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- Educator's Reference Complete, 09/01/2011-
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Multiple Vendors
- Freely Accessible Social Science Journals, 2011-

ProQuest
- Education Collection, 10/01/2011-
- Education Database, 10/01/2011-
- Education Database (Alumni Edition), 10/01/2011-
- ProQuest Central, 10/01/2011-
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- ProQuest Central (US Academic Subscription), 10/01/2011-
- ProQuest Central China, 10/01/2011-
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- ProQuest Research Library (Corporate), 10/01/2011-
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- ProQuest Social Sciences Premium Collection - UK Customers, 10/01/2011-
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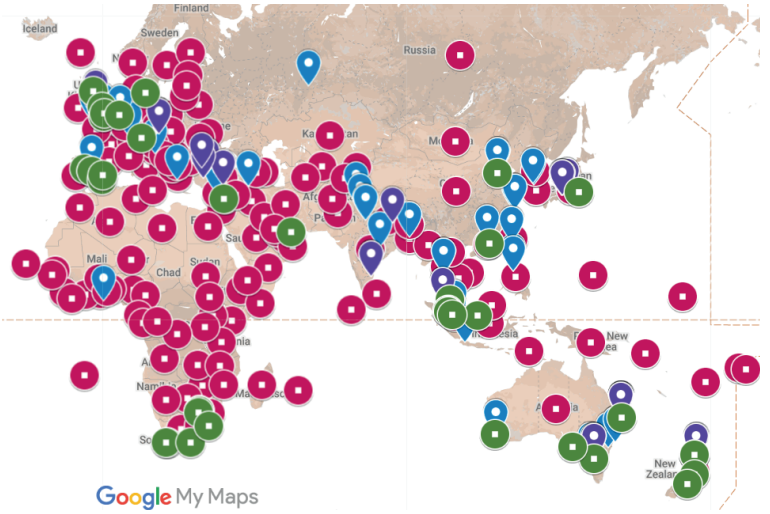

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Touching the Elephant: A Holistic Approach to Understanding International Student Experiences

Krishna Bista
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ABSTRACT

In this editorial essay, the author uses the Indian parable known as The Blind Men and an Elephant to illustrate different perspectives that may frame the international student experience. It discusses the abundance of blinders and high stakes in a growth industry. The editorial illustrates the need to shift perspectives and widen the circle of support and why a holistic approach matters.

Keywords: international student experience; holistic perspective

In an Indian parable known as The Blind Men and an Elephant, several blind men approached an elephant, and each touched the animal in an effort to discover what the beast looked like. Each blind man, however, touched a different part of the large animal, and each concluded independently that the elephant had the appearance of the part he alone had touched. The story illustrates that our subjective experiences can be true, but that they are also limited to our individual context, which presents a need for shared information. The different perspectives that may frame the international student experience bring this lesson vividly to life.

AN ABUNDANCE OF BLINDERS

Support for international students, which is well documented in international education research, has certainly grown around the world in tandem with increasing institutional interest in improving revenue, diversity, and internationalization. But, as in the parable of the blind men and the elephant, different professionals specializing in different areas of support usually have only partial pictures of the students' experiences, needs, and strengths.

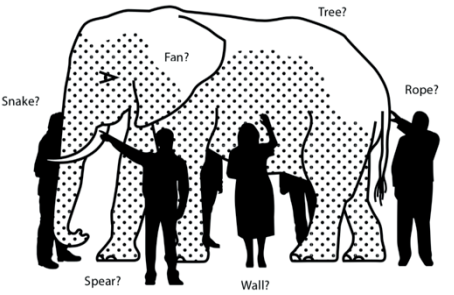

Figure 1. The Blind Men and an Elephant

The research focused on these issues commonly tends to view these students through a deficit perspective, only addressing student struggles with limited local languages or English language proficiency, cultural adjustment hurdles, student dissatisfaction, social integration issues with domestic students, and a lack of preparation to meet (Western) educational expectations.

For decades, colleges and universities in the major receiving (mostly English language speaking) countries have focused on building English language centers or programs, delivering week-long orientation seminars, lecturing on local cultures and university expectations, and providing students with a list of dos and don'ts--all designed around the assumption that "they" need to learn about education "here" in order to be successful. In substance, however, most institutions are barely scratching the surface in terms of understanding and responding to the complex realities of their international student populations, and hence are far from forming a true picture of international students' lived experiences from admission to post-graduation.

HIGH STAKES IN A GROWTH INDUSTRY

Over five million students are currently pursuing a degree program outside their country of birth. There has been sustained global growth of international student numbers over the last several decades, as well an evolving global marketplace, as political and economic developments have created new dynamics and served to shift student interest in key destination countries. At the same time, colleges and universities are restructuring and strengthening their support services. Indeed, many institutions of higher education proudly announce their "global vision" by pursuing foreign student recruitment; hiring international faculty members; promoting exchange opportunities and national and international scholarship program, such as Erasmus+ and Fulbright, among others, and developing other study abroad activities.

In the United States, for example, these global ambitions are primarily focused on recruiting students from non-traditional destinations such as Saudi Arabia and Brazil, particularly to tap into the scholarship programs offered by these governments. Non-English-speaking countries—including China, India, Japan, and South Korea—have also strategically aligned with this global ambition to recruit international

students from foreign countries. For instance, the fast-growing Chinese economy has transformed that country's higher education image into an "international education hub" with an enrollment target of 500,000 international students by 2020. China has strengthened its regional ties under its One Belt, One Road initiative and has widened its visa policies to attract the best and bright international students.

The ways in which international students are perceived and received by their host countries has always been important. But, as our understanding of the multifaceted experience of international study increases, and as the numbers of internationally mobile students grow, their ranks diversify, and the countries and institutions where they choose to study evolve, the stakes involved in getting the work of international student support 'right' takes on increasing importance.

THE NEED TO SHIFT PERSPECTIVES AND WIDEN THE CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

Whether they are called "foreign students," "Erasmus students," "alien non-immigrant," "non-resident alien," "mobile students," "study abroad student," or "international students," students who come from outside the national context are typically viewed as the "Other". As such, the local policies and programs directed toward them are structured in ways that classify them as "special people" who need things they lack—from language learning, to cultural adjustment, to understanding campus values, and becoming people who "fit in". Few people in the institutions hosting international students around the world know that international students are sometimes required to undergo complex administrative processes, may live in austere conditions, in some cases pay exorbitant fees, and often work doggedly trying to adopt local values while pursuing their uniquely individual dreams.

The kinds of support services they receive depend on how they are perceived in their host countries and institutions, which varies widely across the globe. International students may be seen as different types of learners, who can help to internationalize the campus environment. They are also often perceived as "cash cows" because of the revenue they bring to campuses, local communities, and national economies. Indeed, more and more institutions have strategic plans for increasing their international student population. Often missing from such plans, however, is the thoughtful provision of support services for these students and ways of integrating all students to foster campus diversity and student success. Yes, international students may struggle with writing, language, social engagement, and initial adjustment, but the best programs and services offered to this population are not designed as isolated treatments to "correct problems". Rather, the most meaningful supports recognize and attend to the contextual influences on international student learning, such as academic expectations, leadership development, personal motivation, etc, and help students leverage the many strengths they bring with them to the international study experience.

In addition to fostering support services that are grounded in students' strengths rather than their perceived deficits, the creation of synergies within institutions is vital. Student services and supports are only effective if students are aware of their existence and feel comfortable making use of them. Existing services may go

unnoticed or be underutilized if students are not effectively introduced to the resources available to them. Faculty and staff can play a key role here IF they are trained to recognize the needs of international students and are able to direct students to relevant supports. This requires that faculty and staff are made aware of the resources on offer at their institutions and are sensitized to the diverse realities of the international student experience. When existing programs and services such as the office of international students, writing center, health center, career center, counseling center and other campus units collaborate and coordinate with other departments across the campus, they may better address the larger picture of the international student experience.

WHY A HOLISTIC APPROACH MATTERS?

Globally ranked universities do aspire to provide meaningful international experiences for their domestic students; their leaders are also committed to the mission of global engagement and are willing to persevere in the face of challenges brought about by the current political rise in anti-immigration rhetoric. And yet, rather than [what?] nation-based framing of the discourse shapes perspectives about language, culture, politics, economics, and other terms of analysis in particular ways, and continues to make some questions seem less significant than others, some findings less meaningful, some realities less visible. It is vitally important to recognize the differences international students bring in terms of their diverse backgrounds and previous academic context in order to enhance campus diversity and academically prepare both domestic and international students. All of these students—domestic and international—represent the futures of our societies, many in the roles of leaders as professors, doctors, engineers, businesspersons, scientists, and other professionals of the 21st century. In spite of the anxieties and uncertainties of our time, educators should not hesitate to aspire to, plan for, and create the ideal situation where the focus is on the successful integration of international students and development of intercultural competences for all students.

There are certainly complexities in understanding international student experiences and their contribution to higher education, just as the blind men experienced challenges in understanding the true and full nature of the elephant in their midst. In the parable, the blind men did not see the whole elephant, no one said it was an elephant, no one asked the elephant, and they did not ask each other's views about what they were perceiving. An holistic approach to understanding international students will take time and effort, and includes a commitment to the value of fair treatment and the simple logic of reciprocity: inbound students are "international" in the host countries where they study in the same way that outbound students will be "international" by default in the countries that receive them. Receiving countries and institutions need to better appreciate these dynamics.

While the general trends show that many international students simply seek opportunities to study in places with less poverty, greater job prospects, low corruption, better infrastructure, increased safety and an overall better quality of life, the scenario is becoming more complex with the cultural and political changes our world has been witnessing lately. The journey of international students is riddled with

a spectrum of both positive and negative experiences (some of them life changing and transformational). And the international student population is not a single, uniform group; rather, it is heterogeneous by nature. This complexity requires greater nuance in terms of service delivery and a comprehensive approach towards addressing diversity and facilitating socio-cultural inclusion. Serving the international student population in higher education the world over today requires deeper understanding of these complex and shifting realities, and a commitment to addressing them substantively and comprehensively.

The ratio of international students and the support services is never balanced as the majority of campuses and universities have limited resources; office personnel and faculty members are often busy with regular schedules; and most importantly the programs and resources are structured from the perspectives of colleges and universities (what they want to offer) rather than what international students would actually need or benefit from in order to live, study, and work when they are overseas. As in the parable of Blind Men and the Elephant, the partial reality of understanding of the international student is reflected in the limited resources and programs put in place aiming to address the much larger and complex issues of international students (which are never fully understood by the so-called stewards in place). The magnitude of each international student experience varies based on personal educational differences, social integration, help seeking approaches, friendship development, funding issues, different communication styles and customs, career choices, and other soft skills. Most importantly, the human aspect is often ignored and what they bring to the table is minimized. At the human level, international students should not be seen as being different from their local counterparts – as they are real humans and their college experiences are as real as their counterparts' experiences are.

Acknowledgement: This essay is adopted from the author's book, *Global Perspectives on International Student Experiences in Higher Education* (Routledge, 2019).

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International Muslim Students: Challenges and Practical Suggestions to Accommodate Their Needs on Campus

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ABSTRACT

In recent years there has been an increase in the enrollment of Muslim international students in higher education institutions in China. This research provides a brief overview of the issues that international Muslim students face during their campus life, such as adopting a new culture, lack of understanding from the broader university community, poor cultural or religious-responsive education, lack of accommodation for religious practices, and social isolation. This qualitative study also highlights some information about the unique needs of the Muslim students on campus and identifies areas for improvement. To overcome these issues, specific practical suggestions are given to the university administration, faculty, and staff to meet the needs of Muslim students, not only academically, but also socially and culturally.

Keywords: institutional barriers, international Muslim students, needs, university campus

Given the recent trends of internationalization and globalization, the number of students who cross national borders for education has increased. The intercontinental mobility of students has been viewed as one of the indicators of campus diversity and a prime source to boost the revenue of higher education institutions. The number of international students worldwide has been rising rapidly in the 21st century. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2017),

the total number of students registered outside their country of residency increased from 2.1 million in 2000 to 5.1 million in 2016. The enrollment trend of international students has continuously been increasing, with more than five million students enrolled in tertiary education outside their country, and this figure is expected to reach eight million by 2025 (Education at a Glance, 2017; Macionis, Walters, & Kwok, 2018). Students pursue international study to understand a new culture, find out new methods of thinking and behaving, make new friends, and improve cross-cultural knowledge and skills (Andrade, 2006; McClure, 2007). On a personal level, international students may experience an increase in self-esteem and confidence as a result of their independent life experiences in a diverse culture. However, institutions that do not address the unique needs of international students may leave these students feeling disappointed, unfulfilled, and even exploited (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010). To avoid these and other negative outcomes, it is imperative that personnel in higher education take into consideration how well the campus community is prepared for interacting with international students (Arthur, 2017).

The US and UK have traditionally attracted a large number of international students (Ding, 2016). In recent years, however, the enrollment of international students in China has increased because of its emerging market in the global economy. Students from other countries come to China for its burgeoning technology and growing economy. This increased mobility of international students has been an essential part of the communication between China and other countries, which reflects China's increasingly positive international status (Chen, 2016). After educational reforms and the opening-up policy, the government of China has given more importance to international students, and the enrollment of international students in higher education institutions of China is increasing day by day (Bebe, 2012; Li, 2015; Wen, Hu, & Hao, 2017)

According to statistics released by the Chinese Ministry of Education, more than 489,200 students enrolled in Chinese institutions in 2017 from across the world, especially along the "Belt and Road Initiative," a massive trade and foreign investment program linking markets along the traditional Silk Road trade routes throughout Asia and Europe (Ministry of Education, 2018; Su, 2017). The Chinese government set the ambitious goal of receiving 500,000 international students by 2020 as pointed out in the medium- and long-term educational reforms and development plan (2010–2020), with the goal of becoming the foremost host country for international students in Asia and a major study destination in the world (Wen et al., 2017).

The growing number of international students has placed China as one of the top 10 host countries for international education in the world (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2017. Thus, there is a need to know how to best support international students who visit China. Previous research has mainly explored challenges of international students (Duru & Poyrazli, 2011; Lee & Rice, 2007), such as factors affecting their adjustment and psychological well-being (Yeh & Inose, 2010). In China, a lot of work has been done on the problems of international students from the perspectives of social, psychological, and academic issues. Previous studies on international students often focus on cross-cultural adaptation in an academic setting and language problems (Bebe, 2012; Yu, 2010). However, limited studies

have focused on international Muslim students and the challenges that they face, such as cultural adjustment, language communication problems, lack of accommodation for religious practices, social integration, academic issues, problems in daily life, homesickness, etc. All of these problems can be manifested in an inability to sleep, depression and anxiety, and loss of self-esteem and homesickness (Rajab, Rahman, Panatik, & Mansor, 2014; Zhai, 2002). To address these issues, this qualitative study was conducted in hopes of identifying international Muslim students' adjustment issues and help-seeking behaviors while attending higher education institutions in China. This study also provides practical suggestions for effective support services to assist Muslim students in making better transitions to life and education in China. Conclusions, discussions, and implications for practitioners are also provided.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1950, China opened its doors to international students for the first time and received 33 students from Eastern Europe. The People's Republic of China espoused then the issued reforms and opening policies from 1978, when they facilitating the education of 128,000 international students for higher education, most of whom came from socialist and developing countries. Since then, international enrollment in China has steadily increased (Lei, 2014). China's quick economic growth and rising global influence have drawn a large number of international students, with a steady increase since the 1990s. In Chinese universities 195,503 international students' enrollments were reported in 2007. According to the official statistics of the Ministry of Education (MOE) of China in 2018, 492,185 international students from more than 203 countries around the world were studying in China. Recently, China has openly publicized its goal to further increase the number of international students. The State Council of China published *The National Medium- and Long-Term Educational Reforms and Development Plans* (2010) for 2010–2020 and noted that the number of international students should be further augmented. Later in 2010, the MOE (2010) adopted the Project of Studying in China, with the primary goal of bolstering China as the leading host country in Asia and bringing up the total number of arriving international students to half a million by 2020. According to MOE data, there was a 10% rise in 2017 as compared with 2016, and there has been a 299% increase since 2004 (Parr, 2019). Though international student enrollments is a priority for the Chinese government and researchers have done work on the improvement of the international students' education in China, policy makers should also consider the adjustment needs of Muslim students in a cultural and academic environment in China (Ding, 2016). It is true that China has a substantial Muslim population, but according to their religious beliefs and values, they are not well settled (Wang, 2017). Before describing Muslim students' issues in detail, below is a brief introduction to what Islam requires of Muslim students.

Introduction to Islam

Islam is the second fastest and largest rising organized religion in the world (Albrecht, 2012). Approximately 1.6 billion Muslims are scattered across the vast

geography where they live as the absolute majority in 45 countries, and the rest live in 149 countries as substantial religious minorities (Yucel, 2015). The expected rise of the world population between 2010 and 2050 is 9.3 billion, or 35%. Over the same period, the Muslim community is expected to rise 73% to reach 2.8 billion, or 30% of the world's total population (A. Ali, Xiaoling, Sherwani, & Ali, 2017).

Islam is a religion that believes that there is only God (Allah). "Surrender" is the meaning of Islam and "a person who submits to the will of Allah" is stated as a Muslim. The word Allah as used by Muslims refers to the God of all humanity (S. R. Ali, Liu, & Humedian, 2004). The Quran is the sacred book for Muslims and considered to be the ultimate foundation of Islamic ideologies and beliefs. Five articles, or pillars, of faith form the foundation of Islam: (1) Eman, or faith in One God; (2) Salat, which is prayer five times a day; (3) Zakat, or charity; (4) Swam, or fasting in the holy months of Ramadan from sunrise to sunset; and (5) one Haj, or holy pilgrimage, during one's life. Even though the fundamental pillars are the same for all Muslims, there are a wide variety of nationalities, cultural backgrounds, and different sects epitomized within Islam. There are also many dissimilarities regarding the traditions and customs that are followed (S. R. Ali & Bagheri, 2009). However, ultimately, Islam is not just a religion for Muslims; it is a complete way of life (Fatima, 2013).

International Muslim Students' Experiences in Higher Education

The campus is known to be a diverse environment and a fundamental place for students from various backgrounds to interrelate with one another on a day-to-day basis (Bennett, Volet, & Fozdar, 2013). Since the beginning of the new century all over the world universities have started to study the dynamics and societal effects of differing religious and sociocultural backgrounds (Gilliat-Ray, 2007; Hopkins, 2011; Possamai et al., 2016). Universities are being forced to contemplate the necessities and inferences of a new generation of students from a diversity of different religious customs (Gilliat-Ray, 2007). Studies on campus climate have shown that campus life affects academic achievements, especially at the higher education level. A supportive atmosphere improves the quality of teaching and learning and encourages all participants to take advantage of the unique experiences and opportunities offered at universities (Seggie & Sanford, 2010). Such an environment also stimulates greater interfaith understanding and development of cooperative attitudes toward religiously diverse peers (A. B. Rockenbach & Mayhew, 2014).

International students have become an important group of the population on university campuses around the world (Kruid, 2017). It has been found that international students from different countries face more adjustments problems than their local peers (Duru & Poyrazli, 2011). Studies have shown that minority students face different challenges when they enter a new environment; it may be related to their academic setting and can also occur in their social context. Usually, these challenges are institutional discrimination, social isolation, depression, language problems, adjustment problems to the new culture, and homesickness, etc. (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). International students face unique issues, such as an unfamiliar

educational system, unacquainted food and customs, and isolation from family and friends (Akhtar, 2011).

In addition to facing challenges common to all international students, Muslim students deal with a set of entirely different challenges. Although they come from a variety of countries with distinctive cultural and linguistic customs, they share a common religious practice of Islam. Many Muslim students experience a deficiency of respect or familiarity with their religious practices and face internal and external problems in their adherence to Islam (Nasir & Al-amin, 2010). Some practicing Muslims are identifiable by their culture, language, and dress. This can lead to direct and indirect discrimination from organizations, including educational institutions (Gillbborn, 1996). Muslim students have reported uneasiness and discomfort in carrying out their publicly visible Islamic duties, such as prayer, fasting, modest dress, and non-consumption of alcohol. Some studies have shown that Muslim students continuously encounter false assumptions held by students, staff, and teachers that affect their integration in co-curricular activities and social spaces on campus (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Nasir & Al-amin, 2010; A. N. Rockenbach, Mayhew, Bowman, Morin, & Riggers-Piehl, 2017). In addition, the afteraffects of Anti-Muslim persuasion on campuses after 9/11 and the London bombing on 7/7 cause Muslim students to suffer from Islamophobia (Bhatti, 2011). Previous studies on the experiences of Muslim students show that Muslim children and young people have been deeply affected by negative media portrayals and are often less comfortable talking about religious matters relative to their non-Muslim peers (A. B. Rockenbach & Mayhew, 2014; Al Wekhian, 2016).

Cultural Adjustment

Thousands of miles away from home, it is not easy to acquire a sense of belonging. The demands of the host culture might be entirely different in many aspects from one's own culture, and the new lifestyle may be entirely at odds with one's experience in their native country. Getting familiar with new surroundings, customs, and social norms all become essential tasks for international students (Ozabay, 1993; Telbis, Helgeson, & Kingsbury, 2014). Previous studies on cultural adjustment have shown that adjusting to a new culture affects the educational performance of students. It has been found that students from different countries face more adjustments difficulties (Pratyusha Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013). When entering into a new culture, they need to deal with different value systems and cultural traditions, communication problems, interpersonal relationships, and different sign and symbols of social contact (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The language barrier can affect cultural adjustment and has also been associated with challenges related to psychological well-being.

International Muslim students face some additional problems while adjusting to new cultures because they also encounter a lack of familiarity with their religious practices, as well as anti-Muslim sentiments on campus (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003). Research on practicing Muslims in the United States has shown that religious coping (e.g., looking for support from religious institutions and frontrunners, and engaging

in practices such as Salat) might be a method to address the challenges of cultural adjustment (Abu-Ras & Abu-Bader, 2008; Asmar, 2005; Ribeiro & Saleem, 2010).

Social Isolation

When students cross national boundaries, they face lots of challenges, and social isolation is one of them. International students, especially Muslim students, tend to feel very lonely when entering a new environment. Such isolation comprises deficiency of familiar friends, the absence of a social network, an unfamiliar culture, and homesickness (McClure, 2007; Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008). Like other minority students, social support, social connectedness, and positive peer group relationships are significant to the success of Muslims in a new environment. It helps them to maintain their Muslim identity and acts as a means of reinforcing Islamic values and codes of behavior (Zine, 2001). A welcoming community and university environment and having a number of friends also serve as critical factors for the mental health of international students. Student's interaction with their peers in academic-related activities increased understanding of diversity, critical thinking skills and other learning outcomes reported that the non-classroom interaction with peers has a net positive impact on the academic learning of students (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015). Most universities pay attention only to the educational requirements of students and do not consider other critical factors that may also determine the possible achievement or failure of students in a changed environment (Tidwell & Hanassab, 2007).

Religious Practices and Institutional Barriers

Lack of Accommodation

A dominant concern of Muslim students is their need for specific accommodations that can enable the exercise of their belief on university campuses. S. R. Ali and Bagheri (2009) reported that the lack of nutritional necessities and prayer spaces, and the ignorance of Islamic holidays can be challenging for Muslim students. Muslims have to pray five times a day at a specific time in separate spaces for men and women. Students continuously have to search out a suitable place to offer their prayer. When private spaces on campus are not accessible, Muslim students have described uneasiness and nervousness (Nasir & Al-amin, 2010). Research on Muslim Americans shows that an inability to perform religious practices causes stress and trouble. Another barrier for Muslim students in offering their prayers is when academic obligations such as class or meeting times overlap with prayer times (Speck, 1997). Other students on campus and faculty generally do not understand the religious practices of Muslim students, so they experience discrimination and prejudice. Research shows that bias based on religious practices and cultural differences negatively affect the educational performance of Muslim students (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003).

Dietary Restrictions

There are some kinds of restrictions on food choice in prominent religions of the world like Islam, Hinduism, Jewish, Judaism, and Buddhism. It can be difficult to follow the religious instructions for the followers of the religion especially when they travel to other countries that have different religion and culture (A. Ali, Xiaoling, Sherwani, & Ali, 2017). Islam requires its followers to adhere to specific dietary rules known as halal laws, which are practices dictated by the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him [PBUH]). Basic tenets of halal laws include: consuming only halal meat, which is slaughtered in the name of Allah, and ensuring that any processed or wrapped food is certified that prohibited substances have not contaminated the food. Ingestion of pork or pork byproducts, including gelatin, is forbidden, and the use of alcohol in food preparation is not permitted, including extracts such as vanilla (Henry, Hayley, Rachel, & Earl, 2014). Sometimes adequate food facilities are not available on the university campus, so students must search for places with halal food near the campus. Limited dining options also severely inconvenience Muslim students during the holy month of Ramadan, when they fast from sunrise to sunset and need to eat before or after regular dining hours.

Alcohol Consumption

Consumption of alcohol is prohibited in Islam. Believers of Islam are not allowed to consume alcohol and foods in which alcohol is used. Muslims often feel uncomfortable in an environment where alcohol is served. In university settings, the source of entertainment during gatherings often involves alcohol. Therefore, in this way, Muslim students often feel socially lonely from their peers because they have insufficient options for entertainment and social outlets (S. R. Ali & Bagheri, 2009).

Religious Conduct and Clothing

The requirement for Muslims is to cover the body parts. Typically Muslim men cover their body from shoulders down to the knee, and women cover their entire body except for face and hands. Previous research shows that Muslim students face issues related to their religious dressing because government policy in China only allows religious expression in religious institutions. Legally religious symbols are not permitted in public spaces, especially in educational institutions. When female Muslim students wear hijabs, they experience discrimination (Wang, 2017).

Religious Holidays

Beyond acquiring a place to pray, Muslim students follow specific religious holidays. Two major festivals are observed with much dedication in the Muslim world. These are the celebrations of the two Eids: Eid-ul-Fitr, which is celebrated after Ramadan, and Eid-ul Azha, which is celebrated after the Hajj (Anwar, 2001). Universities in non-Islamic countries do not recognize Islamic holidays. Since religious practices and values are mandatory for Muslims, when students have to

choose between accomplishing their educational tasks and celebrating religious holidays, this can cause a great amount of stress.

Religious and Educational Discrimination

Various factors affect the educational performance of Muslim students, such as race, gender, institution type, study time, and educational aspirations. Factors such as ethnicity have also been linked to the academic success of the students (Cole & Ahmadi, 2017). Some researchers have examined the effect of negative attitudes toward the Muslim students on their educational achievements. As a researcher, Watt (2011) considered Islamaphobia a barrier to educational success.

Similarly, in a study on Muslim college students, Speck (1997) found that cultural dissimilarities and preconceptions established about Muslim religious practices negatively influenced Muslim students' educational experiences. Many teachers and guidance counselors have a negative perception of Muslims and their religion. In a situation in which a student is perceived by his or her group as inferior, his or her educational performance can suffer (Steele, 1997). This type of prejudice and lack of understanding on the part of teachers and peer groups has been found to affect academic performance more directly (S. R. Ali & Bagheri, 2009).

Communication Barriers

There is agreement that communication problems that international students experience cause various issues that transcend all areas of these students' personal and social lives (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). In this context, language ability is considered as the most important determinant of students' ability to adjust to a new setting (Freeman, Nga, & Mathews, 2017). Language barriers in an academic environment can not only affect the educational performance of international students but also lower their interaction with fellows and teachers (Behl, Laux, Roseman, Tiamiyu, & Spann, 2017). But in universities in China, the language of instruction is Chinese, and very few local people have proficiency in speaking English. Faculty members, concerned staff, and students usually cannot adequately convey their meaning in English. This is alright for students who share the same culture, but for Muslim students, communication barriers are challenging because they need extra help from the university administration to accommodate their religious practices. However, because of the lack in English proficiency, Muslim students have difficulty successfully communicating with the university administration about their needs, because very few people know about the leading practices of Islam in the first place.

