by some of their American peers in classroom discussions. The interviewees felt that there was a rift or divide between themselves and their American peers. They desired to interact with American students, but found it challenging to do so due to a lack of knowledge regarding American cultural references and how to start a conversation with American students. For example, one of the Chinese international students shared a specific classroom experience:

> It’s really divided by the race line... They are grouped together...native speaking people. And when we do projects, we have different groups to do projects. Normally, we have people from different background[s]...they inform the same project. And I guess one thing is they have better communication. And the other is
they just like people who look like themselves. So for me, when I took class, when we have [had] to form a small group, almost everyone in my group are [was] from China. (Interview transcript)

They also reported that most American students had little to no interest in getting to know Chinese international students unless there were some domestic students who wanted to learn Chinese. Additionally, on numerous occasions, a few Chinese interviewees would be asked "curiosity questions", by their American peers, often consisting of overly exaggerated preconceptions and stereotypes of China and Chinese mainlanders that are frequently expressed by the U.S. media and/or news. Some of the participants were bothered by such questions as the “inquirers” seemed to be spreading misinformation as if it were factual. For example, one of them said:

…But what made me feel uncomfortable is that I found out they have certain stereotypes; that what I share surprised them….I do feel that Americans appear… I do feel like they sometimes hold a slightly more negative image or perception of China. (Interview transcript)

Some of the Chinese interviewees reported that “perfect English” is overly powerful; that when they speak English with a foreign accent, they were wondering if their experiences would be much different if they had “perfect English”. One of my interviewees shared her unforgettable experiences.

Something…I don’t think it’s accent itself, but it’s discrimination. There was once in the library…there was a man who was literally use [using] all his books and paper to use the seats for four. So, I was like, ‘Excuse me, do you mind move [moving] your stuff a little bit?’ And then he look[ed] at me and has [had] a weird smile and say [said], ‘I don’t understand your English’. He was looking at me to my eyes, with that smile, but it is [was] not a happy smile I think. (Interview transcript)

American Domestic Students’ Perspectives

While interviewing American students regarding the trend of increasing Chinese international student presence on campus, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. They believed that it added to the diversity of the campus. They also said that having more Chinese international students on campus helps others to have an international perspective, creates more opportunities, and increases competition in the classroom, leading others to
strive to work harder. One of the interviewees pointed out that the school can "probably make a lot of money".

On the other hand, these interviewees also pointed out challenges that they had experienced with international students on campus. One student claimed that "it was hard to adjust" to the fact that about half of their peers were international students; that "it's hard for the department to adjust as well". Another interviewee explained how difficult it is to adjust to the accents of international students and that American students need more patience in order to "get used to it after a while". Another student said that some American domestic students like him were concerned about the limited time available for group discussions and that "not everyone has the patience to wait for the answer (from international students)". Another interviewee said that "a lot of students don't want to interact with international students" most likely due to hesitance of interacting with "the unknown".

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

Emphasizing diversity in U.S. higher education is important; however, what does diversity really mean to students, faculty, staff, and the institution? Diversity should not just stay at the surface level, but it is the first step we take in order to promote multiculturalism and further advocate for inclusion and social equity in education. There is no superior or inferior culture. We should all be proud of who we are, while at the same time, not demeaning other cultures. Multicultural education ought to be added to American school curriculum and/or college common core for all student populations as “multicultural education is a set of beliefs and explanations that recognizes and values the importance of ethnic and cultural diversity in shaping lifestyles, social experiences, personal identities, and education opportunities of individuals, groups, and nations” (Gay, 1995, p. 28). Diversity is not our ultimate goal; rather, we should use diversity as a pathway to foster multiculturalism and advocate for inclusion in higher education.

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International Student Engagement: Strategies for Creating Inclusive, Connected, and Purposeful Campus Environments


Reviewed by Clyde Barnett III, Eastern Michigan University (USA)

International Student Engagement: Strategies for Creating Inclusive, Connected, and Purposeful Campus Environments is an in-depth analysis of seven colleges and universities across the United States, examining unique programs and activities for international students that foster belonging and connectedness on campus. This book provides a snapshot into the ways institutions effectively engage with international students. The authors examine the effectiveness of programs and policies intended to assist international students through research findings and by examining first-hand student experiences. For higher education/student affairs professionals, this book is an excellent resource to help move higher education institutions forward and into a space that promotes inclusivity.