METHODS

This study uses qualitative research and explores international Muslim students' challenges on a Chinese university campus. To understand the immanent experiences of individuals, the qualitative approach is considered useful because it accentuates careful listening and respect for individuals' unique thoughts and explanations of life experiences (Ponterotto, 2013). According to Yin (2014), "Qualitative research is

interested in analysing subjective meaning or the social production of issues, events, or practices by collecting non-standardised data and analysing texts and images rather than number and statistics." (p. 60). A case study is the most suitable qualitative research technique for this research due to its concentrations on practical awareness of the case and because it closely considers the impact of societal, political, and other contexts. More specifically, case study is a research strategy and an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context and is used when the purpose of the study is to reach an in-depth and detailed understanding of an issue (Alizai, 2017; K.Yin, 2014).

Participants

For this study participants were selected from a university campus through the direct contact of the researcher and were requested to participate in this study. The final sample for this study included 10 participants—six males, and four females—ranging from 23 to 40 years old. The selection criteria included residence in China not less than 1 year and identification as a Muslim and an international student studying in a graduate program (doctoral program). The countries of origin of the participants were as follows: four from Pakistan, two from Bangladesh, two from Egypt, one from Turkey, and one from Sudan. Having the same religious background helped the researcher to establish a relationship with the informants. A close friendship was developed with the respondents during this research. We met them at different festivals and dinner parties; this association permitted our participants to share their own experiences in China.

Procedure

Data was collected through in-depth face-to-face interviews because it gave participants an opportunity to explain their viewpoints thoroughly. With the help of literature review, the interview protocol was developed and included open-ended questions that explored the participants' campus experiences, their challenges in adjustment, their relationships with peers, and services provided by the university. The interviews were mainly conducted in English. Each meeting lasted about 40–50 min, and the students were all asked the same questions. The interviews were digitally audio-recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. Particular care was taken to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Based on the principals of grounded theory, a conventional content analysis was drawn to code the data. Conventional content analysis is a study design that aims to describe a phenomenon and is usually suitable when existing theory or literature on the phenomenon is limited (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002). Conventional content analysis avoids the use of earlier or predetermined forms, and as an alternative permits for classes to appear directly from the actual data (e.g., contestants' responses; (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis revealed that Muslim students encountered different challenges. The three central themes presented in the following discussion highlight the participants' challenges on a predominantly nonreligious university campus: (a) new cultural adjustments and accommodations, (b) social isolation, and (c) educational and religious discrimination.

New Cultural Adjustments and Accommodations

As minority students on campus, the Muslim students interviewed experienced significant difficulties during their early adaptation to a new culture. Because of the different beliefs and value systems, they experienced cultural shock. The initial adjustment stage included adjusting to the differences in the educational system, language challenges, and food incompatibilities. A few students expressed feelings of appreciation for the opportunities, while others reported feelings of discomfort in the new culture. All participants said that language was a significant issue that they faced in their adjustment to Chinese culture, because so few people could speak English. Female Muslim students experienced more challenges because values regarding religion were entirely different. Specifically, female students who wear religious dress and hijab face more discrimination, prejudice, and exclusion. They also face more isolation because in the peer group gathering, they follow their religious values like never shaking hands with male fellows, which was some time more unpleasant because they considered them more conservative. All these things decreased their confidence level and active participation in all the learning activities. Virtually all of the participants described experiencing difficulties in following their religious practices. Muslims have to pray five times a day at specific times, but there were no spaces for them to pray. One participant explained,

> As a female to pray on campus is hard because we need a place for wazoo (wash before to pray), but there is no place for us, and during class, it is not possible to go back in the room.

Some students pointed out that students from countries of non-Muslim origin celebrated their traditional activities openly on campus.

> At the time of Christmas, the whole campus celebrates but Muslim festivals are always ignored or even not allowed.

Participants also described that the learning of the different values and norms in new culture is most significant challenge for them.

> I think the cultural values are much different and people are open-minded so being Muslim it's difficult to adjust.

> Being Muslim and wearing a scarf is hard for me. The students on campus most of the time they ignore me said that she is Muslim. They do not know about my culture and values. They hear things about Muslim from others and the media. I think its big challenge to adjust to the host culture.

Invisibility and Social Isolation

The second broad category is social isolation. Muslim students face difficulties not only in their social life but also in the classrooms. Moving away from their homeland leaves Muslim students far away from family and friends, so they face the challenge of loneliness and making new friends. The participants told me that when they came to China, they sought out students from the same home country or any other Muslims for socialization because when they attended local social events, they had to deal with different ways of communication. Students described missing their family and friends at home due to cultural differences. In the present study, most of the participants were brought up in a collective culture in which people were closer and more friendly with each other. Socializing with peers was challenging for Muslim students because the social activities and religious beliefs of the Muslims and non-Muslims differ from each other.

> Now I am concerned about my family because they are very far from me. When I perceive something dreadful happens to somebody even, I start crying. It's not easy. Here you cannot consistently find somebody to talk to when you feel sad about something.

> I first thought that the people are very cooperative, but actually, they have different feelings. Sometimes they behave like they did not know.

> I was very intensely homesick. I tried to socialize with my fellow students but did not know what to say or how to say things. Felt more profound misery and sat alone most of the time.

Poor Cultural or Religious Responsive Education

The third category is related to Muslim students' educational challenges. Within an educational setting, ethnic minorities face acute disadvantages, particularly from a religious and cultural perspective. Students from minority groups experience conflicts between the host culture and their home culture, and this gap creates some additional difficulties for them.

During the interview, the participants spent a lot of time discussing issues associated with the study. Most of the participants claimed that student–faculty interaction is very low in their classrooms and that they were even often ignored; they stated they never participated in classroom discussions, responses to reading materials, or group activities due to having a Muslim religious background. While the students were in their home country, their professors were very specialized and amicable. However, the students noted troubles in communication with their professors in China due to the language hurdles. They considered language to be a significant hindrance to their academic adjustment. Having limited friends, they experienced isolation in the university setting.

> Professors used group discussion. My classmates usually ignore me to invite in their group discussion.

> Proficiency in the Chinese language is not so good. Sometimes really cannot understand the lecture because some teachers did not speak a single word in English. When the professor allotted us in the conversation group, I was left out.

In this research, almost half of the participants experienced public apathy and feelings of distress, and only two participants felt comfortable in their academic setting. One of the female participants described it this way:

> I am just one female Muslim student in my class. My classmates always give a quick look that they never know me. When they discussed study-related matters, I still listen they talk about me she is Muslim how she can participate, they ignored me.

For Muslims, religion is significant because they believe that it's not only a religion but also a way of life, so they faced some religion-related challenges. Practicing one's faith in a new environment and navigating symbols of religious identity is difficult. Participants also described a heightened awareness of the value of Islam to their own identity. Female participants indicated that students on campus raised questions about their external religious symbols. One participant said that,

> Since I came here, people ask me, "Why do you like this headscarf?" They feel about me that this is hard and sad, but I am like "Don't feel sad for me. I am so happy that I am doing that."

Students also perceived misconceptions about their religious beliefs because some people in China have negative feelings toward Muslims due to the disturbances in Xinjiang.

> We have a religious background, but the people of China have no religious experience so that they do not realize the religious formalities.

> Sometimes their attitude was unbearable asked me why I was fasting, and she had told me "Do you think God cares if you are hungry or not," and I felt awful.

The findings of the present study expand the existing knowledge and indicate that international Muslim students face unique challenges in a new culture and academic setting. The following section will discuss implications drawn from the study.

Implications and Practical Suggestions for Accommodation

Based on the findings of this research, some recommendations will now be proposed for universities in China on how to facilitate international Muslim students in becoming successful. With the growing number of international students in the universities in China, the higher education authorities and institutional administration should take steps to accommodate these students, especially Muslim students. Muslim students are an integral part of the campus community, and their presence enhances campus diversity. The university administration can help Muslim students

in overcoming hurdles to spiritual exploration and religious faithfulness in many ways. They can also improve the campus environment for Muslim students by directly addressing misunderstanding between Muslim and non-Muslim students. This study provides some strategies for improving the campus climate and accommodating the needs of Muslim students.

Spaces to Pray

First of all, the university administration can provide proper space for Muslim students to offer prayer and hold services. Previous studies on the requirements of Muslim students have shown that for prayers and other religious activities, universities across the US established students' centers and sufficient accessible places to Muslims students (S. R. Ali & Bagheri, 2009; Nasir & Al-amin, 2010; Steele, 1997) Muslim students have found this to be a momentous sign of support on behalf of their college community that leads to an increase in morale for Muslim students and communicates to non-Muslim students' gratefulness for religious diversity. It is also imperative to provide adequate accommodations for students to pray during the required prayer time.

Religious Holidays

Universities can create an atmosphere encouraging religious adherence among Muslim students by including holidays of Islamic events on their academic calendar. While the university may not formally accept the holidays, an alternative schedule with a description of the holidays can edify faculty and other officials on this issue. It is crucial that faculty and university officials demonstrate public support for Muslim students.

Halal Food and Alcohol-Free Climate

Maintaining an alcohol-free social environment is important, because in Islam, the use of alcohol is forbidden, and Muslim students avoid places where the alcohol is consumed. This act is not only beneficial for Muslim students but also helps other students who choose not to drink alcohol. Additionally, the most important thing for Muslim students is the provision of halal food. Campus authorities should consider whether the nutritional requirements of the students are being met and also try to adjust their schedule throughout the month of Ramadan.

Cross-Cultural Awareness

Campuses need to create a safe zone and raise cultural awareness among faculty, staff, and students to ensure a welcoming environment, not just for Muslim students, but for all students. The formation of safe areas has shown to be quite successful in providing Muslim students areas to explore their identities together through hosting cultural and spiritual events (Possamai et al., 2016; Seggie & Sanford, 2010). It also helps to host educational and awareness programs regarding Islam.

Collaboration

Campus authorities and faculty can try to arrange different projects and programs in which students with different cultural and religious backgrounds can participate and exchange their knowledge, customs, and beliefs. Academic faculty members have key roles to play in the teaching, supervision, and mentorship of students to reach their academic and career goals (Glass, Kociolek, Wongtrirat, Lynch, & Cong, 2015).There is a great need to provide cross-cultural relationship training programs that encourage cross-cultural sensitivity among students, reduce discrimination and prejudice, and increase respect for foreign cultural values and customs.

Counseling

Counseling may assist the students in coping with adjustment issues. International students' intentions, attitudes, and behaviors toward seeking mental health service are well-documented (Mesidor & Sly, 2016). Students often need counseling to succeed in their academic learning and to reduce psychological stress, but many students are not aware of many services available to them. To encourage these students to use counseling services, there are different forms of counseling that might be utilized. Mori (2000) suggested that campuses provide counseling services to international students, conducted in unceremonious settings such as hallways, homes, or street corners, using informal methods, such as presentations, consultations, or daily meetings that might not be observed as formal counseling conferring to standardized models. Such counseling services can be preplanned, well-structured and presented at regular times.

Cultural and Religious-Responsive Pedagogy

Higher education classrooms are diverse with regards to student culture, as well as race, gender, nationality, and intersecting identities. Indigenous people and ethnic minorities face particularly acute disadvantage within education (Zhang & Wang, 2016). In multicultural education culture and religious differences among faculty and students can create challenges that affect the quality and productivity of teaching and learning. Studies have revealed that culture affects the process of learning and social adjustment of students, and providing culturally suitable practices is the main concern of the teaching profession (Maasum, Maarof, & Ali, 2014). Culture-related pedagogy is an effective means of meeting the academic and social needs of the students with a different culture (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Gay (2002) stated that culturally relevant pedagogy uses "the cultural knowledge, previous experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant to and effective." It is thus important for teachers to be culturally competent in pedagogy to address the diversity in the classroom, and in particular, the various learning styles of students. Teachers need to be able to promote cultural understanding in various ways to enable students to become sensitive to other students from other cultures to be able to live harmoniously in a multicultural community (Derwing & Munro, 2005). China is a multicultural country so we suggest

that the government and the institutions of higher education should encourage culturally responsive teaching practices. For this purpose, they should conduct in-service teacher training, inviting foreign professors to teach, welcoming international students into your classroom, and organizing cultural and religious events celebrations.

CONCLUSION

Using qualitative research methods, this research explored accommodating needs and the challenges of international Muslim students that they faced during their academic, social, and cultural adaption. The study has provided an original contribution because it focused on international Muslim students in higher education in China. A conclusion to be drawn from the study is that Muslim students are an integral part of the campus community and their presence can lead to diversity-enriched campus environments. The findings of this study indicate that Muslim students often face a series of difficulties mainly related to their accommodation, social isolation, adjustment, and educational discrimination. Due to the differences in lifestyle across religion, the participants find it more convenient to become friends with other Muslim students having the same lifestyle.

This study highlights the critical areas for improvement such as a need to provide a proper place to pray on campus for Muslim students. Most of the participants said that they might have an area where they can pray in privacy and feel as if they can be themselves with no further explanation needed. The findings of the study suggest that religious beliefs, practices, and access to faith-based communities in a new cultural context are significant components for the participants. Nurturing a multiracial atmosphere must be primary for universities as their campuses come to be more diverse. Specifically, in the present political and societal environment, multiracial realization surrounding Islam and the experiences of Muslim students has grown up gradually significant. Rising cognizance and growing knowledge is the first step, but campuses can become counselors for Muslim students by taking action in the most effective means. It is an act that will offer an indication that universities are dedicated to forming an atmosphere that not only recognizes and raises the value of the diversity that Muslim students contribute to the university but is similarly devoted to confirming that Muslim students are acknowledged as a valuable member of the campus community. The Chinese government has focused on strategies to quickly increase the enrollment of international students in a short time, such as supplying government scholarships. The government should also take steps to accommodate these students.

Limitations and Future Research

This research should be cautiously considered because it concentrated on a specific group of international Muslim students at a particular institution. The interviews for this study were conducted in English, which may have limited our capability to completely comprehend the emotional experiences of students, particularly those with more limited English proficiency, who feel more comfortable

discussing personal experiences in their native language. Therefore, the generalizability of the results beyond this group of Muslim students is scarce. Despite all these limitations, this study has great importance implications for future research and practice with international Muslim students attending Chinese universities as it highlights the basic accommodation needs of that group of students. Further investigation can explore the behavior of faculty, staff, and students towards intercontinental Muslim students and their consciousness of the problems they face on university campuses.

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International Students' Perceived Language Competence, Domestic Student Support, and Psychological Well-Being at a U.S. University

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ABSTRACT

To increase knowledge of international students' psychological well-being at U.S. universities, we examined the degree to which demographic factors, perceived language competence, and domestic student social support were associated with Ryff's (1989a, 1989b) six aspects of psychological well-being. Participants (n = 216) were undergraduate and graduate students from one mid-sized private university in the Southeast. Analyses revealed differential psychological well-being scores based on demographics. Perceived language competence and domestic student social support were associated positively with multiple aspects of psychological well-being. The novel findings of this case study provide initial evidence of a potentially useful new approach toward international student adjustment and well-being. The authors provide initial recommendations for researchers, practitioners, and international students.

Keywords: college or university, international student, language competence, psychological well-being, social support, United States

The steady increase of international students—students without United States (US) passports studying on visas—at colleges and universities in the US over the last two decades has coincided with greater research attention on international student adjustment (International Institute for Education, 2017; Smith & Khawaja, 2011).

This focus on international students' university experience has illuminated the successes and challenges students from across the globe encounter in the US, with the greatest attention afforded to psychosocial outcomes such as acculturative stress, anxiety, and depression (Brunsting, Zachry, & Takeuchi, 2018; J. Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Potentially lost in the exploration of negative adjustment outcomes is the opportunity to better comprehend more positive psychosocial outcomes such as well-being. The current study is designed to explore demographic, social, and academic factors associated with psychological well-being, specifically six subtypes of well-being: autonomy, purpose in life, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, and growth. To increase the knowledge base of positive well-being outcomes for international students, we selected—based on theory and prior research—variables of interest: perceived language competence and domestic student social support. Domestic student social support represents the degree to which international students perceive the U.S. students on their campus are willing to help them when needed and include them in opportunities. To date, no research has investigated linkages between perceived language competence, domestic student social support, and specific aspects of psychological well-being.

Following Ryff (1989a, 1989b), psychological well-being is drawn from an integrated framework of life course theory, mental health perspectives, and personal growth theories and has extended prior approaches focused mainly on happiness or affect. Ryff posited six aspects of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, self-acceptance, and purpose in life. Autonomy is the degree to which one is the locus of control and is self-directed in one's actions. Environmental mastery represents the degree to which one can arrange one's environment satisfactorily. Personal growth relates to one's feeling of continuous growth and development on one's path to self-actualization. Those who are self-accepting acknowledge both their good and bad qualities, generally having a positive self-regard. Purpose in life refers to feeling one has a direction, usually positive, in life and that life generally has meaning.

Recent literature reviews on international student adjustment, acculturative stress, and well-being concur in their summaries of the international student experience: Many international students adjust well to the new academic, cultural, and social environment at the university and have positive well-being outcomes; however, a substantial portion of international students encounter a range of challenges and experience lower well-being (Alharbi & Smith, 2018; Brunsting, Zachry, & Takeuchi, 2018; J. Li, Wang, & Xiao, 2014; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; J. Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Frequent challenges include social support, English language competence or proficiency, attitudes toward help-seeking and self-efficacy; additional factors associated with well-being include country of origin, personality, and length of time in host country (Alharbi & Smith, 2018; Brunsting et al., 2018; J. Li et al., 2014; J. Zhang & Goodson, 2011). The current study draws on cross-cultural adjustment to identify two primary factors in international student adjustment: perceived language competence and domestic student social support.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ward and colleagues' (Ward & Kennedy, 1999; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999) theory of cross-cultural adjustment partitions adjustment into two domains: psychological (i.e., psychological well-being and satisfaction with one's ability to navigate a new environment) and sociocultural (i.e., one's ability to "fit in" and be welcomed by the host culture). The theory posits that factors such as social support and personality promote psychological adjustment while language fluency and social skills are associated with sociocultural adjustment. However, researchers have noted that some international student factors (e.g., length of residence in the US, acculturation) are associated with both psychological and sociocultural outcomes, which brings into question the degree to which psychological and sociocultural aspects of adjustment interact or are jointly predicted (J. Zhang & Goodson, 2011). The current study is designed to test an aspect of the theory of cross-cultural adjustment: Are both psychological and sociocultural factors—domestic student social support and perceived language competence—associated with international students' psychological well-being when controlling for demographic factors? Figure 1 illustrates the framework as posited by Ward and colleagues (Ward & Kennedy, 1999; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999).

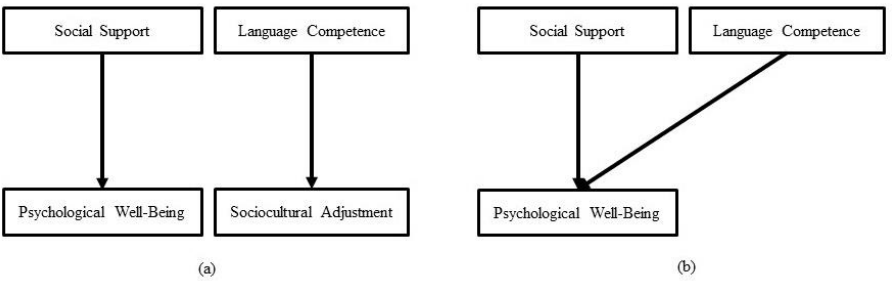

Figure 1: The first model (a) represents a simplified framework of Ward and Kennedy's (1999) Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation, which includes the variables of interest in the current study. The second model (b) is tested in the current study.

Perceived Language Competence and Well-Being

Host country language competence is an essential factor associated with international students' well-being in their adjustment process. In order to pursue successful interaction with members of the host culture, international students may need to adjust their attitudes and social behavior at times to fit in to the local environment and society. Investigations of international students' acculturation process revealed that self-reported English language proficiency is a significant predictor of acculturative stress, depression, and psychological distress (Mahmood & Burke, 2018; Smith & Khawaja, 2014). Low academic–achieving international students reported a low English proficiency and greater overall stress (de Araujo,

2011; Sümer, Poyrazli, & Grahame, 2008; C.-C. D. Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; K. T. Wang et al., 2012). They encountered more challenges in understanding class context, participating in discussions, and communicating concerns. In particular, low language proficiency may affect international students' procrastination behavior, leading to increasing stress and decreasing quality of academic performance (J. Zhang & Goodson, 2011). A recent study documented students' perceptions of their growth as their language skills progressed during studying in the US: Chinese international students reported greater self-confidence, maturity, and independence as well as increased English ability (Z. Li et al., 2017). These outcomes align with the psychological wellbeing subscales of self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and positive relations, providing support for the hypothesis that perceived language competence will by associated with self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and positive relations.

Perceived Language Competence and Domestic Students' Social Support

International students may experience anxiety and isolation because of language barriers (Ching, Renes, McMurrow, Simpson, & Strange, 2017). Although language proficiency is believed to be a significant factor of social well-being, research suggests that individuals' perception of their language competency rather than actual language competence is related to acculturative outcomes (Lin & Betz, 2009). For Taiwanese students in the US, English proficiency mediated the effects of acculturation level (Dao, Lee, & Chang, 2007); similarly, Turkish students' self-reported English difficulties predicted their adjustment (Yildirim, 2015). However, other previous findings show that the level of English proficiency did not mediate the effect of social support on the level of acculturative stress (Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker, & Al-Timimi, 2004). Socially a lack of confidence in one's second language ability may undermine international students' social self-efficacy and social ability. Indeed, social self-efficacy in the English setting is significantly and positively related to English proficiency (Constantine, Okazaki, & Utsey, 2004; Lin & Betz, 2009). Typically, these challenges beget further challenges, as difficulty communicating with members of the host culture impedes communication of necessary information and can lead to decreases in satisfaction with life in United States for international students (J. Zhang & Goodson, 2011). A recent study of international students in Australia revealed associations between English language proficiency, support from host country (e.g., university faculty, staff, and students; locals), and student satisfaction with university life (Mak, Bodycott, & Ramburuth, 2015). The current study is designed to replicate and extend research in this area by testing whether perceived language competence is associated with domestic student social support rather than a broader construct of host country support.

Domestic Student Social Support and Well-Being

Domestic student social support may be an important predictor of international students' psychological wellbeing. Previous research suggests that students who self-report a high level of social support have a lower level of acculturative stress (Yeh &

Inose, 2003). When international students leave their home country, they are often disconnected with their previous social support system. However, the challenge of building a new social network can be difficult for international students compared to the local groups (Longerbeam, DeStefano, & Lixin, 2013; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007) and many report feeling social isolation (MacLachlan & Justice, 2009). We anticipate that social support from domestic students may help them to establish new relationships. Given the benefits of support from local students for succeeding in a new environment, we expect domestic student social support will be associated with psychological well-being constructs of positive relationships with others, environmental mastery, and autonomy. A recent study examined the degree to which university support (i.e., support from university, faculty, and staff) related to student academic, social, physical, and psychological well-being, finding that university support predicted higher scores on well-being generally (Chavoshi, Wintre, Dentakos, & Wright, 2017). However, Chavoshi et al. (2017) did not explore associations between university support and the psychological well-being subscale. The current study extends the current research by testing for relationships domestic student social support and six aspects of psychological well-being.

Hypotheses

1. Domestic student social support will have a significant positive association with perceived language competence for international students.
2. Higher levels of perceived language competence will be associated with increases on three of six subscales of psychological well-being of international students aligned with communication and confidence of speaking (self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and positive relationship), as well as the overall psychological well-being.
3. Domestic student social support will be associated positively with three of six aspects of psychological well-being of international students: autonomy, environmental mastery, and positive relationships with others, as well as the overall psychological well-being.
4. Domestic student social support will have a stronger positive association than perceived language competence for each psychological well-being outcome.

METHODS

Participants

In the current study, the participants were 216 international students at a small liberal arts university in the Southeast. Table 1 includes the demographic information for participants. The age range of participants varied from 17 to 38 with an average

of 21.37. Most of the international students in this study came from East Asian countries with citizenships (n = 171; 79.16%). Chinese students consisted of a large portion of student body from East Asian, (n = 160; 93.57%), and of all participants in the study (74.54%). Most participants were undergraduate students (n = 124; 57.4%) and female (n = 156; 72.2%).

Table 1: Participant Demographic Information

Participants	*n*	%		*n*	%
Gender			**Degree Pursued**		
Male	60	27.8	Bachelors	124	57.4
Female	156	72.2	Masters (non-MBA)	68	31.5
Citizenship			MBA	4	1.9
N. and Centr. America	7	3.2	JD	1	0.5
South America	12	5.6	PhD	19	8.8
Europe	12	5.6	**Year: Undergraduates**		
Africa	4	1.9	1	34	27.4
Middle East	2	0.9	2	27	21.8
Central Asia (India)	9	0.4	3	37	29.8
East Asia	170	78.7	4	26	21.0
Citizen of China			**Year: Graduates**		
Yes	160	74.1	1	54	60.7
No	56	25.9	2	19	21.3
			3	6	6.7
			4	6	6.7
			5	2	2.2
			6+	2	2.2

Procedure

Prior to recruiting participants, we obtained approval from our institutional review board. Names and emails of all international students at the participating university were obtained from the university registrar. The fourth author sent out a series of three recruitment emails asking students to participate in the study and complete the linked survey. The survey took 15–25 min for the participants to complete; those who completed were entered into drawings for one of five $50 gift cards. All participants were aged 16 or above and all surveys were finished within 5 weeks between October 1 and November 5 in 2017. The response rate of participants was 30.64%.

Measures

Demographics

The survey contained a series of demographic questions, including age, gender, home country, citizenship, degree pursued (e.g., graduate or undergraduate) and

location of country in which the participant graduated high school. As participants only selected two of the five options for gender, we coded gender as a binary variable (e.g., female or male) in this survey.

Domestic Student Social Support

To measure domestic student social support, or the perception of support internationals students felt they received from American students at their university, we adapted the Social Support Scale (Carver, 2006) in two ways. First, we removed four items that were deemed to be confusing by a focus group of international students. Second, we adapted the stem of the social support questions to focus on domestic students. An example question is "how much you can relax and be yourself around the American students at your university?". The scale ranged from 1 (*none*) to 5 (*a great deal*) and demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha = .93$).

Psychological Well-Being

The survey included the 42-item Ryff's (1989a, 1989b) Psychological Well-Being Scale, comprised of six subscales: purpose in life, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, and self-acceptance. Example items include "I do not have many people who want to listen when I need to talk" and "It is difficult for me to voice my opinions of controversial matters." Participants responded on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The subscales demonstrated moderate to high reliability in the current sample, ranging from .70 (autonomy) to .79 (personal growth); the full 42-item scale had high reliability ($\alpha = .91$).

Perceived Language Competence

Perceived language competence is derived from a single item. Students were asked to predict the degree to which they felt they were incompetent in English. The response option was a slider ranging from 0 *not at all characteristic* to 10 *extremely characteristic*, with options to one decimal place (e.g., 6.8). This response was then reverse coded to produce the perceived language competence variable.

Plan of Analysis

To prepare the data for regression analyses, we first examined the dataset for diversions from univariate and multivariate normality, issues of multicollinearity, and reliability of measures. No items exceeded recommended thresholds for skewness or kurtosis (±2 and ±5, respectively; Ware, Ferron, & Miller, 2013). After examining Mahalanobis' distances, no multivariate outliers were identified. Variance inflation factors were calculated to assess for issues of multicollinearity for the planned regression. As no variance inflation factor exceeded 1.2—well below the recommended threshold of 3—this suggests the variables are not multicollinear. Measure reliability was assessed with Cronbach's alphas: Multiple-item measures ranged from .71 to .93, demonstrating good reliability. We conducted two series of

ordinary least squares regression analyses to determine first whether perceived language competence would predict changes in the six constructs of psychological well-being as well as the overall construct, controlling for demographic differences. The second series of regression analyses included all the variables in the first series as well as an additional independent variable: domestic student social support.

RESULTS

We conducted Pearson correlations and two sets of ordinary least squares regression analyses to examine first whether self-perceived language competence would be associated positively with aspects of psychological well-being, controlling for demographic differences among participants (see Table 2). After the first set of regression analyses revealed significant relationships between perceived language competence, domestic student social support was added to the regression model as an additional independent variable.

Table 2: Summary of Intercorrelations of Six Subscales of Psychology Well-Being, Socioeconomic Status (SES), Domestic Social Support, and Language Competence of International Students in U.S. Universities

Measure	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	9	*M*	*SD*
SES	–									5.95	1.62
Language competence	-.30***	–								3.91	.83
Domestic social support	.18*	-.11	–							2.23	.85
Autonomy	.22**	-.31***	.16*	–						6.28	4.94
Positive relations with others	.14	-.23**	.25**	.10	–					2.58	3.17
Environmental mastery	.14	-.19*	.28***	.24**	.51***	–				3.58	3.38
Personal growth	.09	-.17*	.18*	.16*	.43***	.42***	–			3.49	.82
Purpose of life	.08	-.22**	.22**	.35***	.39***	.58***	.62***	–		3.06	.90
Self-acceptance	.28***	-.31***	.26***	.35***	.55***	.60***	.47***	.53***	–	3.49	.92
Psychological well-being	.22**	-.32***	.32***	.50***	.69***	.77***	.72***	.80***	.82***	21.67	3.04

Note. $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$.

As expected, there were significant negative correlations between perceived language competence and well-being outcomes as well as between significant positive correlations between domestic student social support and well-being outcomes. Interestingly, the relationship between perceived language competence and domestic student social support was nonsignificant.

Perceived Language Competence and Well-Being

Seven regression analyses were calculated to test for predictive associations between perceived language competence and six subscales of psychological well-being as well as an aggregated psychological well-being variable, all controlling for demographic differences. See Table 3 for the results. Perceived language competence

and the four demographic variables accounted for between 5% and 17% of the variance in psychological well-being subscales: psychological well-being (17%), self-acceptance (16%), autonomy (15%), purpose in life (13%), personal growth (10%), positive relations with others (10%), and environmental mastery (5%). In five of the equations, significant relationships were revealed between perceived language competence and psychological well-being, with higher levels of perceived English incompetence associated with increases in well-being.

Table 3: Psychological Well-Being Subscales Predicted by Domestic Social Support and Perceived Language Competence

Outcome	Predictors	*β*	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Autonomy					
	Chinese	-.08	.12	-1.06	.29
R_2 = .16	Female	-.12	.11	-1.67	.10
	Undergraduate	-.08	.10	-1.06	.29
	SES	.15	.03	1.95	.05
	Language competence	.21	.02	2.66	.01**
	Domestic social support	.14	.06	1.91	.06
Positive relations with others					
	Chinese	.06	.13	.72	.47
R_2 = .12	Female	.14	.11	1.88	.06
	Undergraduate	-.08	.11	-1.05	.30
	SES	.06	.04	.80	.43
	Language competence	.22	.02	2.69	.01**
	Domestic social support	.21	.06	2.86	.01**
Environmental mastery					
	Chinese	.07	.13	.88	.38
R_2 = .11	Female	.07	.12	.87	.39
	Undergraduate	-.10	.11	-1.27	.21
	SES	.09	.04	1.12	.26
	Language competence	.17	.02	1.99	.05*
	Domestic social support	.24	.06	3.14	.00**
Personal growth					
	Chinese	.00	.14	.05	.96
R_2 = .13	Female	.22	.12	3.00	.00**
	Undergraduate	-.16	.11	-2.03	.04*
	SES	.04	.04	.54	.59
	Language competence	.17	.02	2.08	.04*
	Domestic social support	.15	.06	1.93	.06
Purpose in life					
	Chinese	-.17	.13	-2.11	.04*
R_2 = .15	Female	.11	.12	1.49	.14
	Undergraduate	-.19	.11	-2.48	.01*
	SES	.03	.04	.39	.70
	Language competence	.14	.02	1.76	.08

Outcome	Predictors	*β*	*SE*	*t*	*p*
	Domestic social support	.16	.06	2.15	.03*
Self-acceptance					
	Chinese	-.09	.12	-1.14	.26
R_2 = .19	Female	.12	.11	1.73	.09
	Undergraduate	-.11	.10	-1.46	.15
	SES	.19	.03	2.56	.01*
	Language competence	.21	.02	2.56	.01*
	Domestic social support	.18	.06	2.48	.01*
Psychological well-being					
	Chinese	-.05	.53	-.67	.50
R_2 = .23	Female	.13	.46	1.88	.06
	Undergraduate	-.17	.44	-2.32	.02*
	SES	.13	.15	1.79	.08
	Language competence	.25	.08	3.25	.00**
	Domestic social support	.25	.25	3.59	.00***

Note. SES = socioeconomic status. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Perceived Language Competence, Domestic Student Social Support, and Well-Being

The same seven regression equations were recalculated with the addition of domestic student social support as an independent variable (see Table 4). The two independent variables and four control variables accounted for 12% to 23% of the variance in well-being aggregate and subscales: psychological well-being (23%), self-acceptance (20%), autonomy (16%), purpose in life (15%), personal growth (13%), positive relations with others (12%), and environmental mastery (11%). Perceived English competence was associated with six of the seven psychological well-being variables while domestic student social support was related to five of the seven well-being variables. In all instances, higher levels of perceived language competence and higher levels of domestic student support were associated with increases in well-being.

Table 4: Significant Predictors of Well-Being Outcomes

Predictor	Psychological Well-Being	Self-Acceptance	Purpose in Life	Growth	Environmental Mastery	Positive Relations with Others	Autonomy
Chinese			-				
Female				++			
Undergraduate	-		-	-			
SES		+					

Language competence	++	+		+	+	++	++
Domestic social support	+++	+	+		++	++	

Note. +/- signifies the direction of the relationship between variables. +/- < .05, ++/-- < .01, +++/--- < .001

DISCUSSION

The current study was designed to explore potential associations between demographic factors, domestic student social support, perceived language competence, and range of psychological well-being outcomes. Interestingly, the two independent variables of interest, domestic student social support and perceived language competence, did not correlate as hypothesized. This finding aligns with the current research, which has mixed results with regard to English competence and international student adjustment (positive relationship: Chavoshi et al., 2017; Dao et al., 2007; Lin & Betz, 2009; no relationship: Poyrazli et al., 2004). We caution against overinterpretation of an acceptance of the null hypothesis, especially given the homogeneity of the sample in this modest study. Nonetheless it should be noted that the theoretical approach of focusing on international students' acculturation style is naturally incomplete: Domestic students may seek out specific international students for reasons other than their level of English and ability to communicate easily. Clearly more research is needed to understand the potential relationship between language competence and domestic social support.

With regard to the second hypothesis, perceived language competence was associated with higher levels of three aspects of well-being: self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and positive relations with others. As expected, students' perceptions of their English ability were linked with positive psychological well-being outcomes that require higher levels of language knowledge and interaction. Interestingly, perceived language competence was associated with higher levels of two other aspects of well-being, autonomy and personal growth, as well as overall psychological well-being. These findings add to the prior literature that has revealed that perceived language discrimination is predictive of negative mental health outcomes and lower life satisfaction on campus (Wei, Wang, & Ku, 2012). Future investigations can determine the relative contributions of perceived language competency and perceived language discrimination to international students' well-being.

Domestic student social support was related to international student well-being. Three of the four hypothesized relationships were significant: environmental mastery, positive relations with others, and overall psychological well-being; additionally, domestic student social support predicted higher levels of self-acceptance and purpose in life. These findings align with prior research revealing that students who report high level of social connections experience lower levels of acculturation stress (Yeh & Inose, 2003). However, there was not a significant relationship between social support and autonomy or personal growth. A non-relationship between social support

and autonomy is not wholly surprising as one's perception of receiving help and support from other students could be connected with feeling that they cannot satisfy their needs alone autonomously.

The final hypothesis posited that domestic student social support would be a stronger predictor of each aspect of psychological well-being than perceived language competence due to the importance of members of the host society in the acculturation process. Results were mixed: Domestic student social support was a stronger predictor of purpose in life, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, and overall psychological well-being, while perceived language competence was a stronger predictor of autonomy, self-acceptance, and personal growth. Students with lower perceived language competence and language skills reported more academic difficulties and higher stress level. The adjustment process is slower for students with poor English competency. More social discomfort has been reported among these students (Duru & Poyrazli, 2011).

Limitations

There are three main limitations of the current case study. First, the study was conducted with participants from only one U.S. university, making its generalizability limited. In this light, the study should be viewed as an exploration into identifying associations between important academic and social variables. Second, the study relied on a single item for perceived language competence. It would be preferable to have included a scale to increase confidence in construct measurement; however, available scales in the literature focus on anxiety, pronunciation, or communication, rather than English competence. Third, the data are cross-sectional; although the analyses test for prediction, it is important to remember that the predictions are associations rather than causal relationships.

Implications for Research

The current study extends current research by examining predictors of multiple aspects of well-being, yielding a more nuanced understanding of international student adjustment. Further, the current study provides additional empirical evidence supporting the use of individuals' perception of their language ability rather than solely objective measurements of language competence (e.g., standardized testing). From this perspective, researchers can develop a more detailed understanding of the ways in which language ability can potentially influence international student adjustment and well-being. Additionally, the current study extends research on social support to highlight the strength of associations between international students' psychological well-being and a particular source of social support: domestic students at their university.

If the findings of the current study are replicated, researchers might consider exploring differential impact of language and social factors on international student adjustment, given the lack a relationship between perceived language competence and domestic student social support. Previous research has documented well the various types of predictors of international student adjustment: linguistic,

sociocultural, academic, discriminatory, and practical (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). The findings of the current study also bolster the argument of J. Zhang and Goodson (2011) for the need to continue to refine Ward and colleagues' (Ward & Kennedy, 1999; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999) theory of cross-cultural adaptation. Given that both domestic student social support and perceived language competence shared strong associations with multiple aspects of psychological well-being, it may be time to construct a more nuanced and complex model, or consider integrating other developmental theories with strong bases of research for explaining adjustment, growth, and well-being such as life course theory (Elder & Shanahan, 2006).

If the findings of the current study are replicated, researchers might consider beginning to test which factors are most predictive of international student adjustment so that interventions can be designed to provide campus life personnel and university administration with evidence-based highly effective resources to support international student adjustment.

Implications for Practitioners

As colleges and universities in the US continue to experience an increase of international students, the well-being of international students can no longer be solely the concern of the international or global office, but rather should be central to the operations of the university: in campus life, the research lab, and the classroom. Pre-orientation programs and first-year experience courses are well-suited to providing opportunities for international students to create friendships with domestic students as well as to enhance their language competence. Recent studies have demonstrated orientations and orientation-style programming for international students can increase their understanding of university mission and goals and general university adjustment (Güvendir, 2018; Y. Zhang & Garcia-Murillo, 2018). Through provision structured opportunities for international students to interact with domestic students, international students can gain confidence of their English competence and connect with domestic students in orientations. More language-oriented programs can be held in the summer before the international students come to the US. If an institution has a large concentration of students from one or more countries, it may be worthwhile to consider creating country-specific programming or holding pre-orientation programming at a location in those countries, providing students the opportunity to begin their college transition without jetlag and with less potential for culture shock (Brunsting et al., 2017).

As for social support from domestic students, the practitioners are encouraged to create ways to encourage the conversations between international students and domestic students. For example, in the orientation week, there are often icebreakers designed to create social cohesion and opportunity for interaction. We encourage additional time be set aside for semi-structured social events. Pre-orientation programming focused on inclusion and diversity should be developed with an eye toward international student diversity in addition to that of domestic students. Additionally, university faculty and staff should reconsider their role in supporting international student adjustment to university, as they are often viewed by students as academic role models (Glass, Koliocek, Wongtriat, Lynch, & Cong, 2015; Mesidor

& Sly, 2016). Domestic–international student interaction and dialogue on campus occurs frequently in classrooms and research labs (Glass, 2012); however, academic settings typically are the most challenging arenas of communication and English language expertise for international students (Yildirim, 2015). Although many faculty are welcoming of international students and are inclusive and supportive of their perspectives in class, others either miss opportunities to include international students in discussion or outright discourage those who have not fully mastered English (Glass et al., 2015; J. J. Lee & Rice, 2007). We encourage informal discussions among faculty, department chairs, and deans around expectations and support of international student adjustment.

Implications for International Students

The results of this study underscore the importance of perceived language competence to international students' well-being at a U.S. university. Communication is a critical component for fitting into the environment for international students undergoing the acculturation process (Sam & Berry, 2010). We recommend international students increase preparation in two focused areas prior to transition to U.S. universities: increasing English competence and understanding of social culture in the US. In order to build confidence and competence of one's English ability, international students should undergo a thorough and detailed evaluation that includes spoken English, academic writing, and reading speed at least one year prior to departing for university. Additional time spent shoring up language skills may yield increased confidence for international students when they arrive in the US. We encourage international students to engage in pre-orientation programs that are held by their universities, which can provide international students with opportunities to engage in the host environment so that they can be more familiar with the language and culture ahead of the first semester (Y. Zhang & Garcia-Murillo, 2018). Experiencing success within the programs can increase confidence in their English ability. Additionally, gaining intercultural skills via introductory courses or other means can help increase international students' social support (Brunsting, Smith, & Zachry, 2018). After enrolling on campus, we recommend international students continue to push themselves to engage in activities and build friendships with domestic students, as it provides a context to both continue to improve language competence and to receive social support (Brunsting et al., 2019; Glass, 2012; Han, Pistole, & Caldwell, 2017; Lin & Betz, 2009).

CONCLUSION

The current case study provides modest initial evidence of positive associations between perceived language competence and multiple aspects of psychological well-being as well as between domestic student social support and psychological well-being. Although the study is limited based on its participant sample studying at one university, the findings are promising. We encourage researchers, practitioners, and international students to consider a more nuanced, positive, and multifaceted approach toward understanding international student adjustment.

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Academic Reading and Writing Challenges Among International EFL Master's Students in a Malaysian University: The Voice of Lecturers

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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the perspective of lecturers, this qualitative research investigated the academic reading and writing challenges faced by international English-as-a-foreign-language master's students at a Malaysian university. Data was collected through semi-structured, in-depth, one-on-one interviews with 16 lecturers who taught international students from various graduate programs. The findings from the lecturers' perspectives indicate that the students faced acute challenges in their academic reading and writing practices such as adhering to academic writing conventions and interpreting text in an English language instructional setting. This study suggests policies and programs to overcome the challenges of the international EFL students' academic writing and reading practices to ensure their academic success in as they learn in graduate programs.

Keywords: academic reading, academic writing, challenges, international graduate students, lecturers

As a global lingua franca, the English language is the medium of instruction (MoI) for international English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) master's students in Malaysian higher education institutions. The use of English as the MoI in Malaysian higher education is one of the criterion that has made Malaysia a popular hub for further study among international EFL students. However, the use of English language as the MoI also has its disadvantages, especially for EFL students. These students, mainly from Arab countries, China, and Thailand, were previously exposed to academic discourse primarily in their native language. This setback contributes to international EFL master's students facing hardship with the English language, especially with

academic writing and reading practices in Malaysia at the master's level (Manjet, 2015, 2017). Academic writing and reading practices, along with academic listening and speaking practices, are important for academic success (Braine, 2002). Existing research (Abdulkareem, 2013; Saazai, Melor, & Embi, 2014; Yuen & Mussa, 2015) has concentrated on academic challenges facing international students from the students' perspective. Extremely limited studies have focused on these challenges from the perspective of other stakeholders such as the lecturers who teach international EFL master's students.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate a significant issue affecting international EFL master's students' academic performance. In line with the aim, the investigation involved analysis of lecturers' views on the challenges faced by international EFL master's students in their academic writing and reading practices at a Malaysian university. On a macro level, the findings of this study also contribute to global higher education as international EFL students' mobility is not only restricted to the Association of South Eastern Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries such as Malaysia or Singapore but also expands to other countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In addition, at the micro level, the findings provide significant insight for lecturers in terms of reducing the impact of the challenges international EFL students face, along with strategies to overcome those issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Malaysia is one of the most successful countries that draws many international graduate students into its higher education system (Knight & Sirat, 2011; Wan & Sirat, 2017, 2018). Luo (2017) highlighted that the Malaysian government's national education blueprint released in 2015 targeted the future intake of 250,000 international students by 2025. By December 2016, 132,710 international students were enrolled in Malaysian higher education. Most international students in Malaysian higher education institutions from Middle Eastern and Arab countries such as Yemen, Iraq, and Libya (Kassim, 2013; Pandian, Baboo, & Mahfoodh, 2014; Yusoff, 2012) must use English in their academic activities. Thus, English is their medium of international academic communication. International master's students in Malaysian universities experience difficulties and challenges in their academic writing and reading practices because English is not their primary language (L1; Manjet, 2015, 2017), and during their undergraduate study in their native country, exposure to English is extremely minimal or non-existent. Specifically, international EFL students struggle with issues of plagiarism and understanding the nature of academic writing conventions such as synthesizing ideas from various sources for writing, using their own voice in writing, writing coherently, and linking theory to practice. As for academic reading, the common challenges are extracting and synthesizing information from various sources and recognizing and acquiring academic vocabulary for academic purpose (Manjet, 2013, 2017).

Spack (1997) reported that writing practices provide avenues for writers to showcase their reading comprehension and practices, by assisting readers with obtaining information and generating output through writing. Spack (1997) and

Hudson (2007) indicated these two cognitive literacy and learning practices have a reciprocal relationship and are crucial for academic performance and achievement via understanding and accumulating knowledge (Paltridge et al., 2009). To support Spack's notion of reciprocity between reading and writing, Phakiti and Li (2011) argued that reading and writing are key interrelated areas of academic challenge among international EFL students.

Likewise, Scarcella's (2003) argument focused on academic literacy as not only the ability to read and write, but also to acquire higher order communication and research skills. Tas (2010) emphasized that academic discourse is a unique kind of written world, with a set of conventions, or code. As such, competency in academic writing requires students to be attentive and be aware of their lecturers' expectations, leading to the required standard of written output. However, for EFL students, there is a perception that they cannot write in this specialized code due to lack of knowledge and understanding of the code. Irvin (2010, p. 8) concurred and indicated that academic writing involves "evaluation that requires them to demonstrate knowledge and proficiency with certain degree of disciplinary skills of thinking, interpreting and presenting." Other scholars, such as Turner (2011) and Yingli (2012), in consensus with earlier researchers, indicated that the ability to integrate skills such as information gathering, paraphrasing and summarizing resources, organizing ideas in a logical order, editing, and proofreading are very crucial for the success of academic writing.

International students may particularly struggle with achieving expectations for academic writing because rhetorical styles of writing differ from one language to another due to cultural differences (Grabe and Kaplan, 2014). Malaysian researchers Stapa and Irtaimeh (2012) cited that if texts are written in a rhetorical style different from the style of their own language, readers become confused and their language can be unusual even if the grammar and vocabulary are correct.

Earlier research such as that by Andrade (2006) and Wang and Shan (2007) expressed that language skills are one of the key issues that affect the academic adjustment of international students in an English-speaking environment. Phakiti and Li (2011) asserted that academic language competence is related to students' ability to use English to acquire specific knowledge. Their findings also mentioned that academic reading and writing challenges are related to the international students' abilities to orient themselves to academic expectations and tasks, cope with assignment loads, learn subject knowledge, and manage their study and assignment completion time.

Previous research by Zhang and Brunton (2007) and Campbell and Li (2008) also demonstrated that one of the setbacks of low English language proficiency is the negative impact on Asian international students' academic reading and writing practices. Manjet (2013, 2015, 2016) also cited that such setbacks have a negative impact on the international students' academic success. Manjet's (2015) study identified difficulties experienced by international graduate students from the Middle Eastern, African, East Asian, and Southeast Asian countries in dissertation writing. The academic writing practices that students brought from their prior undergraduate education differs from the expectations in a graduate community of practice.

Socialization into academic discourses requires international students to be "… positioned between different cultures and languages" (Turner, 2011, p. 12).

My previous qualitative study of challenges faced by international graduate students in their academic writing practices, indicated difficulty in adhering to proper academic writing techniques (Manjet, 2016). At the same time, due to communication hurdles, the students also faced difficulty in obtaining corrective feedback on their academic work from their lectures. In the current study, international EFL master's students are required to understand lectures, participate in the classroom tasks, and write assignments. However, many of these students experienced limited opportunities to speak, read, write, or listen to English in their home countries.

Existing research by Goodfellow (2004) and Lalasz, Doane, Springer, and Dahir (2014) stressed that the lack of proficiency in English language in a similar setting to Malaysia, affects international students' academic satisfaction, as their academic impairment is attributed to low English language proficiency. Students' communication with lecturers is hampered as they cannot fully engage and interact with their lecturers in question-and-answer sessions. A study by Ankawi (2015), which discussed Saudi international students' experience in New Zealand's higher education institutions, indicated students experienced difficulties with understanding the academic writing conventions because they lacked paraphrasing and summarizing skills, sufficient academic writing vocabulary, and critical thinking in their English communication. The students also faced challenges in locating and identifying appropriate articles for research. In agreement with these researchers, Manjet, Pandian, and Kaur (2015), Talebloo and Bak (2013), and Xu (1991) also highlighted that lack of English language skills contributed to academic problems faced by international students in English-speaking programs. Furthermore, more support from Adas and Bakir (2013) indicated that international students lack understanding of English vocabulary and struggle to express their ideas clearly in the language.

This review of academic reading and writing offers only the perspective of international graduate students. However, a gap that exists in the current literature is the perception and perspective of lecturers, university administrators, and other relevant stakeholders.

Lecturers' Perspectives

In considering lecturers' perceptions of challenges faced by international graduate students, Robertson, Line, Jones and Thomas (2010) indicated that lecturers attributed international students' reluctance to participate in discussions to a lack of understanding lecture content and terminology, a lack of critical thinking, a lack of independent learning skills, and lastly, dependency on lecture notes. Trice's (2003, 2005) qualitative studies listed the challenges such as inadequate vocabulary, the struggles to meet the requirements for academic, and achieving unique academic goals. Basically, these two studies emphasized that English language competency plays a crucial role in academic success among international students. Later, Arkoudis and Tran (2012) captured lecturers' position as individuals being aware of the needs of their international students, yet struggling with the best avenue to assist their students' academic work.

Tran (2013) pinpointed the eminent role of lecturers in the academic learning process of international students. Lecturers need to assist their international students in a way that their expectations are better understood by the students. As strategic personnel in the academic advancement of their students, lecturers need to find more avenues to assist the students' academic literacy challenges, transcending the cultural boundary between them and their students. Such insights, according to Tran, will lead to reciprocal relationships between students and their teachers and enhance the inclusive practices of the institution. Unruh (2015) and Cheng (2016) reiterated that lecturers view international students as assets who bring different perspectives and diversity to their classrooms. However, obstacles to international EFL students offering those diverse perspectives include lack of English language proficiency, cultural differences, issues with learning and study strategies, and lack of student participation in class activities.

METHOD

Research Design

The current study was conducted to find out if there is a discrepancy between international EFL master's students' lived experiences of academic reading and writing practices and the lecturers who teach them. A basic interpretive qualitative study focusing on *insiders' perspectives* (Burke & Wyatt-Smith, 1996) was carried out. Purposive sampling (Onwuegbuzie & Collins 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Teddlie & Yu, 2007) was utilized to select lecturers for the one-to-one interview. This sampling selected participants who have experienced the phenomenon being explored and yields the most comprehensive understanding of rich information on the topic. According to Creswell (1998) and Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), purposive sampling ensures that only those participants who can make a meaningful contribution to the research are included in the study.

Participants

Forty nonnative English speaking lecturers who taught international EFL master's students in a higher education institution in Malaysia were invited to participate in this study. This study draws on the analysis of in-depth, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews conducted with 16 volunteer lecturers who agreed to recorded interviews. These lecturers are from the 10 faculties categorized as Arts (three), hybrid (two), and Sciences (five). The participants were provided the Research Statement Sheet and a short briefing took place. Participants were also provided a consent form to sign and return to the researcher to acknowledge their participation in the research. Participants were reminded that it is a voluntary basis commitment and they are able to withdraw if they wish to do so.

One-on-one Interviews with Lecturers

The purpose of the one-on-one interviews with 16 lecturers was to gain a better understanding of the international EFL master's students' academic writing and

reading practices experiences as they negotiate academic literacy contexts and the lecturers "are likely to be more knowledgeable and informative about the subject under investigation" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993, p. 378) compared with other stakeholders.

The interviews that took place in the lecturers' rooms lasted between 30–60 min for each session. In each session, the lecturer was introduced to the study and purpose of the interview. An interview guide (interview questions) created by the researcher facilitated the interviews, and the lecturers were given the opportunity to discuss issues and concerns pertaining to the academic writing and reading practices of their students. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher at the end of each interview. The transcriptions were analyzed using qualitative data analysis software, NVivo version 10, to organize complex data and emerging patterns. The core feature of the qualitative data analysis was coding. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) and Braun and Clarke (2006), NVivo 10 is helpful for researchers in moving data easily from one code to another and to annotate the data as it is analyzed.

This study used pseudonyms to ensure lecturers' anonymity and confidentiality. The 16 lecturers who took part in the one-on-one interviews were coded according to a number provided to each lecturer and a letter used to identify their school/faculty. For example, a lecturer interviewed in School A is coded as L1A. L refers to the lecturer, 1 represents the lecturer's unique code, and A represents the school's code.

Data Analysis

The coding of the data was done using thematic analysis that is a qualitative analytic method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Data analysis involved five phases of familiarization with the data, i.e., generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and finally, producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Evidence from the various databases was grouped into codes and codes were grouped into broader themes. The captured themes of the relevant data from the interview transcripts answered the research questions and represented the patterned responses within the created data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

RESULTS

The findings, categorized into themes, provided the 16 lecturers' perspectives on the challenges faced by the international EFL master's students in their academic writing and reading practices.

Table 1: Themes of Challenges in Academic Writing and Reading Practices

Challenges in Academic Writing Practices
Lack of English language proficiency
Challenges in expressing ideas
Unorganized academic writing structure
Intentional plagiarism

Proofreading and editing
Translation
Mismatch in academic writing culture
Cheating in their academic writing
Challenges in Academic Reading Practices
Interpretation of reading material
Intensity of reading
Dependency on lecturers' notes
Lack of English language proficiency
Short duration to prepare the dissertation
Lack of resources
Content and English language integrated learning

Challenges in Academic Writing Practices

Lack of English Language Proficiency

An English language barrier in students' academic writing practices was cited by more than half (62.5%) of the lecturers interviewed. Two lecturers expressed that English language is the main barrier for academic success among the students, especially Middle Eastern students. Furthermore, the lecturer stated that the Middle Eastern students who graduated from their undergraduate study in their countries' private universities experienced more academic literacy challenges in their studies compared with those from public universities.

In addition, the lecturer stated that the students faced challenges in answering final examination questions as they were unable to elaborate and explain their arguments. Another lecturer also asserted that the lack of enforcement of the English language requirements by the university, is one of the reasons the students were not able to meet the expectations of the academic language skills' demands in content based programs at graduate level.

> Most Middle East students, what they face, the problem is obviously it's the English. Like when we had a huge group of students from Libya, they told us that most of them didn't even speak English prior to coming to Malaysia. —L3E

Lecturers also faced difficulties supervising the students with their term papers. One lecturer explained that she rigorously guided the students who faced severe challenges in their academic writing from the proposal stage until the final draft stage. Her colleague further reiterated that supervising the students during their dissertation writing was challenging because the feedback provided to the students was often misinterpreted. This led to a written discourse that did not fulfill the lecturers' expectations.

> So, it was really very difficult situation I even had a situation whereby I don't understand what the student submitted and to give an F is just very harsh. So what I did was, I asked the student to come to the front, ask a

> Malaysian who understands Mandarin and had the assessment done by interview. So that shows how difficult it was with student from China because of their English proficiency. —L1C

Five lecturers from the Arts and hybrid faculties stated that language barrier hindered the students' positive development as good writers, in terms of dissertation writing and academic paper publication in reputable journals, especially refereed journals. Communication of research findings in written form is a linguistic challenge for the students although they display good content knowledge capability.

According to one lecturer, the fundamental grasp of the English language is crucial for the students in Malaysia, as master's programs for international students are English Medium Instruction (EMI) based. Unfortunately, low proficiency in English language limited the reporting and dissemination of their high-quality research findings. Consequently, the students failed to report the results of their research accurately and precisely.

Furthermore, according to another lecturer, the fundamental grasp of English language literacy by his international students from China, Iraq, Thailand, and Palestine was also weak. Supporting the views of other lecturers from the Arts, hybrid, and Sciences, the lecturer was very concerned with the students' academic English language skills in expressing ideas, writing the narration of their script, and developing the story for film production. Although these students are considered experts in terms of their technical and content knowledge, their participation in coursework activities, class interaction, and enthusiasm was lacking due to low English language proficiency that is crucial in media production industry.