The authors of this book examined practices at Elon University, Florida International University, Indiana University-Bloomington, Northern Arizona University, Old Dominion University, Valencia College, and Valparaiso University. These institutions, selected because of their commitment and effort to strengthen inclusion of international students, each represent varying missions, values, histories, and traditions. Key areas of focus include strengthening cross-campus connections, exploring ways to deepen the quality of international student experience, and expanding the number of students actively engaged in intercultural learning. From multiple in-depth interviews, the authors highlighted successes as well as struggles international students faced when navigating campus culture. These
interviews also bring light to the negative impacts of overlooking international students and their experiences and remind us that not all experiences impact international students equally.

The first section of the book analyzes how cultural diversity is addressed in the classroom. The research identified that international students adjust better in dialogue-filled courses rather than traditional lecture style courses. Efforts from faculty that display a deep understanding and commitment to embracing cultural variation in the classroom really enhance student learning and simultaneously challenge domestic students to think and reflect about the way they view and exist in the world. Intentionally designed classrooms can provide a safe haven from, or a much-needed complement to, the formal chaotic, and complex social cultures outside of the classroom. The opportunity to engage in dialogue, discussion, and interaction with peers in the classroom assists in forming the core of international students’ understanding of U.S. peers and the world at large. Enhancing classroom experience for international students requires a comprehensive approach in which global learning is deliberate, connected, and pervasive across the student experience.

Chapter 2 focuses on engaging international students in campus leadership. Involving international students and perspectives into campus leadership in purposeful ways helps students make sense of their experiences studying in the United States. Further, involvement in leadership programs bridges gaps and establishes campus connections between otherwise distantly connected people. This also enhances the students desire to engage on campus both inside and outside of the classroom and creates a sense of belonging. Many of these campuses work to involve all students in service learning projects in the institutions surrounding communities, all things that significantly impact engagement within campus life. Movement away from cultural traditions into spaces needing navigation improves self-understanding within the framework of resilience and agency despite frustration with acclimation into American culture and norms.

In Chapter 3, friends, peers, and social networks are examined and provide practitioners with further context into how domestic and international students engage. As it stands, international students trade strong familial ties at home for weaker and very simple connections with US peers and community. Because of this, some students describe their time studying in the United States as being a “tourist on an extended trip.” First hand accounts of student experiences are detailed throughout and shed light on the identity struggle many international students encounter.

The next chapter transitions into the roles of family, relationships, technology, and social media. Colleges and universities in the United States must be prepared to approach international students both as individuals and
representatives of their extended family networks. For many international students, obtaining an education is not only for self-advancement, but to support family back home for various reasons, ranging from cultural considerations to financial support. Obtaining an education in the US is expected to result in tangible benefits for the entire family. Without family and extended family support, international study would not be possible for international students. The use of social media is viewed more as a ritual to maintain cultural and personal connections rather than simply an online social activity. Here authors also outline the practices of Indiana University-Bloomington (IU), a trailblazer in international student engagement, on their approach to purposeful cross-campus dialogue in regards to building and sustaining positive relationships.

Chapter 5 dives deeper into fostering belonging for international students on US college campuses. The authors call for higher education administrators and faculty to no longer turn a blind eye to the fundamental role that belonging plays in human life. This involves a change from focusing on vulnerabilities toward a more holistic and constructive focus on resilience and strength. Further, it is recommended that a shift occur from international students as relatively unconnected, autonomous individuals to a focus on international students as participants in complex and influential social networks. Lastly, authors advocate evolving from the traditional focus on professionalized student services toward a self-authorship model.

Recommendations, implications for practice, and opportunities for potential modeling are made throughout this book. The final chapter provides comprehensive recommendations for practice for faculty and staff at US higher education institutions to better support students from all backgrounds. The authors also acknowledge challenges this presents as universities have competing priorities. Lastly, details on effective campus partnerships and faculty engagement are outlined.

The authors of this book provide a collection of research that successfully conveys many issues that international students face on US college campuses. The personal accounts, review of leading programs, and recommendations of good practice in this book challenge individuals and institutions to truly understand the experiences of international students and the types of environments being cultivated. Higher education institutions must continue to improve inclusion efforts for international learners on campus by providing superior campus support services from actively engaged, committed, and passionate faculty and staff.

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