Intentional Plagiarism

Lecturers commented that enforcement against plagiarism in their faculties is not strict, although plagiarism is treated as an academic offence. According to three lecturers, the lack of English language proficiency and poor paraphrasing skills are two main reasons that lead the students to plagiarize. A lecturer further asserted that students who plagiarize could be categorized into two groups, the expert and the amateur. Expert students skillfully copy and paste by linking words, sentences, and paragraphs. However, amateur students haphazardly organize plagiarized information. One lecturer explained,

> [We tell the students] "Please do not just copy and paste, you can refer to whatever website but rearrange and rephrase all the sentences, use your own sentences." But we still not go that far yet to check with our software, Turnitin not yet for the program. But we do discuss this and might be, we have to go in future. —L1E

According to another lecturer, the students generally have the tendency to use information verbatim from the original text. However, detection is easy as there is commonly a mismatch between the actual language proficiency of the students compared with the proficiently written submission. The lecturer further explained that certain sections of the students' writing was error free when it was copied from other

sources without acknowledgement, compared with some sections that contained language errors. Students often copy and paste in the literature review section. However, writing the discussion section, which requires critical thought, is also a major hurdle due to lack of English language proficiency. As such, the students also found it challenging to copy and paste information in this section, because the analysis section requires the student to deliberate their findings in detail. A lecturer acknowledged,

> During the section meeting, about the problem with the English. … Ok we just, what you call it, we just accept it; we cannot be too detailed on the grammar, the language. We see on the content, on the analysis so we can't just … the students because of their English, so we try to be fair with the student who are having problems with that. —L1D

Furthermore, one of the lecturers pinpointed that students lacked awareness of plagiarism. The students tend to take an easy route in terms of writing their research or project reports. Once a student has access to a thesis to replicate, often the student will not be interested in exploring or researching further for alternative dissertation topics. Avoiding plagiarism is a difficult task for them. The lecturer added that students plagiarize because they face difficulties in writing academically, based on their lack of English language proficiency and research skills. This eventually impacts their research project or dissertation and delays the completion of their degree, because they actually expect to complete their graduate study quickly via shortcuts.

> They tend to hold on to that thesis, even they are not interested in them, even though they are ...they have not ... they don't have much knowledge on they want to do... but they still in a way, do their topic because they have a sample and... uhh... I guess the word "'plagiarism" is the right word. —L1D

Challenges in Expressing Ideas

A majority of the lecturers (75%) found it challenging to grade the assignments submitted by students. One lecturer explained that students lacked the ability to express written ideas fluently in English. This trend was noticeable in the assignments, tests, and examinations. He further commented that students' limited lexis range to express their views offsets fulfilling the requirements set by the lecturers. Secondly, the importance of sourcing substantive literature and the pivotal role of conducting a literature review are downplayed in the students' academic work as they are constrained by their lack of proficiency in English language and data search skills to conduct such reviews. According to another lecturer, the challenges also led students to limit the scope of literature sourced for their academic writing.

Unorganized Academic Writing Structure

Lecturers need to be aware that international students come from very different cultural, academic, and English language backgrounds. For example, students from non-EMI based undergraduate study programs, especially from the Middle Eastern

countries and China, face challenges in writing as they have limited lexis range and they lack proper techniques in structuring and organizing their writing.

In organizing their writing, some of the students occasionally diverted from the actual discussion in various sections of their assignments because they repeated their arguments, lacked clarity in their writing, and did not write concisely. This made it difficult for the lecturers to understand students' organization and structure of writing and the vague message presented in their writing. As noted by 10 lecturers, students could converse well orally but understanding their writing was a struggle.

From the perspective of another lecturer, the majority of students who faced English language challenges were from the Middle Eastern countries. The language-related weaknesses that disrupted the writing process of the students from the Middle Eastern countries were in understanding the demands of the examination questions. The students were unable to explain, argue, and write well. He further added that the students, primarily from Iran and Iraq's private universities, faced challenges with their writing. They also lacked knowledge of their fields' fundamental theories. On the other hand, this particular weakness in writing was not very obvious among Iran and Iraq's public university students because these students performed better academically. This lecturer elaborated that weaknesses in the academic and English language aggravated the challenges faced by the students. Subsequently, another lecturer stated that Iranian and African students also have difficulties performing well in written and spoken English academic activities.

> Some students they cannot even write in English, for example the students from Iran, he can write but a lot of mistakes, broken English ... he cannot deliver, he can transcribe data but he can't describe it and make it clear so that people can understand. —L4E

A lecturer argued that students in the TESOL master's program wrote "horrendously." She questioned the justification of accepting students with low levels of English language proficiency or limited English language skills into the TESOL program as it is a very linguistically demanding program. Another lecturer attested that although the students have strong content or technical knowledge in their field, their low level of English language proficiency impairs their academic writing practices.

In terms of the students' writing during examinations, there has always been an element of curiosity among the lecturers and other academicians when students who are extremely weak in English language eventually succeed in their examinations. A lecturer voiced her curiosity with the ability of the students to write their dissertation or pass the examination considering the restricted vocabulary in presenting their arguments in written form. Another lecturer reported that the students did face challenges in answering the examination questions. One of the characteristics of their answers was a limited vocabulary to explain their arguments. Furthermore, their short sentences written in the answer scripts were regurgitated from the lecture notes.

> So, whatever we teach them, that's only the answer that we will get back… We put point form, they come back with a point form. So, no elaboration, no nothing. —L1E

> In fact, we even had students who know nothing... you know? That's why ...when we go for meeting, professor always ask how do these students... you know respond your class, I wonder how they pass the exam. —L1C

The students also faced challenges in managing and organizing their writing. L1B highlighted that the students' weaknesses were usually centered around the organization of their ideas when writing. Writing aided by computer-mediated tools allow for ideas to be organized smoothly. However, many of the students were found to also lack computer literacy, which caused them to struggle with their academic writing.

Proofreading and Editing

According to a lecturer, weaknesses in the students' dissertation or research projects' write-up could be rectified through editing or proofreading before submission and evaluation. This would be helpful for the examiners as the students' writing has been proofread by a language editor. Another lecturer further explained that as the coordinator of students' dissertation examination, he received complaints from examiners in terms of poor language proficiency or dissertation text not being "proofread." On the other hand, a lecturer, who faced the same problems, assisted the student by voluntarily editing the work of her students.

> …Like in the literature, definitely they can cut-and-paste, but when they're doing the analysis part, so they having problems. So that one we having problem because sometimes we also discuss these problems during the section meeting, about the problem with the English. Some of them said that *Ok we just what you call it we just accept it, we cannot be too detailed on the grammar, the language.'* We see on the content, on the analysis so we can't just fail the students because of their English, so we try to be fair with the student who are having problems with that. —L2E

Translation

A lecturer admitted that the English language proficiency of his students from China is low and they faced difficulty writing in English. However, this did not hinder them from expressing their ideas in their own language. To overcome the challenges of writing in English, the students wrote in Mandarin and used Google translator to translate the Mandarin version into English. According to another lecturer, this strategy is ineffective due to mismatch in information in the original and translated texts.

> …in terms of connecting everything together… for example, they read something, they want to quote, they don't really know how to gel in everything, to relate everything, so sometimes, writing becomes choppy. You have bits and pieces, loose bits and pieces here and there. I think that is the most problem that I had faced getting things to sound right…getting thing to mean something. Not just choppy little bits here and there. —L2D

Mismatch in Academic Writing Culture

The findings indicate prior learning culture at undergraduate level greatly affects academic writing practices of the students. One of the trends that prevailed in the findings is prior learning culture influenced how they coped with their writing in master's programs. The students in the master's programs are bound to integrate their previous learning experiences into present graduate study and its impacts their current academic practices.

> … the cultural background and the system they used, before they come for the master's program… This is how they've been taught; this is how they've been writing… they write in their own language… They've no English even though they're good in talking but in terms of writing, that's the main problem… So which means in their country, writing is not very important, it is not a priority. —L2E

Cheating in Writing

A common practice among students from China is to write in Mandarin and then have their work translated into English by friends. This finding resonates with Ahmed (2018), who asserted that academic dishonesty and cheating among students is on the rise. To overcome cheating, confronting a student is an effective deterrence. Furthermore, it promotes academic integrity.

> Sentence are very simple and you know… what the supervisor ask they never change and they do something else and we caught student. We ask them, "okay now write a sentence," "oh I use google," "oh I use translation"…something like that. Okay now do the translation now... "oh it's not connected to internet." "Okay we will find internet for you." And that's what we did. We call in for VIVA. Although it's not compulsory. Just to allow her the opportunity to defend herself that this is really her own work and she was not able to do that. —L1C

In other similar cases, students' spouses doing PhD wrote the master's dissertation for them [the students]. According to a lecturer, this tactic was detected when a student who could not speak and explain his work in English in class but wrote well in English: "he has to ask his wife" (L1D).

Challenges in Academic Reading Practices

Interpretation of Reading Material

A lecturer reflected that the students faced challenges in grasping the idea or message read in a text due to slower reading pace. According to another lecturer, slower reading pace also affected the students' comprehension. In addition, the same lecturer stated a reason for this challenge in reading was due to "the factor that the fundamental theories originated from developed countries." This situation contributes to the knowledge gap that arose from prior reading experience during the students'

undergraduate study. The students from developing countries faced comprehension problem as they were unable to relate to the theories that originated from developed countries. He added that the lecturers also should not expect these students to successfully comprehend the reading material based on their high expectations.

> …comprehending reading content, grasp of language, working system, governance system of the country from where the reading material comes from, interpret according to their own capabilities [is not] what is expected by lecturers. —L3E

Furthermore, the students did not take the initiative to consult their lecturers to discuss their reading and depended on their own interpretation governed by their prior educational background and academic experiences. This pattern is also apparent in the students' style of writing. The negative effects of the students' lackadaisical attitude are reflected in their examination.

> Because our subject is quite subjective, there's not really a right and wrong answer but they do not really fulfill our requirement so number 1 is comprehension and interpretation for all these references material. —L3E

Subsequently, another lecturer from the same faculty stated that the students were unable to understand the terminology used in the written examination question. This led to students enquiring during examination and the lecturers having to explain in detail the requirements of the examination questions during the examination.

> So, they are sometimes allowed to bring a dictionary, for them to use inside the… Yes, to that extent. —L2E

Intensity of Reading

A lecturer highlighted that the students were also not enthusiastic in reading. He found the students in his faculty depended only on lecture notes to do their assignments or answer the final examination questions. The lecturer stressed the students must be encouraged to do more reading to gain value added knowledge apart from depending on lecture notes.

> Lecture notes only provide an avenue for the students to think, to discuss and explore in his own words, based on what he has learnt, what he has read, what he has experienced, what he thinks should be done or what can be done, how certain ideas and approaches can be used. —L3E

Another lecturer responded that feedback she obtained from her discussion with fellow lecturers concerning academic reading habits, especially journal articles among the students, indicated that students take longer time to read the journal articles as it is a challenging academic literacy demand. Furthermore, in terms of frequency, they have to read a particular article more frequently compared with Malaysian students to ensure successful comprehension of the text.

Dependency on Lecturers' Notes

The issue of dependency on lecturers' notes was also raised by two lecturers. According to them, the students tend to read, write, and refer to whatever was given in the lecture notes only. The students were not "adventurous enough" to read additional literature beyond the lecture notes or to explore and gain additional knowledge on the lecture topic. One of the two lecturers also commented that students took part in tutorial discussions guided by lecture notes only. This phenomenon led to lack of criticality and rigor in tutorial discussions among students.

Lack of English Language Proficiency

A lecturer felt that lack of English language proficiency affects students' reading and understanding of high impact journal articles. Based on her personal opinion, the nonnative English speaking lecturer shared her experience of re-reading each of the highly rated journal articles such as SCOPUS or ISI rated articles repeatedly to gain understanding. This is due to the complexity of English language in those particular articles. Comparing her own English language challenges with the students', the lecturer was concerned with the students' struggle in reading English text, as English is a foreign language for majority of the students.

> …to understand these high-end journals, it so going to be quite a struggle. So, I don't think is attitude...is more of their skills and also the language itself. —L2D

Short Duration to Prepare the Dissertation

It is challenging for students to complete an academic task such as writing an assignment in the master's programs. It is also mutually challenging for lecturers who are teaching them. The challenges prevalent among students concern lack of research and writing ability. Lack of exposure in academic writing during undergraduate study impacted their current research experience in terms of dissertation writing.

> Because thesis is more to research isn't it, so they got a problem in terms of doing the literature reviews, research background, they even got a problem with the methodology. —L2E

The challenge in producing a dissertation in a short period further affected the students' progress in dissertation writing. This predicament of insufficient time is unavoidable as the full-time students' study period in most of the graduate programs ranges from two to three semesters only. These students have to complete their other coursework components (assignments, tests, quizzes), prepare their research proposal, defend the research proposal, write a dissertation, and defend their dissertation during their oral examination, which is evaluated by internal, and in some cases external, examiners. Furthermore, a lecturer commented external examiners put high expectations on student dissertations. Therefore, the students face difficulties coping with the expectations of dissertation writing.

Supervision issues further affected the academic challenges faced by the students. The issues concerning the lecturers who serve as supervisors are the responsibility of supervising a large number of students, limited consultation period for regular supervision, such as only once a month for each supervisee, and misinterpretation of supervisor's written feedback to students' dissertation drafts.

Lack of Resources

Searching and retrieving resources was a problem that impacted the progress of dissertation writing. According to a lecturer, in the TESOL master's program, the student needed "to read a lot to reflect on what is happening in their own environment." However, they faced difficulties in sourcing relevant articles. Some students were not very proficient with their computer skills and lacked knowledge on the availability of online resources. The lecturer also added that the students lacked the skills in accessing suitable resources. Consequently, the students faced challenges in obtaining good and reliable online-digitalized journal resources to help them in their writing. Therefore, the lecturer commented that she provided continuous guidance on doing Google searches to overcome the challenges faced by her students. She also suggested that the students attend short courses to familiarize themselves with the relevant techniques to access reliable journals.

> … they don't really how to go, where to go. Some of them sometimes come and ask me, what journals do I need to find, you know, what kind of journals I need to find…find out…how can I find out these journals. —L2D

In addition, the lecturer claimed the printed journals available at university library are outdated to 20 years back and updating is in process. This led to a lot of time spent searching for current online resources. Furthermore, the problem worsened as some journals only provided abstracts instead of full text, and a journal subscription fee is required to retrieve and read the complete text.

In the context of sourcing online reading material, a communication faculty's lecturer stated that sourcing reading material such as books through the internet is a "hassle." This is because access to certain books is blocked in Malaysia compared with other countries such as Australia, which provides open access or minimal fees for a wide range of academic books.

Content and English Language Integrated Learning

The higher education institutions need to address the challenges faced by the students in doing two kinds of learning activities consecutively. Two lecturers stated that the students in the graduate programs are involved in learning their discipline's content knowledge and, concurrently, are struggling with English language to acquire their discipline content knowledge as it is the medium of instruction in their graduate programs. The challenges of doing one learning task is daunting enough to be further exacerbated by the challenges of doing the second learning task.

> We can teach the students the English along the way but we are not a good teacher because we are scientist and we also have problem with our own

> English language … For example, when I read my students assignment in English…at one point I said enough I cannot read because if I continue reading my English also is going to be like theirs. —L1J

According to one lecturer, the students from China are from an education system that does not prioritize English language and faced academic reading challenges that take longer time to resolve. However, based on his experience, the lecturer found students from countries such as Iraq, China, and India are "quite superior" in their content knowledge compared with other students from the Middle East countries. The lecturer further claimed that lack of English language proficiency, combined with the prior academic background, influence the students' daily classroom academic activities' performance.

> So that is one of the challenges, technical skills, competence, communication skills and you know the way... how they approach the lecturer… when I'm teaching I still get the blank look you know typical Asians students…don't have any questions asked or during lectures… you won't know whether the students actually, understood what was being taught or not. —L1G

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study has succeeded in identifying the challenges from the perspective of the lecturers, in which there is a dearth of current literature, and it adds to the existing literature in the context of Malaysian international higher education landscape. The challenges faced by international graduate students in their academic reading and writing practices are complex issues. The nature of the challenges are linked to other language skills such as speaking and listening, and these challenges create a network of additional academic literacy challenges. In addition, the findings indicate that more remains to be done to address the academic reading and academic writing practices challenges faced by international EFL master's students.

The study revealed an intricate network of academic reading and writing practices challenges from the lecturers' lens. The international EFL master's students faced academic challenges in their writing and reading practices, which were further impaired by the lack of English language proficiency. An area for consideration is the importance of teaching academic conventions to handle the required tasks in master's programs. Additionally, to improve the international EFL master's students' level of academic language proficiency, it is crucial to improve their English language proficiency either before enrollment into the programs or consecutively during their study.

At this juncture, higher education institutions play a pivotal role in ascertaining the readiness of the students to embark on graduate study. Short-term remedial or interventional programs (e.g., one semester) to prepare the students to deal with academic writing and reading demands at graduate level must be imposed on students to ensure smooth enculturation into the graduate community. Moreover, in reference to proofreading and editing, these services should be offered to the students. Due to the short duration of master's programs, and the need to complete various academic

demands, professional proofreading and editing services should be provided to ease the students' academic writing challenges especially in writing their dissertation.

An example of a long-term action plan is a detailed orientation/familiarization program. This suggestion echoes a previous study by Lan (2018). Such a plan to engage students with the academic community in a host country that practices different academic conventions will show positive results. It is hoped that the findings will also benefit the lecturers involved in teaching international EFL master's students. Furthermore, higher education institutions should facilitate adequate training and exposure for the lecturers to be ready to teach international students in a cross-cultural learning setting. Intercultural competence is an important element that lecturers must be equipped with. Lecturers must be able to embrace the learning diversity the students bring and adapt their teaching style to also accommodate the students' learning needs. Such as engagement is also asserted by Adrian-Taylor, Noels, and Tischler (2007) and Phan, Tran, and Blackmore (2019). Lecturers should be committed and supported with relevant professional and sustainable learning to develop their capacity to assist the students in academic and social welfare. Such measures in particular will help to reduce the impact of academic and social challenges faced by the students in their academic venture. Helping students to reduce or overcome the challenges in their academic reading and writing practices in their programs will provide quality engagement with their academic work in master's programs.

It is hoped that the insights gained from this study will be of value for future research and will benefit the international EFL master's student community. The research output will contribute toward the improvement of academic culture at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. At some point, a needs analysis at the graduate level is pertinent to identify the readiness of the students to embark on graduate study. As such, the needs analysis involves research at the undergraduate level in different academic cultures of the students' countries of origin. On the basis of the findings presented in the current study, the result can be generalized to a global context, as higher education mobility, especially among international EFL graduate students, is on the increase, especially in host countries that apply English as the medium of instruction for graduate studies.

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An Inventory of International Student Services at 200 U.S. Universities and Colleges: Descriptive Data of Pre-Departure and Post-Arrival Supports

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ABSTRACT

During the spring semester of 2018, a survey of international student support services was conducted on 200 randomly selected U.S. universities and colleges using the International Student Support Services Index. Survey results identified the most and least commonly provided international student support services in addition to common patterns of institutional practices around international student support across the US. The research results are complimented by researcher notes and observations in addition to school administrator quotes. This article concludes with recommendations and implications for practice. Colleges and universities wanting to recruit and retain culturally and academically prepared international students may benefit from learning how other institutions offer integration support services.

Keywords: integration, international students, pre-departure, post-arrival, support services

In the 2017–2018 academic year, more than 1,094,792 international students studied in the US (NAFSA, 2018). This was a 1.5% increase from the previous year (Institute of International Education, 2018), and although the student growth is very much

welcomed by U.S. higher educational institutions, school capacity for hosting and supporting the influx of international students must be considered. For the purposes of this research and article, an international student is defined as any person studying in the US on a non-immigrant, temporary student visa that allows for academic coursework, including both degree and nondegree students. International students have unique integration needs beyond those of their domestic peers and additional support services can help them navigate a matrix of diverse and unfamiliar interactions, language, customs, campus policies, academic expectations, and U.S. laws. One way to address these needs is to provide effective pre-departure and post-arrival international student support services that help manage first-year challenges while establishing a sense of belonging and value in the students' new community.

International student support and integration services have been found to increase cultural knowledge, adjustment coping skills, health and safety, and student satisfaction (Ammigan & Jones, 2018; Madden-Dent, 2014; Pitts, 2009; Sanchez, Spector, & Cooper, 2000; Shim & Paprock, 2002), yet there is still a need for research on which services higher educational institutions are providing these services and when the services are provided within various integration stages (e.g., pre-departure stage or post-arrival stage). The following article will introduce research findings from a survey of 200 U.S. universities and colleges' international student support services to identify patterns of practices at schools across the US. The findings help illuminate how U.S. schools invest, or do not invest, in integration support services that aid with academic and cultural adjustment of their international students.

This article addresses two objectives. The first objective is to provide descriptive data through an exploratory study that contributes to new understandings of support services offered by U.S. universities and colleges. The second objective is to provide observations of survey patterns found across the 200 institutions, organized by p re-departure and post-arrival adjustment stages. This article includes a discussion of implications for practice and concludes with a section on future research needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

By 2025, more than 8 million students are projected to be studying outside their home country (Chow, Gutierrez, Baumgartner, & Sato, 2009), contributing to campus diversification (Sahin, 2008; Ward, 2001), and providing significant economic contributions (Lyman & Rogers, 1994; NAFSA, 2018). While international students enrich U.S. higher education, they add to the increasingly complex matrix of intercultural interactions on campus and the need for unique support services to ensure matriculation, engagement, and success (Cetinkaya-Yildiz, Cakir, & Kondakci, 2011; Cho & Yu, 2015; Glass, Gomez, & Urzua, 2014). To ensure that international students become familiar with U.S. campus policies, culture, communication styles, and laws so that they can safely integrate into U.S. campus and community networks, U.S. institutions can initiate new strategies that better address relocation and integration needs during pre-departure and post-arrival adjustment stages (Madden-Dent, 2014).

This transitional time is especially turbulent if international students have little or no knowledge of, or experience with, U.S. educational systems, laws and policies,

culture, communication and interaction styles, cuisine, healthcare, transportation, weather, jet lag, and environmental variables (Berry, 2006; Leong, Mallinckrodt, & Kralj, 1990; Mori, 2000). Research has demonstrated that international students can experience psychological issues during transition including stress, depression, homesickness, loneliness, identity confusion, and fear (Johnson & Sandhu, 2007; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). Moreover, Fritz, Chin, and DeMarinis (2008) demonstrated that international students are more likely to experience anxiety, homesickness, and stress than domestic students. These challenges lead to academic problems, and as Weng, Cheong, and Cheong (2010) stated, "Poor academic performance is often indicative of difficulties in adjusting to university environment and makes dropout more likely" (p. 337).

If challenges are unaddressed, poor integration experiences often stifle academic pursuits (Weng, Cheong, & Cheong, 2010), and have been found to negatively impact international students' sociocultural adjustment (Ward & Kennedy, 1994), health and psychological well-being, (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994; Shadowen, Williamson, Guerra, Ammigan, & Drexler, 2019; Tochkov, Levine, & Sanaka, 2010; Yoon, Lee, & Goh, 2008), first-year academic experience (Freeman & Li, 2019), communication (Shah, 1991), and persistence (Gardner, 2007). Without institutional support unique to international students' needs, this student demographic can experience problems with academic success, socialization, language development, professional development, and psychological well-being (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & Van Horn, 2002; Madden-Dent, 2014; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Wang, 2004; Zhou, Frey, & Bang, 2011).

Research indicates that integration training increases awareness and coping skills for better cross-cultural transition and adjustment (Neill, 2008; Pitts, 2009; Shim & Paprock, 2002; Yan & Sendall, 2016;), increases intercultural communication and understanding (Altay, 2005; Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2011; Shemshadsara, 2012), and strengthens intercultural sensitivity (Altshuler, Sussman, & Kachur, 2003). However, most U.S. colleges and universities provide international students with integration training only immediately after they arrive in the US and only in an orientation format (Madden-Dent, Roskina, & Wood, 2018; Martirosyan, Bustamantea, & Saxon, 2019). Additionally, the services that institutions provide are often underdeveloped, inconsistent, optional (Hser, 2005), or not available at all (Madden-Dent et al., 2018).

U.S. schools can better address integration issues by identifying and aligning gaps between the international students' expectations and their actual experiences (Kegel, 2009; Mukminin & McMahon, 2013). In addition, they can offer better integration training and support services that promote integration to local academic norms and expectations (Sullivan & Kashubeck-West, 2015). With a better understanding of the U.S. academic system and culture through intentional study or training, international students can develop more accurate expectations of college life and may develop more effective methods for coping with host country norms (Pitts, 2009).

When it comes to student satisfaction, integration training may support better international student experiences (Cho & Yu, 2015). Student satisfaction often proves critical in today's highly competitive higher education markets when schools compete for international students. As international students have greater choice of college or university they will attend, students seek institutions perceived to facilitate their social and academic adjustment, integration, retention, and academic successes (Cetinkaya-Yildiz et al., 2011; Cho & Yu, 2015). One recent study utilizing data from the International Student Barometer (ISB), measured 45,000 international undergraduate students' satisfaction at more than 100 U.S., European and Australian institutions (Ammigan & Jones, 2018). The findings showed that students were least satisfied with institutional support services, which suggests that institutions may benefit from enhancing integration support services to improve the overall learning experience and thus, student satisfaction (Ammigan & Jones, 2018).

To address what types of support services are available to international students throughout their transitional experience (e.g., pre-departure stage, initial arrival/on-boarding stage, post-arrival stage), this study's goal was to investigate international student integration support services provided by 200 randomly selected U.S. universities and colleges that hosted international students during the 2017–2018 academic year. The investigation was structured by three research questions:

> RQ1: What are the most commonly provided international student support services offered at 200 higher educational institutions in the United States?
>
> RQ2: What are the least commonly provided international student support services offered at 200 higher educational institutions in the United States?
>
> RQ3: What common school practices and patterns emerge from the data related to how schools are communicating those services?

METHODS

School Sample

In an effort to investigate international student integration support services provided by U.S. universities and colleges, 200 schools were identified within a purposive sampling pool of higher educational institutions that hosted international students during the 2017–2018 academic year. The study was conducted from January 1 to May 26, 2018. The schools were selected from the International Institute of Education's 2017–2018 Open Doors membership data consisting of 3,000 institutions, including associate, bachelor, masters, and doctoral degree-granting schools in addition to specialty schools (e.g., medical educational institutions, theological schools, music/fine art/film schools). From the overall school listing, the researchers intentionally chose a random sampling of schools on two variables: institution type and size of international student population. An equal number of schools were selected from each of the degree-granting categories and then

randomized by size of international student population. Each school type was equally represented in this study within the total school sample size ($N = 200$).

After schools were selected, each of the three researchers was assigned a third of the randomized school list to examine using a three-step data collection protocol (see below). Every 2 weeks, researchers discussed the independent school investigations and came to consensus on data points to ensure rater reliability of the data collection.

Data Collection

This study used three data collection approaches. The first included an internet search of the institution's website to identify services listed on the International Student Support Survey Index (ISSSI). The ISSSI includes 48 international student support services found in literature and industry practices. The second data collection approach was a phone call to the institution's office responsible for international students as a way to confirm the website findings were accurate. The third data collection approach was an email confirmation of data findings to the Director or Assistant Director of the office responsible for international students. In some cases, if the institution did not have an office dedicated to international students, an alternative email confirmation was conducted with the most appropriate office (e.g., Student Support Services). In all correspondence, participants were notified that participation was optional and that this was a research study with full anaominity. The following section describes the data collection process for each approach.

Website Data Collection

For each of the 200 higher education institutions that were selected for this study, researchers completed the following three-step website assessment. The first step included identifying the school's website address from a general internet search inquiry and verifying it was the correct institution (and campus) of interest. The second step was for the researcher to visit the school's home page and find documented evidence of specific services for international students referenced. The third step was for the researcher to locate the school's supporting webpages that corresponded to international students, international scholars, international admissions, international student clubs, student orientations, student support services, transportation, career services, etc. Researchers completed the ISSSI index (described below) during all three steps.

Phone Call Confirmation

In some instances where website content was ambiguous, researchers conducted a phone call to confirm website findings. The phone calls were made to the office responsible for international students and/or scholars. Researchers contacted individuals in positions ranging from student workers to office managers, international student advisors, English language coordinators, assistant directors, and program directors. Length of phone calls ranged from 10 to 30 min.

Email Confirmation

As the third data collection approach, researchers sent an email request for confirmation to provide school representatives with an opportunity to confirm and/or correct the ISSSI data collected from their school website and the confirmation phone call findings, where applicable. The confirmation emails were sent to a Chief International Officer (e.g., Director, Assistant Director), the person responsible for managing office correspondence (e.g., Office Manager), a generic main international student office email, or an international admissions email, in the instances when it proved impossible to locate other contact information. School responses either confirmed that the researched findings were correct, provided corrections or updates, or provided notes about future plans to develop new services. This allowed the researchers to collect data about student services that may not have been clearly identifiable on the school's website but did indeed exist at the school. This third confirmation approach added additional reliability to the data collection process by allowing a school representative to review the accuracy of collected ISSSI data as applicable to their particular institution.

International Student Support Services Index

This study's three-step data collection protocol utilized the International Student Support Services Index (ISSSI). The ISSSI is a list of 48 international student support services developed into a checklist survey based on international student services found in literature and industry practices. The ISSSI was created and piloted in 2014 at the University of Nevada located in Reno, Nevada and then developed over time to include consistent and current services. In addition to identifying support services, the ISSSI includes search variables on facilities and resources directly related to international student integration. Lastly, the ISSSI is organized into three categories of transitional stages based on when international students receive or experience the support services (e.g., pre-departure, initial arrival/onboarding, or post-arrival).

The first category, pre-departure stage, included international student support services provided by a school before the start of the first semester to international students still in their home country. The second category, the initial arrival/onboarding stage, included international student support services provided by a school within the first 30 days following a student's arrival in the US. The third category, the post-arrival stage, included the international student support services provided by a school throughout the first year and beyond.

RESULTS

The purpose of this research study was to investigate international student integration support services provided by 200 U.S. universities and colleges that hosted international students during the 2017–2018 academic year to advance previous research and increase understanding of what supports are available for international students in the U.S. This section provides a summary of findings that emerged from the data and is organized into two categories: most and least provided international

student support services, and common patterns found within institutional practices. The support services listed in Table 1 are defined in the Appendices section.

Most and Least Provided International Student Support Services

This first theme that emerged from the survey is the most and least commonly offered types of international student support services. This theme is demonstrated through the percentages of schools that offered each student support service type that are described below. Both the support service and percentage are organized into corresponding integration stages: pre-departure, initial arrival/onboarding, and post-arrival (Table 1).

Table 1: Percentage of Schools Offering International Student Support Services by Integration Stages

Integration Stage	Type of Support or Service	Percentage
Pre-departure	Online reading materials	70%
	Required on-campus visit or tour	10%
	Optional on-campus visit or tour	40%
	Parent outreach	31%
	Targeted language services	26%
	Online orientation	12%
	Integration preparation class	6.5%
	Online mentor buddy system	9%
Initial arrival/onboarding	Required Office of International Students and Scholars check-in	69%
	International student orientation	56%
	Airport pickup service	27%
	General housing offered	59%
	International housing offered	13%
	Off-campus housing assistance	46%
	Move-in assistance	11%
	Banking and cell phone assistance	37%
	Driver's license assistance	33%
	Mentor/buddy system	29%
	Welcome packet	26%
	Bridge/integration class	17%
	Language partners	12%
Post-arrival	Office of international students	71%
	Cultural events or activities	66%
	Field trips	22%
	City tours	16%
	International student clubs	59%
	Mentor/buddy system	29%

Access to a kitchen	23%
International foods on campus	17%
Grocery store assistance	12%
Off-campus transportation	32%
Rental cars	7%
Driver's license assistance	33%
Psychological and emotional support	10%

Common Patterns of Institutional Practices

This theme represents common patterns found in content provided on institutional websites. Although 89% of the surveyed U.S. institutions had a webpage designed for international students, many of these schools often provided generic or incomplete web pages that contained minimal information for prospective and current international students. The study's findings identified the least posted topics on U.S. institutions' websites: information about the campus office responsible for international students; information about the offices' staff and their direct contact information (e.g., email or phone number); social media or blog weblinks; information about transportation and lodging; information of campus support services specific to international students; and a 24-hour contact for emergencies.

One common pattern among U.S. schools, regardless of their rank or the number of hosted international students, was to not include staff contact information. Overall, it was a common practice for institutions to only provide a generic email address instead of staff emails or phone numbers. Of the surveyed institutions, 71% with a designated office responsible for international students (N = 141), posted general office email addresses instead of specific office staff contact information. In contrast, 29% (N = 59) disclosed staff contact information, bios, and photos. These schools often encouraged international students to connect with their office representatives through email, phone, or social media (e.g., WeChat).

Another pattern found was that many institutional websites provided student support services for both domestic and international students, without consideration of the unique needs of the international students. When discussing this theme with interviewed school administrators, some indicated through phone calls and email responses that they were aware of the website's impact on international student applications, attendance, and persistence but expressed feeling frustration from a lack of time, personnel, institutional capacity, or funding to update the website. Some administrators expressed difficulties justifying the added expenditure of updating school websites to school executives over other school priorities. It was common that an administrator expressed feeling frustrated with their school websites and the lack of current information for international students and their families. For instance, one school administrator described her website had been outdated for a year when she stated, "We do that [support service], but we don't have it on our website." This was a repeated finding from U.S. schools who offered new services but did not communicate them via their website.

Timing Matters

There was a clear imbalance of when international student support services were offered. The majority of international student support services offered at the 200 surveyed U.S. institutions were provided during initial arrival and post-arrival stages (e.g., new international student orientation). The pattern of having little or no mention of integration preparation and transitional support was a common theme across all surveyed intuitions. Only a few schools provided information and resources related to U.S. classroom and campus rules, traditions, expectations, personal safety practices, linguistic support, health and wellness resources, cultural competency preparation, and social-emotional development. Furthermore, there was an absence of support around international relocation assistance related to transportation and lodging.

When discussing this theme with U.S. school administrators, some indicated through phone calls and email responses that they were aware of the imbalance of when support services were provided. Many administrators expressed having no awareness to predeparture or post-arrival international student support service options. For example, one school administrator described that her school offered very few predeparture supports and was not familiar with evidence-based support practices. She stated, "I didn't know that service was even a thing. Maybe we should offer it." This was a common sentiment from U.S. school administrators who were not offering pre-departure integration support services. Some school administrators even expressed interest during the data collection process, when asking researchers, "Can you come to my school and present what other universities are doing? We need to know this."

DISCUSSION

This study sought to provide answers to its three research questions. The first two questions provide insight into what international student support services are being offered at U.S. higher educational institutions from pre-departure through post-arrival stages. The third research question addressed how the services were being communicated on the U.S. institutions' websites.

Research Question 1

> *What are the most commonly provided international student support services offered at 200 higher educational institutions in the United States?*

The findings indicate that the most commonly provided international student support services included posting online reading materials (e.g., international student website, newsletters, translated brochures), new international student orientations, required Office of International Students and Scholars check-in meetings, language partners, and cultural events. These are important support services for international

students to increase cultural awareness and integration coping skills for better cross-cultural transition and adjustment (Dekaney, 2008; Neill, 2008; Pitts, 2009; Sanchez et al., 2000; Selmer, 2001; Shim & Paprock, 2002; Ying & Liese, 1990; Zhu, 2008).

Research Question 2

> *What are the least commonly provided international student support services offered at 200 higher educational institutions in the United States?*

The findings indicate that the least commonly provided international student support services are pre-departure support services. These services can include integration preparation for U.S. academics and cultural expectations, health and wellness resources (e.g., Title IX personal safety lessons), cultural competency training, and international relocation assistance. This finding is problematic for international students with little or no previous knowledge of, or experience with, the U.S. educational, academic, and political systems, which can lead to more challenges during first-semester experiences (Berry, 2006; Leong et al., 1990; Mori, 2000). Without these services and information, Sandhu and Asrabadi (1994) found that international students can experience psychological issues during transition including stress, depression, homesickness, and loneliness. Weng et al. (2010) stated that, "Poor academic performance is often indicative of difficulties in adjusting to university environment and makes dropout more likely" (p. 337).

Research Question 3

> *What common school practices and patterns emerge from the data related to how schools are communicating those services?*

This study's findings identified the most and least offered services and the timeline for when these services are offered. The consideration of most and least offered services demonstrated that many U.S. schools lack websites specific and updated to international student needs. School administrators often shared frustrations with their websites and wanted more updated resources posted but lacked time and staff to keep the websites current. Some school administrators expressed the need to know how other schools were supporting international students.

The timeline theme describes when the 200 surveyed U.S. institutions provided international student support services. The majority of international student support services were provided during post-arrival stages (e.g., new international student orientation) compared to the pre-departure stage. When discussing international student support services with U.S. school administrators, many indicated through phone calls and email responses that they were aware of their school's lack of pre-departure support services and wished they had more. This pattern is consistent with research demonstrating that many U.S. schools lack integration training and support services (Hser, 2005), even though U.S. schools can better address integration issues by aligning expectations with actual experiences (Kegel, 2009; Sullivan & Kashubeck-West, 2015).

Limitations

This study has recognized limitations related to data collection processes. The first relates to the differences in the amount of time that each researcher invested in phone confirmation calls with school administrators about the website survey findings. These differences could have affected the amounts of collected data that was analyzed and reported. The second limitation relates to school administrator participation in phone and email confirmation since some administrators provided both while others provided one or the other.

Implications for Practice

International student support has been demonstrated as critical for international student success (Cho & Yu, 2015), and this study's findings advance literature on what type of international student support services are being offered at U.S. higher educational institutions from pre-departure through post-arrival stages. International student support services vary widely across institutions. The clear imbalance of when support services are provided (more during post-arrival stages than pre-departure stages), highlight areas of opportunity for schools to improve their support initiatives. The post-arrival imbalance is consistent with the findings of Martirosyan et al. (2019). Educational leaders can take inventory of what services their school offers and when they are offered to identify which integration stage needs additional support. By dispersing international student services across a longer period of time, international students will have a greater opportunity to develop integration skills and awareness earlier, and prepare more accurate expectations of post-arrival experiences. Another implication for practice generated by this study's findings relates to how institutions communicate which international student support services are available on campus. School websites were found to be outdated or lacked international student-centered content. School administrators may want to consider updating and enhancing their campus web content, social media, and staff contact information.

Future Research Directions

Future research directions may include the examination of relationships between specific international student support services, as well as the time period for when the service are offered, and retention rates, graduation rates, student satisfaction, and student academic success. Findings of such future research may contribute to international student recruitment, retention, graduation rates, health/safety, and professional development. Furthermore, as noted in the findings, many university websites provided inaccurate or outdated information about their international student support services, so future research could address international student perception of website experience that influences their school application and/or persistence decisions.

Recommendations

This study's findings indicate that U.S. higher educational institutions provide inconsistent and underdeveloped international student support services, especially during the pre-departure stages to address integration, retention, and academic success. For this reason, a recommendation would be for schools and educational providers to provide skills-based academic and cultural integration support services during the pre-departure stage that allow earlier preparation skills that prevent negative transitional conflict around academic, linguistic, professional, cultural, linguistic, health/safety, and social-emotional needs. Moreover, based on this study's findings it is recommended to provide support services ongoing throughout students' entire experience (pre-departure through repatriation). Lastly, from the research and this study's findings, a recommendation includes to regularly update available support services and content on international student-centered school web pages, offer content in multiple languages where justified and feasible, and reinforce with direct staff contact information.

CONCLUSION

International students face many challenges when transitioning from home countries to U.S. educational institutions but the growing base of evidence suggests that integration support services and programs help international students overcome academic, cultural, and social challenges (Cetinkaya-Yildiz et al., 2011; Cho & Yu, 2015; Glass et al., 2014; Madden-Dent, 2014). The current study reveals that 200 randomly selected U.S. colleges and universities provide a variety of international student support services on academic, cultural, linguistic, professional development topics in efforts to address these challenges; consistent with findings from previous related research (Madden-Dent et al., 2018; Martirosyan et al., 2019). Additionally, this study provides patterns found within school administrators' quotes and researcher observations that contribute valuable insights into current practices for overcoming common integration barriers to guide future directions. These findings are encouraging, but more researched is needed to better understand which international student support services are the highest impact on whole-student success.

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International, Inaccessible, and Incomplete: A Texas Case Study of International Student Websites

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ABSTRACT

As the number of international students attending U.S. higher education institutions has declined 2 consecutive years (Saul, 2018), several institutions are exploring ways to increase international student interest. In Texas, the sociopolitical climate has become increasingly anti-immigrant (Watkins, 2017), leading many international students to question whether study in the US is feasible and safe. As institutional websites have been found to be important sources of international student information (Huang & Bilal, 2017; Taylor & Bicak, 2018), this study examines international student information on all public, 4-year institution websites in Texas. Findings suggest international student materials are difficult to read, are rarely translated, and lack basic information such as cost and housing information. Implications for future research and practice are addressed.

Keywords: access, admissions, application, Internet, institutional websites

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the Texas Legislature has threatened to cut funding to public higher education, forcing institutions to find new ways of raising revenue, supporting educational programs, and helping Texas students enroll, persist, and graduate from Texas institutions of higher education (Watkins, 2017). However, Texas is far from the first state to experience threats to state funding, as other states such as Wisconsin, Ohio, and Illinois have witnessed multiyear budget cuts (Marcus, 2017), requiring these states to raise revenue through tuition dollars in the form of recruiting and admitting greater numbers of international students (Saul, 2018).

Along with threats of budget cuts to public higher education, Texas is also feeling the effects of a national immigration climate that has rendered the US a less hospitable and inviting climate for international students, "leading a lot of families to really take a step back and wonder if the US is really a good place to go for their education" (Glum, 2017, para. 5). As a result, during the 2016–2017 academic year, U.S. colleges and universities experienced a decline in international undergraduate and graduate applications and enrollments for the first time (Saul, 2018). Recently, the Institute of International Education reported that international student enrollment declined for a second year in a row during the 2017–2018 academic year (Redden, 2018). However, recent research has explored another element of the international student choice process that may be influencing international students' decisions to attend U.S. institutions.

In a study of international undergraduate students, Huang and Bilal (2017) found that many international students often feel confused when navigating institutional websites, a very common source of information for prospective international students. These students claimed institutional websites were difficult to read and often lacked critical information necessary for application to the institution, such as housing information and minimum TOEFL requirements. In related research, Taylor (2018) found international undergraduate information on U.S. institutional websites—such as admissions materials and application instructions—to be written in high, difficult English reading levels and rarely translated into languages other than English.

Focused on TOEFL scores specifically, Taylor and Bicak (2018) also found that the presence of publishing minimum TOEFL scores on institutional websites predicted international student enrollment numbers with statistical significance (p = 0.02). This finding means that simply publishing an institution's minimum TOEFL score for unconditional acceptance may lead to greater international student enrollment numbers, while an absence of such information may lead international students to feel "an institutional website lacks information necessary to apply to a U.S. institution of higher education (Taylor & Bicak, 2018, p. 64). As a result, even though Texas institutions in particular exist in a combative, hostile educational environment, especially for international students and immigrants (Watkins, 2017), these institutions of higher education may not be publishing the most informative and accessible websites for international students.

This study examines international student websites published by public, 4-year institutions of higher education in Texas (n = 43) to learn whether critical international student information is available, readable, and translated into languages other than English. Expanding upon research suggesting institutional websites are often incomplete and confusing for international students (Huang & Bilal, 2017) and difficult to read and rarely translated into languages other than English (Taylor, 2018), this study will inform institutions of higher education hoping to facilitate a more equitable admissions process for international undergraduate students in Texas and beyond.

METHOD

The research team established the sample of 43 public, 4-year institutions in Texas, as these institutions are in danger of budget cuts during the next legislative session, yet it is these types of institutions that international students most frequently attend in Texas (Watkins, 2017). Moreover, given the hostile political climate facing international students and immigrant students in Texas specifically (Saul, 2018), the research team deemed it appropriate to examine institutions in Texas to learn if their websites were as informative and accessible as possible.

The research team used the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System to locate all public, 4-year institutions in Texas, and then used the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board website to locate all institutional websites. Then, the research team used the web-embedded search tool on each institution's website and entered the terms "international students" to locate the information necessary for international undergraduate students to apply and enroll in a public college or university in Texas.

The research team employed quantitative linguistic software to calculate the length of the text and four common readability measures to learn of the English readability level of the material, including the Automated Readability Index, the Gunning-Fog Index, the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Test, and the Simple Measure of Gobbledygook (Taylor, 2018). These English-language readability measures all examine a different element of the text, with the Automated Readability Index serving as a sentence structure measure, while the Simple Measure of Gobbledygook primarily focuses on word choice within sentences. All four measures calculate the English reading level of a text by providing a grade-level estimate of difficulty, meaning a text measured at the 12th-grade level would require a reader to possess a 12th-grade level of English fluency or have matriculated through 12 years of English-only curriculum and instruction. In addition to readability level, the research team explored each website to learn if the institution had translated any international student information into a language other than English, as Taylor's (2018) study found that less than 5% of 335 four-year U.S. institutions provided international student content in a language other than English.

Regarding international undergraduate application materials, the research employed a binary coding strategy to analyze what information is apparent on each institution's international student website. These variables included an international student admissions webpage, minimum TOEFL scores for admission, application fee, cost of attendance at the institution, visa information, housing opportunities, and if there was contact information for international students to engage with if they have a question during the application process. These information categories emerged from the data and were informed by the lived experiences of members of the research team who are currently international students studying in the United States, as well as extant research focused on information useful for international students seeking U.S. institutions (Huang & Bilal, 2017; Taylor & Bicak, 2018).

FINDINGS

The length, readability, translation, and web accessibility of international undergraduate application materials on institutional websites can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Length, Readability, Translation, and Web Accessibility of International Undergraduate Application Materials on Texan Institutional Websites (*n* = 42)

	Length (in words)	Readability (by grade)	Translation
Average	607	14.3	12.2%
High	2,067	19	
Low	49	10.3	
SD	438	1.9	

Note. One institution in this study's sample did not enroll international undergraduates in 2016–2017 (Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center).

Findings in Table 1 illustrate that average international undergraduate admissions materials at public, 4-year institutions in Texas are written above the 14th-grade reading level, only 12% of institutions provide non-English translations of international student admissions materials, and the average length of admissions materials are over 600 words long. As a result, public, 4-year institutions in Texas may be publishing inaccessible websites for international students whose first language is not English, possibly deterring non-English speakers from exploring these institutions, applying, and enrolling.

International undergraduate application information present on Texan institutional websites can be found in Table 2 below.

Table 2: International Undergraduate Application Information Present on Institutional Websites (*n* = 42)

Type of Information	% (*n*)
International student website	85.4 (35)
Application fee amount	75.6 (31)
Application deadline date	87.8 (36)
Housing information	21.9 (9)
Visa information	80.5 (33)
Email/contact information	68.3 (28)
Minimum TOEFL scores	97.6 (40)
Cost of attendance	51.2 (21)

Note. One institution in this study's sample did not enroll international undergraduates in 2016–2017 (Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center).

Findings in Table 2 suggest 85% of institutions publish an international student admissions webpage. This was a surprise in the findings, as the research team anticipated that all public, 4-year institutions in Texas would publish a separate international student admissions page as part of their institutional website. Moreover, 21% of international student admission webpages included housing information for international students, 68% included contact information, and 51% provided cost of attendance information specifically for international students.

As much of this information is critical to inform international student choice, public, 4-year institutions in Texas may not be providing international students with enough information. Although international students may seek housing (21.9% of the sample) or visa information (80.5%) on other websites, institutional websites may want to include this information to provide international students with the most complete information possible.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Our findings suggest public, 4-year institutional websites in Texas are potentially difficult to navigate for international students and may lack crucial institutional information that would likely inform an international student's choice to attend a public institution of higher education in Texas. Given the Texas sociopolitical climate is unwelcoming to international students and immigrant students (Saul, 2018; Watkins, 2017), institutions in Texas that may want to welcome international and immigrant students may not be providing these students with clear communication to facilitate the undergraduate admissions process. Although international students may seek housing, visa, and cost-of-living information elsewhere, institutions may be making the information-seeking process more difficult for international students by failing to consolidate international student information in one place, possibly leading to a less stressful exploration experience.

While institutions of higher education usually require international students to demonstrate 12th-grade level English proficiency evidenced by minimum TOEFL scores, the findings of this study suggest international admission materials at public, 4-year institutions in Texas are is written at a higher, 14th-grade reading level and are rarely translated into languages other than English. Moreover, several international student webpages lacked basic international student information such as housing opportunities, cost of attendance information, and minimum TOEFL scores for admission. This linguistically inaccessible and incomplete information may create additional barriers for international students to navigate the admissions and enrollment process at public, 4-year institutions in Texas. As a result, institutions across the country should ensure that their international student communication is simple, informative, and translated into other languages, thus rendering institutional websites inclusive, welcoming, and easy to navigate.

Ultimately, the sociopolitical climate in Texas may already be deterring international students and immigrant students from the higher education system in Texas. Consequently, institutions of higher education should reevaluate their international student webpages to ensure that they are providing the most transparent, accessible admissions process possible.

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A Quantitative Assessment of Japanese Students' Intercultural Competence Developed Through Study Abroad Programs

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the factors of study abroad programs that contribute to cultivating intercultural competence. Through an empirically based quantitative examination of 303 Japanese study abroad students, it attempts to gain an understanding of the factors that enhance the development of intercultural competence. Considering that many previous studies worked with students in English-speaking countries, this study examines whether an investigation of Japanese students would yield similar results, given the different context. The primary findings show that program type, prior local language proficiency, and predeparture orientation are predicted to have significant impacts on intercultural competence. The findings clearly demonstrate the importance of empirically based arrangements of study abroad programs based on student and program profiles to enhance students' intercultural competence.

Keywords: factor analysis, institutional arrangement, intercultural competence, international education, Japanese students, study abroad programs

The internationalization of higher education has changed higher education modalities. It has had an influence on the promotion of study abroad programs as a dimension of cross-border education. For example, the number of study abroad students has increased, quadrupling from 1.3 million in 1990 to 4.2 million in 2010, and it is expected to increase to 8.0 million by 2025 (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development [OECD], 2016, 2017). As this increase in the number of study abroad students has been seen as a symbol of the internationalization of higher education, different researchers have examined various components of the impact that

study abroad programs have on students. These components are exemplified by interculturality (Jackson, 2018), cultural resistance (Lemmons, 2015), independence and self-confidence (Walsh & Walsh, 2018), cultural competency (Hermond, Vairezm, & Tanner, 2018), awareness of cultural diversity (Wooldridge, Peet, & Meyer, 2018), intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2009; Yarosha, Lukic, & Santibáñez-Gruber, 2018), self-efficacy and cultural intelligence (Nguyen, Jefferies, & Rojas, 2018), contact with host-society (Matera, Imai, & Pinzic, 2018; Rodriguez & Chornet-Roses, 2014), cultural adjustment (Basow & Gaugler, 2017) and acculturation process (Lee & Negrelli, 2018). This study differs from these existing studies by using a different perspective to focus on the impact of study abroad programs on developing one's intercultural competence. The previous studies have been largely comparative, analyzing and comparing two different kinds of study abroad programs such as short-term and long-term study abroad programs. Moreover, the majority of existing research about study abroad programs explore students who are from English-speaking countries. However, the nature of intercultural competence varies across cultural contexts, and it is therefore important to observe local contexts in intercultural competence research.

It is questionable whether an investigation of Japanese study abroad students would yield similar results given the different context. Although some studies have explored Japanese students (e.g., Hommadova & Mita, 2016; Martin, Schnickel, & Maruyama, 2010; Tanaka, 2007), the majority of such studies were largely conducted with qualitative analyses that included students from only one university or study abroad program. Based on the findings of previous research, this study has two aims. First, this study uses a quantitative analysis to explore the impact of study abroad programs on developing intercultural competence among Japanese students. Second, this study extends the existing single-case studies by examining 303 Japanese students at 15 different universities.

Research Question

This study empirically explores the impact of study abroad programs on cultivating intercultural competence in Japanese students who joined study abroad programs in Canada and the United States. The research question of this study is—"Which factors in study abroad programs contribute, either positively or negatively, to the development of students' intercultural competence?" Through an empirically based quantitative examination, this study will attempt to gain a greater understanding of the factors that contribute to the development of intercultural competence. In this study, developing intercultural competence refers to cognitive, affective, and behavioral developments that are related to cultural differences based on Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett, 1993; Hammer, 2011).

Backgrounds of Japanese International Students

The term "international student," when used in Japanese policy papers, generally refers to both full-time Japanese international students, who study at foreign higher

education institutions, and Japanese students who participate in study abroad programs that have been mostly arranged by Japanese higher education institutions. Japan has been encouraging an increase in both types of these for Japanese international students. For example, Japan's Revitalization Strategy -Japan is Back- was released by the Japanese government as a current, national fundamental policy to address the necessity of sending more Japanese students abroad. This policy tackles the drastic decrease, from 82,945 in 2004 to 53,197 in 2014 (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2017), in the number of Japanese full-time international students who studied at foreign higher education institutions. These figures include both types of Japanese international students. As a possible countermeasure, the policy aims to offer more opportunities for Japanese university students to study abroad in order to increase the number of study abroad students to 120,000 by 2020 (The Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2015). In this context, there is no clear distinction between full-time international students and study abroad students (i.e., students from Japanese universities who are studying abroad only for a certain period of time).

There is a different outbound trend if one includes only the number of Japanese international students who are participating in study abroad programs that have been arranged by Japanese higher education institutions. For example, Table 1 indicates that the number of this type of student increased by 211% from 28,804 to 60,810 between 2010 and 2016. In particular, the number of students participating in Japanese short-term study abroad programs (hereafter referred to as "short-term programs," which refers to programs that are shorter than 1 month in duration), increased by 262% (the highest increase recorded over the same period; Japan Student Services Organization [JASSO], 2012, 2017). By region, short-term programs in North America (the United States and Canada) were the most popular among Japanese students.

Table 1: The Number of Japanese International Students in Study Abroad Programs (JASSO, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2017)

Year	<1 mo	1–3 mo	3–6 mo	6 mo–1 yr	>1 yr	Unknown	Total
2016	35,626	5,771	8,435	9,740	1,238	0	60,810
2015	31,432	5,858	7,120	9,269	776	0	54,455
2014	29,933	5,959	6,566	8,856	814	4	52,132
2013	25,526	5,288	5,344	8,122	802	0	45,082
2012	24,220	5,333	5,233	7,510	712	1	43,009
2011	19,374	4,883	4,802	7,087	510	0	36,656
2010	13,626	3,996	4,468	5,412	1,302	0	28,804
2016/2010	262%	144%	189%	180%	95%	—	211%

Based on the government's policy regarding Japanese international students, this study covers Japanese international students who satisfy two points—program mode and duration. Program mode refers to the content of the study abroad programs, such as study tours, noncredit foreign language education, and study abroad programs for academic credit. The present study concerns programs in which Japanese

undergraduate students physically travel abroad to participate in education at foreign institutions for a certain period of time. For example, this research includes academic credit programs provided by partnerships between students' home and foreign host universities, in which students participate in regular, full-time curricular programs at a foreign host university. This study also includes English language programs hosted during summer or spring vacations. By contrast, this study does not include Japanese students who are enrolled full time in foreign universities. Furthermore, programs that are hosted at international branch campuses in home countries, which operate under the name of foreign universities, are not recognized as study abroad programs.

Duration refers to the length of study abroad programs. The present study includes study abroad programs that have been arranged by Japanese universities that are as long as 1 year in duration. As shown in Table 1, the short-term program is very popular among Japanese students. By contrast, the long-term program is defined as a program that lasts between 1 month and 1 year in duration.

Given this background and the lack of relevant empirical research that employs this specific classification of international students to focus on developing intercultural competence in Japanese study abroad programs, there is a need to explore the impact of study abroad programs on cultivating intercultural competence as it relates to Japanese students.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis guiding this study is that the degree of development of intercultural competence through study abroad programs depends on both student profiles and program profiles as variables during students' study abroad. This study uses three student profiles and five program profiles, as shown in Table 2, and seeks the significant variables that are related to the development of intercultural competence. Prior local language proficiency refers to one's proficiency in the official languages of the destination country (i.e., English in this study) before studying abroad. Prior international experience determines whether or not any previous international experience that occurred before studying abroad influences one's degree of intercultural development. Program type refers to whether students participated in academic credit programs or language and culture programs. Predeparture orientation encompasses lectures and workshops offered to students to teach basic theories and concepts of intercultural understanding as well as the destination countries' cultures, before students study abroad.

Table 2: Student Profiles and Program Profiles

	Variable classification
Student profile	
Gender	0 – Male
	1 – Female
Prior international experience	0 – No experience
	1 – Up to 21days
	2 – 22 days or more
Prior local language	0 – No score

	Variable classification
	1 – TOEIC 499 or lower
	2 – TOEIC 400–700
	3 – TOEIC 701 or higher
Program profile	
Program duration	0 – Long-term (1 mo or more)
	1 – Short-term (less than 1 mo)
Program type	0 – English language & culture
	1 – Academic-credited
Stay type	0 – Homestay
	1 – Dormitory
Predeparture orientation	0 – Did not take
	1 – Did take
Destination	0 – Canada
	1 – United States

Note. TOEIC = Test of English for International Communication.

Based on this study's hypothesis, Figure 1 displays the study's conceptual framework.

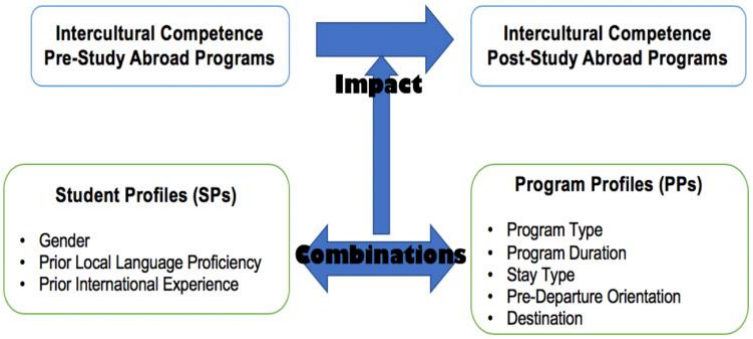

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence has often been recognized as a capability that supports effective and appropriate interactions with people in different cultural contexts. However, scholars have used varying perspectives to explore the specific components that comprise intercultural competence. For example, Spitzberg and Changnon (2009), in the *SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, indicated that scholarly works have advocated for 325 different components of intercultural competence. These components were generally perceived as intercultural competence in one context but not in another. Jackson (2018) mentioned that easy formulas and ready-

made clichés when examining intercultural encounters and diversity should be avoided. This assertion implies that no particular component of intercultural competence could ever be universally applicable. Therefore, the conceptualization of intercultural competence is highly diverse in terms of different disciplines, terminologies, and scholarly/practical objectives.

Despite the fact that no authoritative definition of intercultural competence prevails in the relevant literature, intercultural competence includes at least three elements: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Bennett, 2011; Deardorff, 2009; Griffith, Wolfeld, Armon, Rios, & Liu, 2016; Hammer, 2015). According to Bennett (2011), the cognitive element deals with cultural knowledge, cultural self-awareness, and interaction analysis. The affective element relates to how one sees different cultural qualities such as curiosity, motivation, and open-mindedness to adjust to varying circumstances. The behavioral element relates to one's behavior and the skills adopted in intercultural environments. Different researchers have conceptualized intercultural competence based on these three major elements. Bennett himself conceptualized intercultural competence by identifying six orientations that individuals display in their acquisition of intercultural competence. His development model of intercultural sensitivity stated that as one's experience of cultural differences becomes more complex and sophisticated, one's potential in intercultural competence in terms of behavior, knowing others, and empathetic attitudes to others evolves as relations increase. This study used DMIS as a grounded empirical analysis model.

Another example of such conceptualization is research by Spitzberg and Changnon (2009), who proposed their definition of intercultural competence as "the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people, who to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive and behavioral orientations to the world" (p. 7). Deardorff (2009) offered another empirical study that conceptualized intercultural competence. In this research, the author argued that the major components of intercultural competence are shared by intercultural scholars and higher education administrators. She surveyed both intercultural scholars from a variety of disciplines and higher education administrators from across the United States, from community colleges to research universities, to answer questionnaires in order to measure the desired components of intercultural competence. The results showed that knowledge of others and of self, skills of interpreting others' values, beliefs, and behaviors, and relativizing one's self were the most commonly shared competencies among the group.

Study Abroad Programs and Intercultural Competence

This study included eight independent variables in its empirical analysis. This section reviews the major previous studies, which examined the same variables to identify the impact of study abroad programs on cultivating intercultural competence.

The first variable is program duration, which is perhaps the most popular variable in this field of empirical research. Does program duration influence the degree of intercultural development? Perhaps the most comprehensive and well-known study in this category is the Georgetown Consortium Project, which was conducted by

Vande Berg, Connor-Litton, and Paige (2009). This study made specific note of the importance of program duration for the development of intercultural competence based on 1,152 American students from 190 universities in the United States. The authors found that the students who participated in 13-18 week programs, equivalent to approximately one semester of study abroad, showed the greatest increase in their intercultural development. This study also examined students who participated in 4–7-week and 8–12-week programs. It showed a negative impact for students in the 4–7-week program and small intercultural development for those students in the 8–12-week program. In order to reinforce intercultural development, the authors proposed a need to intervene with students' intercultural learning abroad, especially for students who participated in shorter duration programs. By contrast, Nguyen et al. (2018) included 79 study abroad participants to examine the impact of a 5-week program in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands regarding the development of self-efficacy and cultural intelligence. They found that participants' self-efficacy and cultural intelligence were higher after studying abroad than before studying abroad for monocultural individuals. As illustrated by the different results obtained by Vande Berg et al. (2009) and Nguyen et al. (2018), if duration is a determining factor of the effectiveness of studying abroad, this topic remains controversial since some studies (e.g., Czerwionka, Artamonova, & Barnosa, 2015; Gilin & Young, 2009; Lee & Negrelli, 2018) have concluded that even short-term programs are effective while some other studies (e.g., Engle & Engle, 2004; Kehl & Morris, 2008; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004) have found the opposite.

Gender is the second most-commonly used variable among scholars and international educators in this field. Do gender differences influence the degree of intercultural development? Nichols (2011) revealed that gender differences have an impact on the development of intercultural competence in study abroad programs. She concluded that women were more likely to take intercultural and targeted language courses. Furthermore, she found that women were more active in meeting frequently with mentors to discuss cultural adjustment. Vande Berg et al. (2009) also found that females experienced more changes relating to intercultural learning and cultural awareness through studying abroad, while Pedersen (2010) and Williams (2005) did not find a significant difference between male and female students.

How smoothly students can adjust to foreign cultures may be influenced by whether or not they attended predeparture orientations at their home universities. Jackson and Oguro (2018) mentioned that international educators can no longer optimistically expect that study abroad students will develop intercultural sensitivity and become more global-minded people simply by studying abroad. Rather, a professional intercultural intervention is essential to bolster their intercultural learning. This study indicated that many study abroad programs still lack predeparture orientations, or instead, only offer short, nonacademic logistics orientations such as security issues and travel arrangements. Pedersen's (2010) was another study that emphasized the importance of intercultural professional mentoring for students' intercultural competence development. This study examined two groups of students who were studying abroad in a year-long program in England. One group received an intercultural intervention, while the other did not. The students who received the intercultural intervention developed significantly more intercultural competence than

those who did not. Those who did not receive the intervention showed no statistically significant difference from the control group who had enrolled in study abroad, but had not yet departed (Pedersen, 2010). This result implies that students who receive mentoring from intercultural professionals before leaving their home universities might have smoother entries into the local communities, and they then might have more productive experiences in terms of the development of intercultural competence.

Prior international experiences should be included as a control factor in order to precisely examine the impact of studying abroad between the pre- and poststudy periods. Pedersen (2010) indicated that prior international experiences had a significant impact on intercultural competence while gender, prior language studies, and stay type in the destination country did not. By contrast, Williams (2005) indicated that previous international exposure was not a significant predictive factor influencing a change in intercultural communication skills, including cultural adaptation and sensitivity. Rather, Williams concluded that exposure to different cultures, regardless of whether or not students traveled abroad, was an influential factor in the development of intercultural competence. Exposure to different cultures included having close friends from another culture, previous experiences with traveling or living abroad, attending religious services outside of one's own religion, taking intercultural courses, learning a foreign language, or attending intercultural exhibitions. Vande Berg et al. (2009) indicated that students who had never lived amidst a different culture started out with the lowest level of intercultural competence but showed the greatest development. However, this study concluded that there was no statistically significant relationship between students who have lived among different cultures and those who have not.

Prior local language proficiency is also an important factor in the relationship between foreign language proficiency and intercultural competence. Allen and Herron (2003) followed 25 undergraduate students who had joined a 6-week study abroad program to France. With the use of a quasi-experimental study with a control group of non-study abroad students, they found that the participants significantly improved their French speaking and listening capabilities and experienced a decrease in cultural anxiety. Vande Berg et al. (2009) found that students who had previously studied foreign languages in high school and college had a statistically significant greater development of intercultural competence in comparison to those who had not.

Finally, stay type in destination countries should be included as a potential factor for Japanese students in developing intercultural competence. It is often heard from returning Japanese students that they spent time with Japanese friends in destination countries. International educators often identify this tendency as a negative aspect of study abroad programs for Japanese students. The impact of stay type could be viewed through the students' type of housing in destination countries, which could be homestays, dormitory stays, or others. Rodriguez and Chornet-Roses (2014) examined the construction of student–host relationships among 42 American students who studied in Luxembourg. Their study revealed that the students expected to interact with their host families like family, but in reality, students lacked opportunities for intercultural communication with their host families because these relationships instead functioned as friendships, guest–host relationships, or tenant–

landlord relationships. Vande Berg et al. (2009) identified a similar finding. They found that students living with other American students or host-country students showed statistically significant gains in intercultural competence, while those living with a host family or with international students from other countries did not.

These previous studies demonstrate that the impact of the above factors on the development of students' intercultural competence deserves ongoing research. In particular, research has yet to identify how study abroad programs affect Japanese students, the majority of whom grew up in monocultural environments.

METHODS

Data Collection Procedures

This study analyzed 303 Japanese students who had joined study abroad programs. These students were recruited from 13 Japanese universities and two Canadian universities where study abroad professors or coordinators agreed to invite their students to participate in the study. The 13 Japanese universities, both national and private universities, were chosen to include diverse university characteristics. Also, university locations included both urban and suburban areas in order to include a wide demographic spectrum of Japanese students. Since many Japanese students were studying abroad in the United States, two Canadian universities were consulted to identify Japanese students currently studying abroad in Canada in order to compare two English-speaking countries. Although the researcher used study abroad agencies to collect data from study abroad participants, this study does not include students affiliated with specific agencies so as to generalize participants' backgrounds as much as possible. The data were collected from 2014 to 2015. Table 3 illustrates the sample population data.

Table 3: Basic Sample Population

Country	Long-term study abroad programs	Short-term study abroad programs	Total
Canada	28	114	142
United States	29	132	161
Total	57	246	303

For data collection, the researcher contacted international education professionals at the students' home universities and at the two Canadian universities, inviting students to participate in the study. The international education professionals gave the students a URL to use to take the Intercultural Developmental Inventory (IDI) online. Using this procedure and recognizing ethical considerations, the researcher arranged the survey but did not have face-to-face contact with the participants. Thus, the students were able to decide if they wanted to take the IDI without any pressure from the researcher. As a benefit of participation, the students were able to take the IDI for free, and they received individual feedback sheets from the IDI that explained their further development of intercultural competence after studying abroad.

Based on the collected data, this study then explored the factors that caused changes in intercultural competences through participating in study abroad programs. SPSS (version 25) was used to conduct a multiple regression analysis to determine if there were significant factors in the student and program profiles that were predicted to have significant impacts on a change in intercultural competence between the pre- and poststudy abroad time periods.

Instrument

There are various empirical approaches used in intercultural competence research, and each of them focuses on a different element of the research. For example, the psychological approach observes individuals' psychological tendencies, such as stress and shock, in adapting to different cultures. The compositional approach focuses specifically on identifying which individual-level abilities are needed to adapt to different cultures. By contrast, the epistemological approach, which is used in this study, focuses on individuals' cognitive, affective, and behavioral developmental processes involved in adapting to different cultures. The DMIS developed by Bennett (1993) models this approach. The DMIS is comprised of three ethnocentric stages (denial, defense, and minimization), followed by three ethnorelative stages (acceptance, adaptation, and integration). Bennett (1993) defined ethnocentrism as "assuming that the worldview of one's culture is central to all reality" (p. 30) and ethnorelativism as the idea that "cultures can only be understood relative to one another and that particular behavior can only be understood within a cultural context" (p. 46).

Based on the DMIS, Hammer developed the IDI in 1996 as an instrument that can be used to assess a person's intercultural competence by indicating their orientation in the DMIS. The IDI is an online, 50-item, theory-based instrument that uses a 5-point Likert-type scale: 1 = *disagree*, 2 = *disagree somewhat more than agree*, 3 = *disagree some and agree some*, 4 = *agree somewhat more than disagree*, and 5 = *agree*. Willy (2017) conducted a reliability analysis of the IDI and the results showed that the overall score exhibited strong internal reliability, with an estimate of 0.84. The present study used the IDI to measure students' intercultural competence twice—before and after they studied abroad. The IDI clarifies how students' developmental scores (i.e., one's degree of intercultural competence) changed between the pre- and poststudy abroad periods.

According to Fantini (2009), there are 44 instruments that can be used to assess intercultural competence. Among these, the present study's researcher decided that the IDI would be the best tool for this study because the IDI has three major advantages. The first advantage is that the IDI is a theory-based instrument and is used worldwide. According to the Intercultural Development Inventory, LLC (2018), the IDI provides in-depth insights into how individuals make sense of cultural differences in terms of their mindsets, and it also identifies how individuals respond to cultural differences in terms of skillset (which is defined along a development continuum).

The second advantage is that the IDI has been proven to have strong validity as an instrument that measures intercultural competence for diverse cultural groups,

including Japanese people. To develop its validity, the IDI has been continuously conducting pilot studies and has developed three revised versions since it was first developed in 1998 (Hammer, 2011). The latest and third version was developed in 2010. The 50 items used in the second version were reviewed by administrating them to 4,763 respondents from 11 distinct cross-cultural groups, including 277 Japanese respondents (Hammer, 2011). These respondents were deliberately chosen from both high schools and universities and from for-profit and non-profit sectors to have diverse respondents. In order to avoid problems arising from the influence of language proficiency in assessing intercultural competence, the IDI developed a rigorously back-translated Japanese version, which enabled Japanese participants to complete the IDI in their native language. This development was a very important step for the present study, as a certain number of this study's participants were students studying abroad for the first time and they did not have sufficient English proficiency to answer IDI questions in English. The IDI, therefore, can be viewed as a cross-culturally valid instrument that can be used to measure intercultural competence.

The third advantage of the IDI is that it is a very sophisticated psychometric measuring instrument. In analyzing IDI results, a crucial factor in this study's credibility relates to what extent participants answered the questions in a straightforward manner. For example, it might be a risk for this study if some participants intentionally chose answers just because they wanted to obtain high scores. Regarding this point, the IDI's 50 psychometric questions are deliberately created to judge both respondents' perceived orientation score, which represents where the individual or group perceives themselves to be on this developmental continuum, and the developmental orientation score, which indicates where the IDI places the individual or group along the continuum (i.e., the individual's or group's actual level of intercultural competence; Hammer, 2012). The perceived and developmental scores were confirmed in terms of their reliability at .82 and .83, respectively (Hammer, 2011). Given the two reliability scores, the IDI can assure insusceptibility against respondents' social desirability effects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the collected sample, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to predict change in intercultural competence (i.e., developmental score) based on student and program profiles to identify if there were significant predictors that contributed to the change. A stepwise selection was applied, which chooses variables that improve the regression model one at a time and repeats this process until no further model improvement is possible. Using the stepwise selection process, gender, program duration, stay type, destination, and prior international experience were all dropped from the selection. By contrast, predeparture orientation, prior local language proficiency, and program type were predicted to have a certain impact on changes in developmental scores between the pre- and poststudy abroad periods. Tables 4 and 5 display this result.

Among the significant predictors, predeparture orientation was the strongest predictor of positive development score change between the pre- and poststudy

abroad periods ($p < .000$). This change demonstrates that attending a predeparture orientation has the strongest impact on developing intercultural competence through study abroad programs. Program Type 1 (i.e., academic-credited programs) has a more significant impact compared to English language and culture programs ($p < .014$). In comparison to a prior local language proficiency of 0 (i.e., no English language test score or students who were not ready to take an English language test because of low English proficiency), a prior local language proficiency of 3 (i.e., the Test of English for International Communication [TOEIC] 701 or higher) was shown to have a positive significant impact on change in intercultural competence ($p < .033$).

Table 4: Explanatory Factors of Developing Intercultural Competence (N = 303)

	M	*SD*
Pretest average of development score – posttest average development score	2.3447	11.64340
Pretest average of development score	83.5520	13.11533
Gender	0.3729	0.48439
Prior International Experience 1	0.1848	0.38879
Prior International Experience 2	0.1056	0.30785
Program Type 1	0.2211	0.41569
Program duration	0.3696	0.48350
Predeparture orientation	0.0924	0.29008
Prior Local Language Proficiency 1	0.0891	0.28537
Prior Local Language Proficiency 2	0.8119	0.39145
Prior Local Language Proficiency 3	0.3696	0.48350
Stay type	0.5842	0.49368
Destination	0.4686	0.49984

Note. *Overall Average of 303 Students: 83.55 (posttest average development score) → 85.90 (pretest average of development score) (+2.3447)

Table 5: Regression Model Coefficients

	B	*SE B*	*β*	*t*	*p*
(Constant)	29.047	3.878		7.489	.000
Pretest average of development score	−0.371	0.045	−0.418	−8.162	.000
Predeparture orientation	5.856	1.188	0.248	4.931	.000
Program Type 1	5.432	2.194	0.133	2.476	.014
Prior Local Language Proficiency 3	4.545	2.121	0.113	2.143	.033

Note. *A significant regression equation was found, $F(4, 298) = 24.608$, $p < .000$, with an R_2 of .238.

Predeparture Orientation

Among all eight explanatory variables, this study shows that attending predeparture orientations is shown to be the most significant factor in increasing the development of intercultural competence. Table 6 shows that the actual IDI change was 4.66 for students who attended predeparture orientations, and −0.91 for students who did not attend predeparture orientations, while the average change for 303 students was 2.35. This result clearly shows that predeparture orientations have a significant impact. Also, more students who attended predeparture orientations developed intercultural competence compared to students who did not attend an orientation in both short-and long-term programs. Thus, predeparture orientations are a very effective way to increase the probability that a student will develop intercultural competence regardless of program duration.

Table 6: Impact of Predeparture Orientation by Program Duration

	No Change (Average IDI Change)	Positive Change (Average IDI Change)	Negative Change (Average IDI Change)	Total
Did not take predeparture orientation				126 83.19 → 82.28 (−0.91)
Long-term programs		17 81.44 → 92.24 (+10.80)	17 86.21 → 73.78 (−12.43)	34
Short-term programs	1 93.65 → 93.65 (0)	37 77.04 → 86.15 (+9.11)	54 86.18 → 78.31 (−7.87)	92
Took predeparture orientation				177 83.81 → 88.47 (+4.66)
Long-term programs		16 85.02 → 98.36 (+13.34)	7 96.87 → 92.85 (−4.02)	23
Short-term programs		95 80.42 → 91.18 (+10.76)	59 87.39 → 80.91 (−6.48)	154
Total				303 83.57 → 85.88 (+2.31)

Note. IDI = Intercultural Development Inventory.

Furthermore, a more detailed investigation reveals that predeparture orientations are especially helpful for the following two types of students. The first type refers to students who join short-term programs. Among 246 short-term program students,

only 40% of students (37 of 92) who did not attend a predeparture orientation developed intercultural competence, while 62% of students (95 of 154) who did attend an orientation successfully developed intercultural competency skills. Observing the actual IDI change, predeparture orientations contributed to both leveraging positive change and to reducing negative impacts. A primary disadvantage of short-term programs is the limited period of intercultural emersion. The results show that predeparture orientations can compensate for this limitation.

The second type of student are those who had lower pre–study abroad intercultural competence. Table 7 indicates that 22 of 26 (85%) students in the denial group, 50 of 72 (70%) students in the polarization group, and 37 of 73 (51%) students in the minimization group developed intercultural competence. By contrast, the percentage of students who did not attend any predeparture orientation is clearly lower (77% in denial, 46% in polarization, and 30% in minimization). Likewise, the actual IDI change is persistently higher in students who attended a predeparture orientation than students who did not. Attending a predeparture orientation is strongly recommended given that the majority of students (n = 225) were in polarization and minimization groups in the pre-study abroad periods.

Table 7: Impact of Predeparture Orientation by Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) Orientation

	No Change (Average IDI Change)	Positive Change (Average IDI Change)	Negative Change (Average IDI Change)	Total
Denial				
Did not take predeparture orientation		10 64.15 → 77.30 (+13.15)	3 65.81 → 58.06 (−7.75)	13
Took predeparture orientation		22 64.54 → 80.06 (+15.52)	4 65.52 → 61.29 (−4.23)	26
Polarization				
Did not take predeparture orientation		30 76.47 → 85.14 (+8.67)	34 79.00 → 71.38 (−7.62)	64
Took predeparture orientation		50 77.74 → 88.35 (+10.61)	22 76.76 → 72.30 (-4.47)	72
Minimization				
Did not take predeparture orientation	1 93.65 → 93.65 (0)	14 94.16 → 103.16 (+8.99)	31 93.30 → 84.56 (-8.73)	46
Took predeparture orientation		37 93.10 → 102.73 (+9.63)	36 94.85 → 87.73 (-7.12)	73
Acceptance				
Did not take predeparture orientation			3 119.67 → 93.22 (-26.46)	3

	No Change (Average IDI Change)	Positive Change (Average IDI Change)	Negative Change (Average IDI Change)	Total
Took predeparture orientation		2 124.25 → 127.71 (+3.46)	4 117.22 → 107.44 (-9.78)	6
Adaptation				
Did not take predeparture orientation				
Took predeparture orientation				
Total	1	164	138	303

Program Type

Program type demonstrated that academic credit programs are predicted to be more effective in developing students' intercultural competence than English language and culture programs. This result addresses the importance of the quality of learning in study abroad programs. For example, academic-credited programs cover specialized study areas, which do not necessarily include intercultural topics. Nonetheless, these programs require students to see things from an academic perspective, which might help students to see critical differences between their home cultures and the destination countries' cultures. By contrast, English language and culture programs generally aim to study the English language through intercultural topics. Thus, one possibility is that having deeper, more meaningful intercultural experiences is more important for developing intercultural competence than is learning about various intercultural topics such as foods, clothes and fine arts.

Prior Local Language Proficiency

Only the highest level of prior local language proficiency was found to be statistically significant compared to the lowest level of prior local language proficiency. This result indicates that the correlation between local language proficiency and intercultural competence exists when students have an advanced level of local language proficiency. In other words, this result suggests that local language proficiency does not necessarily impact the development of intercultural competence.

Implications for International Educators

By conducting statistical analyses, this study indicated that the impact of studying abroad was not uniform for all students but instead differed depending on the student and program profiles. In other words, simply studying abroad may or may not be beneficial. Based on the results, this section presents three major implications of this study for international educators at higher level educational institutions.

Intercultural Education and English Language Education

This study suggests that it is very important for international educators to recognize that students do not necessarily develop intercultural competence just by participating in study abroad programs. Instead, the development of intercultural competence through study abroad programs can be enhanced if the home institutions and universities offer pre–study abroad intercultural instruction.

This study clearly indicates that providing students with a predeparture orientation is extremely important for all student types. However, of the 303 students surveyed for this study, only 58.4% (n = 177) were offered predeparture orientations at their home universities. On the other hand, many of these students were offered English language training programs, such as daily English conversation classes for prospective students joining study abroad programs. On this point, this study revealed that there is no statistically significant correlation between prior local language proficiency and a change in intercultural competence via study abroad programs, unless the student had an advanced local language proficiency (i.e., TOEIC 701 or higher). In this research, only 28 of 303 students had reached this proficiency level, which demonstrates that, for the majority of students, English language education alone is insufficient for developing students' intercultural competence through study abroad programs. It is recommended that intercultural education is provided separately from English language education in order to develop intercultural competence.

Data-Evidenced Arrangement of Study Abroad Programs

The second implication for international educators is the importance of arranging study abroad programs in a way that is based on empirical evidence. In this study, the degree of intercultural competence development varied by the student and program profiles. This study advises that international educators consider at least three points about the study abroad program arrangement.

First, the most important point in an empirically based program arrangement is to understand the students' pre-existing intercultural competence in the pre–study abroad period. This step is essential for improving the positive impact of study abroad programs. For example, Table 7 showed that the lower a student's pre–study abroad intercultural competence (i.e., the three ethnocentric stages of denial, polarization, and minimization), the more effective predeparture orientation tends to be. This result demonstrates that understanding pre–study abroad intercultural competence can be an effective way to provide a better intercultural intervention to improve the impact of study abroad programs.

The second program arrangement is relevant for students in short-term programs. Because of the limited amount of intercultural exposure due to time constraints, the quality of intercultural immersion experiences is crucial to help students develop their intercultural competence. This study found that arranging predeparture orientations that teach the destination countries' culture and the basic theories/concepts involved in intercultural understanding, is an effective way to enhance the possibility of developing students' international competence. The findings of this study indicate

that the number of Japanese students joining short-term programs has dramatically increased in recent years; however, the proportion of students attending predeparture orientations remains low. This outcome necessitates the arrangement of a predeparture orientation for those students who join short-term programs.

Third, in arranging study abroad programs, it is important to focus on program quality. Based on the government's initiative, many Japanese universities are aiming to send an increased number of students to overseas universities. Also, numerous Japanese universities are expanding their short-term English language and cultural programs. This study indicated that academic-credited programs are more effective than English language and cultural programs in developing students' intercultural competence. It is recommended to international educators that they offer short-term academic programs. To improve the impact of study abroad programs on developing intercultural competence, it is necessary that international educators focus on both the quantity of study abroad participants as well as the quality of the programs.

Limitations

This study has two major limitations. First, this study used the IDI to examine changes in students' intercultural competence between pre- and poststudy abroad periods. Considering the aforementioned three advantages of the IDI, the IDI is the most reliable instrument for this study. However, it is true that this study's results should not be overgeneralized but instead should be referred to as an IDI case study. Nonetheless, it is also true that no specific measurement instrument has been developed to examine intercultural competence, either universally or perfectly.

Second, this study chose three student profiles, which represent students' major characteristics and might influence the changes in intercultural competence. However, there might be other factors, such as age, major subject areas, grade point averages, and family backgrounds that might impact intercultural competence. As it is not realistically feasible to define all the possible influencing variables and to control for them, the researcher chose gender, prior international experience, and prior local language proficiency as the major variables related to the study abroad programs.

There is also a need to pay attention to evaluation methods. One implication of this study is that the factors that generate quantitative results should be pursued by a qualitative analysis. For example, although the quantitative analysis revealed by how much students developed their intercultural competence via short-term programs, a quantitative analysis alone is insufficient for gaining a more thorough understanding of the learning process. A possible solution is to use a mixed-method study. A mixed-method analysis allows for a more complete analysis of the findings, as one method complements the other. Quantitative analyses provide objective data but do not always clearly demonstrate which factors shaped the data. Conversely, the qualitative method facilitates a deeper understanding of empirical results by observing the participants or interviewing them. Researcher bias, however, can occur through observations conducted in qualitative analyses.

This study suggests that a single evaluation approach does not sufficiently aid the understanding of the impact of study abroad programs. It suggests that

understanding intercultural competence should be deepened both vertically (a panel assessment) and horizontally (the assessment channels). It is insufficient to evaluate only the pre- and poststudy abroad periods. A variety of perspectives obtained from professors, international educators, administrators, and study abroad coordinators would be desirable. Assessments by only the students and study abroad coordinators might limit the possibility of accurately capturing students' performance.

Based on the above information, it is recommended that international educators consider a study abroad program arrangement based on varying assessment methods. In this study, the evaluators at the Japanese universities who gauged students' intercultural competence were either study abroad coordinators or the professors who had accompanied the students to their destination countries. It might be helpful to gain additional perspectives from related parties, such as other professors, English language instructors, academic tutors, academic administrative staff, other students, support staff, etc.

CONCLUSION

This study specifically explores the factors of study abroad programs that contribute to cultivating intercultural competence. Through an empirically based quantitative examination of 303 Japanese study abroad students, the findings show that program types, prior local language proficiency, and predeparture orientations are predicted to have significant impact on intercultural competence. The findings also clearly demonstrate that students do not necessarily develop intercultural competence by only participating in study abroad programs. In order to enrich the impact of study abroad programs on intercultural competence, this study addressed the importance of distinguishing between intercultural education and English language education, data-evidenced arrangements of study abroad programs based on student and program profiles, and the necessity of multiple evaluations as implications for international educators.

By contrast, this study did not provide a specific reason as to why some students had negative changes on the development of intercultural competence. A hypothesis that might explain this result is that intercultural competence does not develop linearly; rather, it develops in back-and-forth movements between stress and adaptation. For instance, W-curve theory (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963), a major cultural adaptation theory, indicates that people have a back-and-forth experience between experiencing difficulty and progress, as they seek to adapt to different cultures. One possibility is that these students experienced honeymoon periods after they arrived in their destination countries and then regressed in the course of a back-and-forth adaptation experience. Since there is a trend in Japan for many Japanese students to join short-term programs, it is possible that these students return home before they fluctuate back to adaption in the back-and-forth process. Nonetheless, this does not mean that short-term programs are inappropriate for developing intercultural competence. Rather, this study finds that students in short-term programs should be encouraged to arrange experiences that will enable them to overcome any stresses or difficulties that arise while in an intercultural environment. For example, it might be advantageous to have Japanese students join group work programs that are comprised

of people from different cultures. In such programs, the Japanese students would experience the challenge of understanding and accepting the different values and thought processes exhibited by group members who come from other cultures. Interacting with people from different cultures and experiencing both obstacles and progress in achieving a common goal might inspire students to reflect on the nature of the difficulties they encountered and overcame. International educators should encourage such deliberate arrangements of study abroad programs to aid students in learning how to acquire intercultural competence via intercultural emersion in a limited time period.

Future Research

Based on the findings and limitations, this study indicates four major promising areas for future studies. The first is to focus more closely on exactly how students develop intercultural competence through study abroad programs. This study sought to identify the factors that can be predicted to have significant impacts on the development of students' intercultural competence through study abroad programs. However, this study did not fully investigate the question regarding which specific intercultural experiences gained via studying abroad contributed to the development of intercultural competence. In order to conduct these contextual analyses, this study concludes that additional in-depth qualitative research is necessary.

The second area for further research relates to deepening cultural backgrounds. Given that the majority of existing intercultural competence studies have been conducted from a Western perspective, this study is significant in that it focused on Japanese students. However, it is an empirical study of students who dispatched to North America. Going forward, it is necessary that future studies include a wider range of destination countries to enhance the reliability of the data. Including a wide range of destination countries will also help to address important questions, such as whether or not the outcomes would be different for North America and East Asian countries, with which Japan has more cultural similarities.

The third area for future research would be to develop the research methodology. Assessments of intercultural competence would more beneficial than a point-to-point evaluation. In this study's research design, for example, predeparture orientation is understood as preparatory education in the immediate pre–study abroad period. This definition was therefore limited to sessions that were designed to prepare students for studying abroad through classes on intercultural understanding, local culture and customs, English conversation practice, etc. However, the impact of predeparture orientations on pre–study abroad intercultural competence cannot be clearly separated from the impact of what students learned through their home university's curriculum before their orientation. One possible future study might entail a detailed analysis of both predeparture orientation content and an assessment of what students previously learned from their home university's curriculum. Universities need to consider the importance of linking study abroad programs to the broader university curriculum, including predeparture orientations, before sending students abroad (as suggested by this study). Furthermore, the growth curve for intercultural competence bends back and forth, so a more detailed analysis of why this occurs should be conducted via an

on-site assessment, especially for medium-term study abroad students. Capturing the impact of study abroad programs more precisely would require tracing students' learning and their intercultural competence from the time they first began receiving intercultural education at their home universities.

Finally, a collaboration between international education and other disciplines would be helpful in order to develop an instrument that can be used for Japanese students. One of the significant benefits of collaboration would be to discover possible solutions to any potential problems with using the IDI. That is, it is necessary to develop a made-in-Japan intercultural assessment inventory. Needless to say, developing an instrument to assess the cognitive developmental process of cultural adaptation is beyond the scope of international education coverage. Rather, creating such an assessment needs to be considered from three major perspectives—statistical, epistemological, and through the lens of international education. The epistemological perspective can be used to create a conceptual model, the statistical perspective can be used to apply the conceptual model as an instrument, and the international education perspective can be used to consider the tool's usability in real education. Exploring the possibility of a multidisciplined collaboration on this topic is a promising area for future studies.

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Bahamians as International Adult Learners Determined for Academic Success: Challenges and Required Support System

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the factors that impact the experience of Caribbean nontraditional adult learners encounter while pursuing higher education in the United States and perceived support systems needed by Caribbean adult learners to be successful. On this premise, this qualitative study was conducted. A total of 15 Bahamian students participated. Data was collected via semi structured interviews and analyzed utilizing open coding. The major themes that emerged with regards to influential factors that impacted their experiences were: (a) financial constraints, (b) lack of support, and (c) cultural differences and adaptation. As it relates to support systems needed by Caribbean students, the major themes that emerged were: (a) family, (b) faculty/mentors, and (c) a network of friends.

Keywords: The Bahamas, challenges, international students, nontraditional learner, support systems, transition

INTRODUCTION

The term "international student" is a temporary identity to describe all mobile students over the world (Bista, 2016). However, the definition and criteria for international students may vary in different countries. An international student has been defined by different resources. For example, Shapiro, Farrelly, and Tomas

(2014) defined an international student as "a student who moves to another country (the host country) for the purpose of pursuing tertiary or higher education e.g., college or university" (p.2). The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (2015) provided a definition: "Anyone who is enrolled at an institution of higher education in the United States who is not a U.S. citizen, an immigrant (permanent resident) or a refugee" (para 2). Among all the definitions, the similarity is "study abroad" while the differences occur when defining the immigrant or visa status.

The ideology of exploring higher education in a foreign country is not unique to internationals traveling to the United States. However, the USA in comparison to other countries of the world is the country of choice for most international students. According to UNESCO (2017), in 2014, the top three destinations for international students were the USA with 907,251 international students, the United Kingdom with 430,687, and France with 239,409. Within colleges and universities throughout the United States, the international student population contributes vastly to the overall student population and hence influences not only the changing demographic landscape of students but also contributes to cultural diversity, which can present many benefits and challenges at both the individual and institutional level.

According to the Open Doors Report (Institute of International Education, [IIE], 2017b), there are over one million international students studying in the United States of America. As a result, $35.8 billion dollars was contributed to the U.S. economy during the 2016–2017 academic year. The most prevalent countries represented were India, China, and South Korea. In 2017, China was the top country, sending 32.5% of all international students, with India representing 17% and Korea 5.4% (IIE, 2017b). It is also worth noting that a large percentage of international students also migrated from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Latin America, and the Caribbean (IIE, 2017b). With regards to Caribbean students traveling to the USA for higher education, the Bahamas is among the highest countries represented. During the 2014–2015 academic year, the total number of Bahamian students represented 1,835, which is 0.2% of total international students in the U.S., while the total number of Caribbean students was 10,478, which is 1.1% (IIE, 2015). Compared with the previous academic year, both the Bahamas and overall Caribbean students increased in the 2015–2016 academic year. The total number of Bahamian students in the 2015–2016 year is 2,027 (0.2%), while the total number of Caribbean students is 11,042 (18.4%, Table 1; IIE, 2016).

Subsequently, it was also notable that international graduate students compared with international undergraduate students showed a significant increase and accounted for the greater number of new students reversing a 2-year trend that reflected undergraduate students accounting for the greater new student population (IIE, 2015).

Table 1: Academic Level of Bahamian and Caribbean International Students in the USA, 2014–2016 (IIE, 2016)

	2014–2015			2015–2016		
	Bahamas	Caribbean	Bahamas to Caribbean	Bahamas	Caribbean	Bahamas to Caribbean
Undergraduate	1,395	6,915	20.2%	1,567	7,330	21.4%
Graduate	281	2,376	11.8%	276	2,395	11.5%
Nondegree	14	223	6.3%	7	268	2.6%
OPT	145	964	15.0%	1,049	177	16.9%
Total	1,835	10,478	17.5%	2,027	11,042	18.4%

Note. OPT = Optional Practical Training.

The underlying motivation of an international student to travel in pursuit of higher education varies. Such motivation includes but is not limited to the pursuit of academic and professional growth, experience of intercultural contexts, promoting future career opportunities, enhancing social status, economic benefits, greater political freedom or stability, and the gap between educational supply and demand of many countries of origin (Chiswick & Miller, 2010; Khadria, 2011; Kim, Bankart, & Isdell, 2011; Valdez, 2015; Zhou, 2015). Despite the motivation to pursue higher education in the USA, internationals are faced with expected and unexpected challenges that American students would not necessarily encounter and that require additional support systems. Utilizing this as an underpinning, this study was conducted to explore the factors that impact the experiences of Caribbean nontraditional adult learners and perceived support systems that would be needed for success.

This study is significant because there is an evident gap in the literature with regards to the experiences of Caribbean students as international students, in particular Bahamian students and their relevant support systems. Additionally it adds to the literature on international students from a nontraditional student perspective all of whom were graduate students. Hence, this study adds a diverse perspective in this regards. Additionally, there is a gap in the higher education literature of how to better accommodate adult learners, who are becoming the "new majority in higher education" (Jung & Cervero, 2002, p. 306). From an educator's perspective, it is imperative to be aware of the diverse student population needs and hence be willing and aware of how to modify their teaching strategies and hence have a learning environment that would be beneficial to a diverse student population (Halx, 2010). The theoretical framework work that acts as a lens to illuminate this study is the Schlossberg's adult transition model (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006; Schlossberg, 1981, 1984; Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995). The guiding research questions are:

1. What are the factors that impact the experience of international nontraditional adult learners pursuing higher education in the United States?

2. What support systems are needed by international nontraditional adult learners pursuing higher education in the United States?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is guided by Schlossberg's adult transition model (Anderson et al., 2011; Goodman et al., 2006; Schlossberg, 1981, 1984; Schlossberg et al., 1995). The Schlossberg's adult transition model is categorized as an adult development theory and "provides insights into factors related to the transition, the individual, and the environment that are likely to determine the degree of impact a given transition will have at a particular time" (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2009, pp. 212–213). Schlossberg (1984) identified a main goal of the theory is to promote an understanding of adults in transition and to help them find ways to cope with the "ordinary and extraordinary process of living" (p. vii). Schlossberg (1984) integrated and expanded the existing theory and research, including Levinson (1978), Neugarten (1979), and Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1975). Over time, Schlossberg's theory has continued to develop and refine with ideas from other researchers and the critiques of her own theory.

Schlossberg (1981) debuted a conceptual model to examine adults' experience in transition at different times and situations. Later, Schlossberg (1984) developed a theoretical model to understand adults in transition and help them to cope with the transition. Further, Schlossberg et al. (1995) introduced the 4 S's transition theory, which identifies four major factors that influence the adults' transition: situation (characteristics of event or nonevent), self (personal characteristics and psychological resources), support (social support systems), and strategies (coping responses). Schlossberg et al. (1995) defined a transition as "any event, or nonevent that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (p. 27). International students experience both expected and unexpected situations during the transition of studying aboard. Building on Schlossberg et al. (1995), Goodman et al. (2006) included the global perspectives of technological advancement to improve the adult transition model. Recently, Anderson et al. (2011) updated the model by considering diversity and multicultural issues.

The purpose of this study is to explore the factors that impact the experiences of Caribbean nontraditional adult learners pursuing higher education in the United States and the perceived support systems needed by Caribbean adult learners to be successful. Schlossberg's adult transition model provides a foundation to examine the purpose of this study. This theory works for the population of international students who are in transition of both academic and social life from their home country to the US. The Schlossberg et al. (1995) theory is applicable to a variety of international students who experience anticipated transitions, unanticipated transitions, nonevents transitions, or a combination of transitions in their academic study, career, and family at different times. While expected transitions often allow people to take time to prepare, the unexpected transitions may cause shock or challenges since people cannot prepare for the situation psychologically and physically (Anderson et al., 2011). The characteristics of international students, such as individuals' demographic characteristics, support systems, financial situations, and cultural environment, as well as context, also influence transitions experienced in U.S. higher education. Goodman et al. (2006) argued that each individual might cope with transition differently based on their personal differences. Transitions may involve gains as well

as losses and they are processes over time. Therefore, the outcomes of transitions and the time needed to adjust vary with the individual. This argument confirms the different transition experiences of international students since each individual differs in the background, experience, personality, and the timing of their studying abroad. Therefore, using Schlossberg et al.'s (1995) transition model, further developed by Goodman et al. (2006) and Anderson et al. (2011), guides this study and its search to identify how Caribbean nontraditional international students experience higher education in the US and what supports they may need to better succeed.

Nontraditional Adult Learners

There are numerous criteria to define a nontraditional student. For example, the U.S. Department of Education (2002) has defined nontraditional students that have any of the following characteristics: delays postsecondary enrollment, attends school part-time, works full time, is independent for financial aid proposes, has dependents other than a spouse, is a single caregiver, and does not have a traditional high school diploma. In addition, age is used as a criterion—over 23 years old at the time of enrolment—to identify nontraditional students (Metzner & Bean, 1987). Moreover, Rendon, Jalomo, and Nora (2000) argued that nontraditional students have a different backgrounds, such as lower socioeconomic status, different ethnicities, and are first-generation students, compared to the traditional students.

Malcolm Knowles, a classic in the field of adult education, also identified some defining characteristics of the nontraditional adult learner. Six key assumptions about adult learners identified by Knowles (1970) were: self-concept, experience, readiness to learn depends on need, problem-centered focus, internal motivation, and the need to know why they are learning something. Knowles (1970, 1984) identified adult students as conscious and self-directed learners. Adult learners learn from their life experiences so school education should be related to real life and based on their own life experiences (Knowles, 1970, 1984). Chung, Turbull, and Chur-Hansen (2017) conducted a quantitative study using an online mental health survey among 442 undergraduate psychology students and found that nontraditional students had significantly higher resilience in some aspects of life than traditional students. However, they have to overcome personal, societal, and institutional barriers to achieve success in the higher education system (Webber, 2014). Boeren, Nicaise, and Baert (2012) indicated that financial problems, inconvenient time scheduling, and time problems that arise from conflicts in responsibilities are the major barriers to adult learners participating in higher education.

Caribbean Students Study in the USA

While there are numerous studies about the transition experiences of international students in U.S. higher education, very limited professional literature regards Caribbean students studying in U.S. universities. Caribbean students include students from the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Bahamas, and some South American islands, such as Guyana, Surname, and French Guiana (Edwards-Joseph & Baker, 2014; Hunter-Johnson, Newton, & Cambridge-Johnson, 2014). Caribbean students

represent a small population in the US so they are usually classified as Black/African American and treated as if they have the same issues as African American students (Hudson-Gayle, 2015). Therefore, Caribbean students were considered to experience racial discrimination during U.S. college life. Usually, Caribbean students pursue higher education in the US because of the better quality of the education system. Douglas-Chicoye (2007) conducted interviews with six Caribbean college students who studied in the US, and most of the participants reported that their families supported and encourage them to pursue higher education in the US.

Like other international students, students from the Caribbean also face many challenges to achieve success in a foreign academic system. Caribbean students are mainly from a British system that required them to be more disciplined compared to American students (Edwards-Joseph & Baker, 2014; Hunter-Johnson et al., 2014). Additionally, in the Caribbean, the class is often teacher-oriented rather than student-oriented, while students in the US are encouraged to react with the instructors and engage in class activities (Nero, 2006). In addition, Hudson-Gayle (2015) distributed the Student-Life Stress Inventory survey to over 200 Caribbean students studying in the US to measure students' stress levels and found that the majority of participants were experiencing moderate stress. Moreover, Douglas-Chicoye (2007) indicated that Caribbean students experience financial issues because they were neither eligible for state or federally funded financial aid programs, nor for funding from their home governments, and because of the disparity in the cost of tuition and the scarcity of legal employment in the US.

Reviewing the literature, there are similarities and differences in the transitional experiences in U.S. higher education between Caribbean students and other international students. For example, since Caribbean islands have smaller higher education sectors, Caribbean students seek to pursue better professional opportunities in the US, which is the same motivation for other international students (Bista & Dagley, 2015; Douglas-Chicoye, 2007). In addition, both Caribbean students and other international students must adjust their learning strategies and styles to meet the requirements of the U.S. education system (Edwards-Joseph & Baker, 2014; Nero, 2006; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Moreover, although both Caribbean students and other international students experience discrimination in the US, the discrimination faced by Caribbean students is more related to racial issues since they are usually categorized as Black/African American (Hudson-Gayle, 2015; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). However, the biggest difference between Caribbean students and other international students regards language challenges. Compared to English-speaking Caribbean students, most of international students are nonnative English speakers so they experience more challenges caused by language issues than Caribbean students (Edwards-Joseph & Baker, 2014; Schmidt & Gannaway, 2007; Storch, 2009).

METHODS

Study Design and Data Collection

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design. This qualitative approach was selected because it allows in-depth understanding of the participants'

perspective of the same phenomenon, hence minimizing the researchers' prejudices with a focus to allow the participants' perspective to emerge (Fischer, 2009).

Participants

This study consisted of 15 participants. There was diversity among the participants with regard to their discipline studied. Both genders (11 females and four males) were included in the study, and there was also variation in age levels. A total of 10 universities were represented. The inclusion criteria for this study were: all the participants had to be born in the Bahamas, had to have studied within the United States for at least 2 years, had to plan on returning to their country within 5 years of completing their degree, and must be over the age of 25 years while receiving their degree (see Table 2).

Table 2: Participants' Demographic Profile

Variable	*n*	%
Gender		
Male	4	27
Female	11	73
Age range		
21–30	3	20
31–40	5	33
41–50	7	47
Educational program level		
Master's	8	53
Doctorate	7	47
Program of study		
Education	8	53
Business	3	20
Psychology	1	7
Science	3	20

Note. $N = 15$.

Data Collection and Analysis

Boeije (2010) described purposeful sampling as "intentionally selecting participants according to the needs of the study. These participants can teach us a lot about the issues that are of importance to the research" (p. 35). Additionally, this method was selected because it provides a platform for a diverse range of cases relevant to a particular phenomenon or event—in this instance, Caribbean nontraditional international students who are studying abroad in the USA. The purpose of this kind of sample design is to provide as much insight as possible into the event or phenomenon under examination.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Human Subject Committee before conducting data collection. Participants for the study were solicited via emails

and telephone calls utilizing a script provided by the Office of Sponsored Research. Once the participants indicated that they were interested in participating in the study, they were advised to contact the primary researcher of the study. At such time, prior to the interview, the participants were required to complete the informed consent. They were provided detailed information about the overall objective of the study, criteria for the study, study procedures, and the proposed benefits of the study. Upon receipt of the documents, arrangements were made to have the interview conducted at the convenience of the participant. Prospective participants were also given the option to "opt out" of future emails or telephone calls.

Semistructured interviews were the method utilized for data collection. Questions were crafted reflective of the study's objective and guiding research questions with a focus on challenges and support systems utilized by nontraditional international students pursuing higher education in the United States. The interviews lasted approximately 45–60 min and were audio recorded. Additional notes were taken by the researchers during each session to ensure accuracy. Once completed, the interviews were transcribed immediately after each session. Member checking was conducted by sending a copy of the completed transcript to each participant to review for accuracy of the interview data captured in the transcripts. As validity and reliability are of utmost importance, an independent peer reviewer assisted by reading through the transcriptions confirming themes and categories that corresponded with the research questions. Data was reflective of transcripts and notes and was analyzed using open coding, a method of qualitative analysis used with a focal point of establishing themes and main concepts coding (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Themes and subthemes were identified from the transcripts that reflected the research objectives, research questions, and theoretical framework, which contributed to a greater understanding and explanation of the issues being studied.

RESULTS

This study explored the challenges that Caribbean adult learners encounter while pursuing higher education in the United States and the perceived support systems needed by Caribbean nontraditional adult learners to be successful while pursuing higher education in the United States. Data were collected through semistructured interviews, which were administered to 15 participants from the Caribbean, in particular, from the Bahamas. After careful analysis of their responses, the major themes that emerged with regards to influential factors that impacted their experiences were (a) financial constraints, (b) lack of support, and (c) cultural differences and adaptation. With regard to support systems needed by Caribbean students, the major themes that emerged were (a) family, (b) faculty/mentors, and (c) a network of friends.

Financial Hardship

It was a general consensus among the participants that pursuing higher education in the United States is expensive and resulted in a vast change in their quality of living compared to their home country. All of the participants indicated that they were

financially challenged while pursing higher education in the United States. However, despite the financial hardship, they were determined to excel and generally indicated that the experience was still rewarding and indicated if they had to do it again, they would. A single female indicated,

> I had to overcome many obstacles, particularly financial hardship…however, despite these difficulties, I would not give up this experience for anything in the world and I am a better person because I was able to endure to the end and completed my degree.

A married mother of two children echoed the sentiments with regards to financial hardship. She explained that her husband remained behind in their country while she traveled to the USA to pursue higher education with their two children. She stated, "There was a constant concern about paying tuition and bills in general." While financial hardship was identified as a major theme among the students, the opportunity to be employed as an international student contributed greatly to the financial hardship they experienced. A husband and wife team both pursuing their graduate degrees in the USA with their three children indicated that

> …it was extremely difficult to obtain graduate assistantship as international students. Furthermore, as international students, employment was restricted to the university campus and only 20 hours per week. In most instances, the graduate/research/teaching assistantships were given to the American students.

This added an additional layer to the financial hardship experienced by international students.

Lack of Support

The decision to travel outside of one's country to pursue higher education is a decision that evokes a multiplicity of emotions, intellectual processing, and stimulating discussion with family and loved ones. To travel to an unfamiliar country for approximately 2–4 years to obtain a graduate degree embracing an unfamiliar educational system, culture, quality of living, and in the case of many Caribbean students, transitioning from being a majority to being a minority requires some level of support to be successful. As participants discussed the lack of support system, this aspect of the interview evoked a vast amount of emotions as it was deemed necessary to have some support system in place while pursuing higher education in the USA. A single female participant indicated that there is a need for family support. She stated,

> …not having support…like a physical family support over there [United States]…I feel it is important to have family support when going through academic challenges. With any challenge, you need that support. And me not having that support was a negative thing for me.

There were numerous participants who indicated a lack of family support due to them being in another country had a negative impact (80%, or $n = 12$). There were also concerns expressed by the participants regarding lack of support from the

universities the participants attended (67%, or n = 10). In particular they lacked support from their respective colleges and/or departments. One participant indicated that he felt as though there was a more structured support system when he was an undergraduate student compared to now as a graduate student. He defined lack of support from the college and/or department as "lack of financial support, experiences/opportunities to teach, conduct scholarly research and lack of guidance and/or mentoring from faculty and administration at the university." While pursuing a graduate degree and preparing for academia, all of the above are essential to one's success not only as a student but also as a prospective faculty member.

Cultural Difference and Adaptation

A common thread that linked the participants of this study were their challenges adapting to the cultural differences in the United States compared to their home country. Cultural differences as described by many (93%, or n = 14) of the participants included ethnic food; enunciation and pronunciation of words and accents; ethnicity and race; religious beliefs; family and individual values; and the ideology of individualism versus collectivism. Concerns as to where to live, where to shop, how to utilize the transportation system, how to find a job, and what it means "not to have credit score and its impact" are all questions that are faced by international students and impact their adaptation to the culture in the USA and their quality of living. One of the participants described her experience as being lonely because of the cultural difference. Another female indicated that

> You tend to lack a sense of belonging…initially, I was not concern about assimilating into another culture. I was worried about how I was going to fund my education and get the best possible grades. However, there were times I was really lonely and it took a while for me to meet new persons.

A single female indicated that she was told by the other foreign students that she believed she was "white" because she always sat with the "white people." She explained, "I never realized this. So my challenge was trying to fit in with the Haitians and Jamaicans because they thought I was so different. That was a major challenge for me…so I found myself living in white America." A married mother of three children indicated that there was a vast difference with regards to the cultural upbringing. She indicated it took her a while to adapt to passing people or entering an elevator and saying "good morning" or "good afternoon" and no one responding. She said, "no one would even look at me less respond. I thought they were being very rude…as this is considered extremely rude in my culture." It is not unique to have culturally reflective food, but it can be challenging when studying in a foreign country. Many participants indicated that it took a while for them to adjust to the difference in food, while others indicated that they never adjusted to the food in the USA. A single male participant indicated that he would have native food sent to him while studying in the USA by his mother. This is a usual practice by Caribbean people living in the USA.

English was the predominant language for all participants in this study, but they still experienced language challenges, in this case, being enunciation, pronunciation,

and spelling of words (English vs. British spelling and pronunciation), coupled with their Caribbean accent. The most notable difference between American and British English is the vocabulary. This includes both the pronunciation and spelling of words and hence can create a language barrier. For example, the American version and spelling is "color" while the British version is "color." Another example would be the use of collective nouns, which lends to grammatical differences. In American English, collective nouns are singular but in British English, collective nouns can be plural or singular. Additionally, there is a difference in the use of past tense verbs, such as the American "ed" and the British "t" (e.g., learned vs. learnt) Such a difference can create a challenge, not in terms of which is correct, but which is more appropriate in an American setting and being mindful to utilize American English compared to British English. This provided an added layer for isolation and was perceived as different or inferior in the learning environment. With a level of frustration, a married female who traveled to the USA with her kids indicated that "there are some words that are enunciated differently depending on the culture and accent…no culture is better than the other."

In an effort to adapt to the new culture, many participants indicated that they joined different Christian movements or international student groups, which afforded them the opportunity to be connected to their universities and other international students, specifically catering to Caribbean and west Africans students, within their universities. In addition, some participants indicated that they networked with some of the African American students who would assist them with adapting to the American culture, assisting them with unique hair care and skin needs.

When asked what support systems are needed by international students pursuing higher education in the USA, the major themes that emerged were: (a) family, (b) faculty/mentor, and (c) network of friends.

Family

It was discussed by participants of this study that while it may not have been possible for their family members to be present with them while pursuing higher education, it family support is crucial to the international student. Family support as described by the participants of this study includes: prayer from family members, financial support and resources, encouraging words, emotional support, and a mechanism to keep them culturally grounded.

One female participant indicated that it was necessary for family members to call her. She stated, "it was important to have encouraging words to keep you moving forward". A couple pursuing their graduate degree indicated that they had to be that support system for each other. They often communicated the challenges they were experiencing academically, culturally, and socially. This strengthened their bond as husband and wife and they indicated that they could not have been successful without each other as international students pursuing higher education in the USA. Another married participant echoed these sentiments stating,

> Family support is paramount, particularly from one's spouse…if your spouse does not support your efforts to study abroad it could be very

> challenging as he/she should be your greatest cheerleader. Not to be a part of them and encouraging or supporting could be detrimental to one's psyche. It could result in emotional strain and stress.

Faculty and/or Mentors

It was a general consensus by the participants of this study that there is a need of support from faculty and/or a mentor within their respective programs. As international students studying in the USA without the presence of any family members, faculty, staff, and administrators within that university may be the only support system that students have initially. There were some participants (67%, or n = 10) who indicated that the lack of support system at their respective universities made them feel as though they were alone in the matriculation process of their programs because questions were not answered by university personnel, as if the university personnel were not interested in the challenges an international student may be experiencing. There were other participants (26%, or n = 4)who indicated that it was only because of a supportive faculty and department that they were able to excel in their program. One participant indicated that one of her most pleasant experiences while studying in the USA was her lecturers "actually taking time with me and assisting me particularly in subjects I was not familiar with or had difficulty with." A graduate student indicated that once he had identified a faculty mentor within his program, this changed the quality of student life for him. He was then properly prepared for academia and provided some of the same opportunities extended to the American students such as a graduate assistantship, teaching opportunities, and mentoring with regards to research and scholarship.

A Network of Friends

Many participants (93%, or n = 14) indicated that there is an apparent need for a network of friends as international students. One participant indicated that although she was faced with many challenges as an international student, once she connected with other students, specifically other international students, "I started to become more balanced in my approach…not just focusing on funding my education but I also became more socially connected with other people. I think connecting with other people really helped me." A male graduate student expressed that if it was not for networking with other students, he would not have secured a graduate assistantship. He further explained that the opportunity to network with other students assists with creating balance and an outlet from the challenges of academia. Another female indicated that it was not until she had a network of friends that it assisted her with regards to assignments and academic success. She stated,

> Having a network of friends to support you in terms of working together on projects, providing class notes when you miss a lesson, or simply providing personal support is important. In addition, the financial assistance that many of them provide cannot be understated.

DISCUSSION

The major themes that emerged with regards to challenges that impacted nontraditional Caribbean international student experiences were (a) financial constraints, (b) lack of support, and (c) cultural differences and adaptation. With regards to support systems, the major themes that emerged were: (a) family, (b) faculty/mentors, and (c) a network of friends. While the findings from this study are consistent with findings regarding non-Caribbean or traditional international students challenges, this study adds a unique perspective and affords an opportunity for a voice in the academic literature regarding nontraditional Caribbean students as international students. Most of the literature pertaining to international students reflects larger countries that are represented in the USA, such as China which reflects 32.5 % of the international student population (IIE, 2017b). Hence, most of the literature regarding international students in the USA is from a Chinese perspective.

The findings support Schlossberg's adult transition theory (Schlossberg et al., 1995), which includes four majors factors influencing the adults' transition: situation, self, support, and strategies. The findings have shown that financial constraints, lack of support, and cultural issues are different situations that Caribbean nontraditional international students experienced in the transition tp U.S. higher education. Also, the personal characteristics of international students influence their transition experiences, such as their financial, marital, and academic status. According to the findings, international students have limited support from their family and universities and they also try to find mentors and establish new networks of friends as their strategies to cope with the challenges.

This study also adds to the literature with regard to the lack of support specifically from family and at an institutional level. This theme, specifically as it relates to family, may be foundationally based on the culture within the Caribbean and Latin America, which is very family-oriented and values the presence of family. In addition, it also may reflect the cultural difference in the Caribbean, which is grounded more on collectivism than individualism compared to the American culture, which is perceived as the opposite. Hence this provides an explanation as to why the absence of family members, especially during a challenging time, is considered to be a challenge, which supports previous studies (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006; Rao, 2017).

With regard to lack of support at an institutional level, international students in comparison to American students encounter added layers of conflict while pursuing higher education, which would require a greater level of support from an institutional level, which is also reported by previous studies (Douglas-Chicoye, 2007; Glass, Buus, & Braskamp, 2013; Horne, Lin, Anson, & Jacobson, 2018; Urban & Palmer, 2015). Such added layers include the visa process, work restriction as a result of immigration status, obtaining credit or having no credit, or obtaining a Social Security number, all of which are relative to international status. These factors influence their ability to receive housing, vehicles, access to daycare facilities for their children, and a line of credit, which directly requires support from an institutional level. In addition, these graduate students need an added level of experience that can only be obtained at their institution because of their visa restrictions. To this end, it is imperative that

faculty, administration, and staff at institutions of higher education are aware of such restrictions imposed on international students and utilize this restriction as a motivation to assist international students for employability in academia or their profession of choice.

While language and culture have been identified as a challenge in previous literature (Khoshlessan & Das, 2017; Rao, 2017; Straker, 2016; Zhang, 2016), it is most often from the perspective of English as a second language while pursuing higher education in the USA. However, within this specific study, language focuses more on accent and different approaches to English (British compared to American) and the challenges it creates in an American institution of higher education who speaks and writes American English. The Caribbean accent also leads to a difference in the pronunciation and enunciation of words. In some instances among American students, this can create a divide rather than a learning opportunity.

Limitations

There were two major limitations of the study. First, participants were all Bahamians and did not represent other Caribbean countries. Second, there were only 15 participants in the study, which does not lend to the generalization of the results. It is proposed to conduct a larger study with participants representing more Caribbean countries in future research. Also, future studies should include students enrolled in both graduate and undergraduate degrees.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the factors that impact the experience of Caribbean nontraditional adult learners while pursuing higher education in the United States and the perceived support systems needed by Caribbean adult learners to be successful. This research is meaningful and contributes to the fields of adult learners and learning, adult education, international students, and higher education in many ways. The findings of this research validate the current literature on the factors impacting international students pursuing higher education in a foreign country.

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Social Support and Stress-Related Acculturative Experiences of an English-speaking Afro-Caribbean Female Student in U.S. Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This two-year qualitative single critical case study research investigated the stress-related adjustment experiences and academic progression of a female English-speaking Afro-Caribbean collegian in an American postsecondary institution through the lens of the "triple bind" phenomenon and the stress buffer hypothesis. Student development theory and research on college student outcomes have largely focused on Black students' experiences and achievement outcomes through a homogeneous African American cultural lens. Minimal existing research has shown differences in the lived experiences and achievement outcomes between Afro-Caribbean students and domestic African American students in U.S. postsecondary education.

Keywords: acculturation, Afro-Caribbean, international students, social support, stress

The beginning of a Ph.D. program marks one of the most important yet stressful transitions in the life of novice scholars, especially international doctoral students. Empirical studies spanning several decades support the position that stress linked to relocation, employment-related responsibilities, finances, and social isolation provides fertile ground for the onset of emotional disorders and health-related issues (Ali & Kohun, 2006; Hawlery, 2003; Lewis, Ginsberg, Davies, & Smith, 2004; Lovitts, 2001). In addition, the Committee on the College Student (2000) acknowledged that students in doctoral programs "face enormous demands upon their time, energy, intelligence, endurance, patience, and organizational skills" (p. 1). Transitioning to another country for doctoral studies introduces an added layer of complexity and stress to international students' educational progression.

Several studies have focused on the major life change experiences of international collegians and interconnections to social network construction and academic progression (Misra & Castillo, 2004; Mitchell, Greenwood, & Guglielmi, 2007; Sullivan & Kashubeck-West, 2015; Yoon & Portman, 2004; Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005; Zhou, Zhang, & Stodolska, 2018). Furthermore, some researchers have discussed migration and the development of social networks among immigrants (Faist, 2000; Gold, 2001; Waldinger, 2004, 2008). Therefore, social networks hold implications for processes of acculturation or assimilation (Chelpi-den Hamer & Mazzucato, 2010; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Previous studies have found linkages among internationalization, culture, and social network development (Bilecen, 2014; Pachucki & Breiger, 2010), but these studies have not included Afro-Caribbean women in the participant groups.

The Institute of International Education, in its 2017 *Open Doors on International Educational Exchange* report, stated that in 2016–2017 academic year, total international student enrollment in institutions of higher education in the United States numbered 1,078,822. Of this aggregate, 11,351 (a 2.8% increase over the previous year) were international students from the Caribbean, with the majority from the English-speaking Caribbean coming from Jamaica (2,797), the Bahamas (2,252) and Trinidad and Tobago (1,304). Yet, little is known about this population's stress-management techniques in postsecondary education. Few studies of any methodology has investigated and analyzed the stress-coping strategies of English-speaking Afro-Caribbean females matriculating through doctoral graduate programs in the United States (Alfred, 2003). This scholarly omission indicates a need for focused studies on Afro-Caribbean women.

Understanding how female English-speaking Afro-Caribbean women, in particular, successfully navigate high-stress episodes, given their enrollment in postsecondary programs is vital. The remainder of this article is divided into five sections. The first section briefly examines the corpus of literature on stress and social support networks. The second section investigates the effects of stress and the use of social support networks by a female Afro-Caribbean student in a doctoral program in a research institution in the Southern United States. The third section provides the study's findings followed by the discussion in the fourth section. The conclusions section completes the research report.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Female Afro-Caribbean students in postsecondary education in the United States encounter the same oppression as African American students with the added dimension in America of being foreign born (Asher, 2010)—they are Black women experiencing minoritization as international students in American postsecondary institutions. Asher (2010) candidly observed that "Confronting the 'triple threat' of being foreign-born, female, and non-White can be a daunting task" (p. 534). Encountering the effects of this "triple bind" daily at American postsecondary institutions is both intimidating and stressful. Female Afro-Caribbean doctoral students who successfully navigate higher education must develop processes for managing the overwhelming stress.

Students experience stress related to scarcity, including food insecurity, sleeplessness, anxiety, and fear of failure. For Black students matriculating in predominantly White institutions in particular, racism and impostor syndrome (Esping, 2010; Harper, 2013; Strayhorn, 2008) add to these stresses. The ways in which students manage stress are associated with their levels of persistence or attrition (Ali & Kohun, 2006; Hawlery, 2003; Lovitts, 2001). Further research has revealed that stress impairs both psychological and physical wellbeing (Schnurr & Green, 2004; Thoits, 2010), but social support networks have been shown to mitigate these negative effects.

Available research suggests a causal relationship between social support networks and wellbeing (Cohen & Syme, 1985; Fernández González, González Hernández, & Trianes Torres, 2015; Shavitt et al., 2016). Social support networks are assistive structures constructed within and dependent upon proximal and distal relationship ties that have been widely researched by social science researchers (Song, Son, & Lin, 2011). Several studies have identified that students manage academic stress by accessing social networks during high-stress episodes (Ali & Kohun, 2006; Dirks & Metts, 2010; Hadjioannou, Shelton, Fu, & Dhanarattigannon, 2007). The members of social support networks may include family, friends, cohort members, coworkers, and professional counselors (Kelly, 2005). Students therefore create networks of practical, emotional, and professional support (Campos, Yim, & Busse, 2018; Thomas, 2016).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research project investigated the influence of acculturative stress and social support networks through the theoretical lens of the "stress buffer" hypothesis, a four-category typology of social support networks advanced by Cohen and Wills (1985). The researchers hypothesized that social support networks protect (buffer) people from the negative influences of stressful events (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Stress occurred after people determined that situations were "threatening or otherwise demanding" (p. 312) and they realized that they did not have "an appropriate coping response" (p. 312). Further, the negative effects of stress were substantially increased when multiple stressors amassed. People with high stress levels and low social support levels experienced fewer buffering effects and had a greater likelihood of illnesses.

When individuals perceive events as stressful, they often experience feelings of helplessness that increasingly threaten their self-esteem. One of the four categories named by Cohen and Willis (1985), Esteem (or Emotional) Support, restores a sense of control over stressful circumstances and reassures individuals that they are valued for their inherent worth rather than personality traits or character failings. Secondly, Informational Support, or cognitive guidance, helps with deconstructing, comprehending, and managing stress-related events. Individuals alter their perceptions of stressful situations and are subsequently able to perceive stressful experiences as benign and manageable through counternarratives offered in information-based support networks.

Third, Social Companionship Support, also called belongingness or diffuse support, alleviates social isolation, provides connection and relationships with others, and distracts people under stress from obsessing about problems. Instrumental Support, or aid, provides financial, material, and services support that resolve or reduce stress-related events. Affected individuals thus have time to relax or engage in social interactions with others.

Fourth, Instrumental Support Networks are most effective when the resources provided are directly associated with the source of stress (e.g., a student experiencing food insecurity benefits most from financial support rather than social interactions with friends). The four types of support networks work interdependently to interrupt the stress-to-illness causal chain at two points, resulting in a sense of wellbeing. Each stress-related event elicits distinctive coping mechanisms based on the impact of the stressor.

The current research project is grounded in the stress buffer hypothesis (Cohen & Wills, 1985) and answers the question: What are the social support networks that work to mitigate stress-related acculturative experiences for a female English-speaking Afro-Caribbean student at a predominantly White research institution in the Southern United States?

Two sub-questions allow a more nuanced exploration of an English-speaking Afro-Caribbean woman's academic progression and the construction of stress-coping strategies through social network construction:

1. What are the stress-related experiences of an Afro-Caribbean female student in graduate courses at this institution?
2. How does she describe and interpret the intersections of race, gender, social class, and national origin in the creation of social support networks?

I move next to the research study design and rationale for using a qualitative single critical case study approach. Afterward, I present my data analysis approaches, and provide the strategies I used for validating the findings.

METHODS

Rationale for Qualitative Single Critical Case Study Research Design

I conducted this project using qualitative single critical case study research design principles as defined by Patton (2002) and Flyvbjerg (2001). Researchers have effectively used case study approaches for examining subjects within their real-life contexts (Eisenhardt, 1989; Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1981), where sometimes the boundaries between subjects and contexts are not clearly defined (Yin, 1981). Case studies, therefore, have become particularly useful when it is important to separate the person (or the subject) from the context, yet investigate the relationship between the two. Similarly, in this study a qualitative single critical case study approach provides the means to more fully understand the "bounded system," (Merriam, 2009, p. 40)—that of an English-speaking Afro-Caribbean woman—while gaining greater

insight into the context (Emory & Cooper, 1991; Stake, 1978; Yin, 2009)—the stress-filled environment of U.S. postsecondary education.

Several researchers have effectively used single critical case study design in qualitative research or have become proponents of the methodology despite contestation (Schofield, 2000; Stake, 1982; Tripp, 1985). In fact, noted qualitative researcher Flyvbjerg addressed the use of single case study research in this way:

> One can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization as supplement to other methods. But formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas "the force—of example" is underestimated. (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 425)

Furthermore, Yin (2009), in explaining the difference between the goals of analytical generalization (critical case study) and statistical generalization provided justification for the use of critical case studies. Yin (2009) stated:

> A ... common concern about case studies is that they provide little basis for scientific generalization. "How can you generalize from a single case?" is a frequently heard question. ...The short answer is that case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a "sample," and in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization). (p. 15).

Critical case study in the current project requires analytical generalization, i.e., generalization to the previously developed theory of stress buffering not to a population of Afro-Caribbean women. The findings, however, may hold additional implication beyond the theory. The respondent represented a critical case as she was one of only two Afro-Caribbean women at the site of the study and she was the only one who consented to the 2-year study. One participant was therefore considered appropriate as the research was exploratory and the research questions sought depth and detail about the theory of acculturation, stress, and social support networks rather than normative data. The participant's experiences provide "the force—of example" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 425) in a critical case because so few research studies have focused exclusively on Afro-Caribbean women.

Sampling and Confidentiality

I conducted a 2-year qualitative single critical case study project using purposeful criterion sampling. Patton (1999) described purposeful criterion sampling as a way "to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance. Criterion sampling are routinely identified for in-depth, qualitative analysis" (p. 176). In that vein, I employed purposeful sampling of a female Afro-Caribbean doctoral student at a Southern university in the United States to address the research questions. The participant completed all postsecondary education as an international student and completed a master's degree at the same institution where she was currently enrolled

in the doctoral program. The participant, who I refer to as Michelle, provided informed consent and I removed all identifying information from transcript data to protect her identity. Names of faculty and other graduate students mentioned by the participant were changed to protect identities.

Data Collection

I collected field observations, digital recordings of interviews, and digital photographs for 2 years. I used the triangulation of data to support and enhance the validity of the findings (Patton, 1999). Instead of charting brief answers on a Likert-type scale, I listened to the participant's stories, observed interactions in classroom settings using an observation protocol (Barbour, 2007; Liamputtong, 2009), and asked clarifying questions in interviews based on those observations. Interview questions focused on acculturative stress, race, gender, nationality, and relationships with peers and the institution. I recorded responses to interview questions and a professional transcriptionist prepared transcripts for coding. I gathered field notes on the student's interaction with faculty and peers during multiple classroom observations. Additionally, I took pictures of the classroom layout and ongoing activities to analyze the subject's participation in class and interaction with classmates.

Data Analysis

I analyzed all data abductively, i.e., deductively and inductively, using first open then selective coding. I analyzed the data deductively using a priori social support network constructs described by Cohen and Wills (1985). Then, I open-coded transcripts for key words and concepts from additional social support network theories. Next, I analyzed the data inductively allowing new categories to emerge from data. One example of an emergent new category was social media. Additionally, I made meticulous notes on insights and impressions (Moustakas, 1994) as I read the interview transcripts. I used analytical memoing in this project to further identify salient or interesting themes in the data. Analytic memos are brief written records that describe the products of the analyses of emergent themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). A combination of 30 patterns, exceptions, and unique themes emerged from the extensive coding of the transcript data. I presented initial findings to the department faculty members who acted as devil's advocates, intentionally challenging and critiquing conclusions I drew from the findings. Finally, I uploaded transcript data in the form of Microsoft Word documents into NVivo 10 software and recoded and reorganized the data to further clarify patterns and themes.

Strategies for Validating Findings

I collected classroom (field) observations, interviews, and pictures as triangulated data for the study (Patton, 2002). I sent transcript data to the participant to confirm the accuracy of the transcript text (member-checking). I also provided audio files and working interpretations and analysis of the text to the respondent to

establish referential adequacy (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Two faculty members acting as devil's advocates were an additional resource to establish trustworthiness (Patton, 2002). The faculty rigorously questioned my interpretations and provided critiques and feedback for document revisions in debriefing sessions.

FINDINGS

The first major finding of this research study was that the participant, Michelle, experienced multiple stressors during the first year of a doctoral program and she contemplated dropping out of her program. Stressors included relocation, health issues, and social isolation. The second major finding was that the participant accessed and, in some instances, constructed social support networks that included friends and professional services to mediate on- and off-campus stressors encountered during the first year of her doctoral program. Existing and emerging social support networks became valued systems of encouragement, collaboration, and assistance.

I have organized the findings around two broad headings, Stress-Related Acculturative Experiences and Support Networks, with subheadings for additional clarity to support the reader's understanding of the respondent's experiences. In most cases, I have included extended excerpts from the participant's responses rather than short snippets as is common in some qualitative studies because the responses provide the rich context so important in case study research. I present the respondent as the primary interpreter of her experiences to reduce the instances of reinterpreting her already interpreted recollections.

Stress-Related Acculturative Experiences—All the Stuff Running Through the Back of Your Mind

Relocation and Separation from Family as a Source of Stress

Afro-Caribbean students are situated in liminal spaces, navigating the tension between the "there and then" of home and the "here and now" (Waldinger, 2008) of the university campus. Michelle, an Afro-Caribbean female graduate student, was particularly affected by her recent relocation to the United States. Moving to a new environment and separation from direct family support brought on feelings of stress. Michelle reflected:

> So, when I left [my country] last August, I remember laying [sic] in bed with my mother the night before I left and actually crying. She was like, "Why are you getting upset, what's wrong?" And I was like, "I don't want anything to happen to you when I'm not here." So, it was my biggest fear. I'm 44. My parents are well in their 70s. They're not getting any younger and that was one of my major fears is that I'm far away from them. I can get there within a day, but I wouldn't be there if something major happened. I have a sibling, I have a brother, but he doesn't handle that kind of stuff well. So, I know if anything happens, and when my parents get older, that they will be my responsibility.

The concern about her parents' well-being was a source of emotional tension for Michelle. Her family did not understand her decision to pursue doctoral studies. She lamented "I don't feel like they really understand". Her family kept asking: "Why the heck are you still in school? What are you doing?"

Social Isolation as a Source of Stress

Michelle's institution was predominantly White and this demographic reality imposed limitations on opportunities for network building because of Michelle's prior cultural socialization. Michelle was part of the racial majority in her country and had few instances to socially interact with White people in her native cultural context. Michelle described her former racial background like this:

> Interestingly enough, in [my country] I've had no friends outside of my race except for a classmate when I was at secondary school. That in itself was interesting because White people and Black people in [my country] do not socialize together. So maybe we'd hang out at school or get together sometimes after school to work on something, but we definitely wouldn't share the same social circles.

Social isolation was, therefore, a concern for Michelle at the beginning of her program. She described her academic context and some of the ways in which she felt socially isolated. The experience of cultural homogenization was especially bothersome for her. Michelle disclosed:

> I know that the institution really … I think it's welcoming to international students. They have [a space] and they have their programs and activities that celebrate differences on people's countries and cultures and traditions, but I still do think that international students are seen beyond that as a homogenous group. Unless I go out of my way to interact with those programs then I really don't see anyone outside of my program and department which is a little insular.

Stereotypes and Racism as a Source of Stress

In addition to cultural homogenization in institutional programming, Michelle experienced minoritization, the exchange of dominant status for minority status, the moment she flew into the United States. During interviews, she revealed that her upbringing and socio-political experiences were different from those of African Americans in part because she was a member of the dominant racial and political group at home. She did not have the minority orientation expected of her in the United States because she was Black. Michelle explained:

> When asked for my ... on those forms where they ask you, what is your race and what is your ethnicity, I am Black, Caribbean. I'm not African American. I'm Black Caribbean. So, if African American is on the form, I won't check that. If it says Black/African American, then I'll check it. My Caribbeanness—I think I just made up a word—is very essential to my

> identity. Like I said, I think I have self-confidence, I know what my people are capable of. We run our own country, there's no position in society that is not attainable for me, so a lot of those issues I think that really affects Black Canadians and Americans is an issue that I can't relate to. It's not my experience.

Furthermore, Black international students are sometimes confronted for the first time with racial aggression or microaggression at their institutions and in their community. Asked whether she had experienced racialized episodes during her Ph.D. matriculation, Michelle said:

> I have. The most recent one... at the [event] this week where we had someone come up to us and ask if, so you do go to [an HBCU]. I mean, it's a [South University] event, everybody there is from [South University], so I don't know where this assumption was that we were from [an HBCU].

Michelle was concerned about campus climate and a diminished sense of belonging at her institution. Additionally, she was distressed because of the racism in the wider community. As a result, she vacillated about her future professional plans. She was unsure about staying in the United States after graduation because of the racial tensions in America. Michelle shared about her uncertainty and why she was reconsidering a professional career in the United States in this way:

> I remember when the ... was it Ferguson? I remember saying on Twitter that I don't feel welcome here. As a country, I don't feel that I'm welcomed here. I don't feel unwelcome at [South University], I don't feel unwelcome at [my academic department], but before, when I did my master's, I'd wanted to stay in the US. My plan was to stay in the US, have my career and retire back to [my country]. Why would I want to live in a country that treats Black people this way when I could be home where I don't have these issues, where this is not an issue for me.

Michelle experienced the same racial tensions as African Americans in the United States with the additional complexity of being foreign born. While Michelle could be mistaken for an African American as she moved about the campus and the community, the moment she spoke, her international status became apparent and differentiated her from African Americans. This differentiation also become a source of stress.

Health-Related Issues as a Source of Stress

In an ongoing highly stressful experience, Michelle's symptoms first erupted with a breast cancer scare. She experienced high and frequent episodes of anxiety in the interval between identification of a lump and the subsequent diagnosis. She talked about the episode like this:

> In January, I went for my first mammogram after putting it off for a while and I got called back for a second mammogram and then an ultrasound. And then they decided that they found something that they needed to

> biopsy. So, that got me really concerned. I have an aunt who had been diagnosed with breast cancer and I'd had a biopsy on that same breast before, so I was totally freaked out. I'm also terrified of needles, so that didn't help. So that was a two-month process at the beginning of the second semester that I had to be dealing with and it really caused a lot of anxiety for me.

She subsequently received word that her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. In fact, cancer was to play a recurring role in Michelle's mother's life and the psychological and physical stress took on a toll on Michelle's psyche. She reported:

> Once I'd gotten past that and found out that that was benign and not an issue, then I found out that my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer so that really threw me for a loop. That was towards the end of the semester. That was also difficult and dealing with that during the summer as well. Because my mother, she's retired now but she is the nurturer of the family. She takes care of everybody and I felt almost like a failure as a daughter. That the one time my mother needs somebody to take care of her, that I wasn't physically able to be there to be her source of comfort and support.

Financial Precariousness as a Source of Stress

The United States remains the destination of choice for international students. Yet studying in the United States can be one of the most expensive choices international students make. American students have a number of federal and institutional financial aid mechanisms available to assist with the cost of postsecondary education. International students have far fewer options. Michelle described how the decision to pursue a Ph.D. impacted her professional and financial status. She said:

> Choosing to put my consulting career on pause and use my savings to meet my financial obligations has been difficult. Because I choose not to incur any debt during my doctoral studies, my GRA stipend is now my sole source of income. Initially I had planned to stay with friends, but their family expanded, and it became necessary to move out and find a place to live and paying rent that I hadn't planned for.

The Influence of Stress on Work and Academic Production

Findings indicate that as health and emotional concerns multiplied, stress levels rose, and Michelle's work and academic production suffered. She recounted, "There were major assignments that I wasn't able to finish, so I have a couple incompletes." Sleep deprivation is common among doctoral students and this phenomenon eventually transpired for Michelle as well, resulting in more stress and a diminished productive capacity. She disclosed:

> I was having serious insomnia, so I would sleep for three hours at night maximum and I would do that for four nights in a row and then I would

> crash for 12 hours and that went on for a week or two, and I realized I couldn't keep that up. So being sleep deprived, that doesn't help on your focus or concentration to sit in or to write a paper or to read. You have all this stuff running in the back of your mind and then trying to fall asleep at night, your brain is just not shutting off.

Stress Leads to Thoughts of Attrition

As sustained, multiple stressors act on doctoral students as they progress through programs (Cahir & Morris, 1991), the likelihood that they will attrite increases (Lovitts, 2001). Multiple and persistent sources of stress ultimately led Michelle to consider dropping out of the doctoral program. She revealed, "I was having panic attacks, having major anxiety. And the last time I returned home, I was convinced that that was it, I was not going to be leaving again."

Social Support Networks—It Takes a Village

Michelle revealed that she had constructed social support networks that encouraged her and increased the likelihood that she would persevere and succeed in the doctoral program. In the absence of her biological family, Michelle valued a relationship with a small group of friends she now considered family. She divulged:

> I am a loner and I've realized there's no way that I can do this [doctoral studies] maintaining that loner status. It's a difficult process and you will need people to help you limp across the finish line. I think I've created another circle, my doc circle. We actually call ourselves La Familia. I think, obviously with my own efforts plus the support of them I think will help me finish this thing.

Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in Esteem Support

When asked about the role that race, gender, and social class play in the construction of her social support network, Michelle admitted that she forms deeper connections with people who share her race. Michelle responded:

> I've had relationships with people outside of my race, not a lot of them and they definitely are never as deep as they are with people who are the same race as me. In my program, how many ... is it just the two of us there? So, there are two Black people in my cohort for my doc program ... and Denise ... well, people of color. We have two people who are Indian.

Constructing support systems amongst friends who share similar racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds was important to Michelle. She connected with a new friend in the doctoral program who had a similar upbringing and cultural experiences. During one of her interviews Michelle said this:

> I have a great office mate, classmate, who's also from the Caribbean. One of the concerns I also had when I was starting my grad program was like,

> oh my God, I'm going to be the oldest person there, it's terrible. How am I going to relate to these people? They're going to be so much younger than me? And then I saw on the Facebook group before I started in August that there was somebody else from the Caribbean, so again I wouldn't be the only international student. During my master's program, also, at [South University], I was the only international student in the program which made 9-11 very interesting. I really identified with Kayla, we're a similar age, we're from the Caribbean growing up in a Black majority country so there's a lot of things that we have in common, and have also done higher education in the US and away from home. So, we really connected.

While the data revealed that Michelle preferred relationships with people from her own racial background, and this was also evidenced by the differences in her interactions during group work with Black and White classmates—she did establish connections with students of other races to reach mutual goals. She specified:

> My most recent professional experience would have been in [my country] and I've had very little exposure to people outside of my race in [my country] professionally. Academically ... in my first semester, I ended up in [quantitative methods class]. So, it was me and two other first years, they're both White males, and we decided if we were going to make it through this thing that we would have to do it together. We actually had a regular Sunday study group at a library and we worked really well together. Whether we would socialize outside of that? Probably not. Probably that's more of a cultural thing in that we don't really share a lot in common outside of school.

Professional Counselors as a Source of Informational Support

Mental health support is crucial to graduate student success (Committee on the College Student, 2000; Mitchell et al., 2007). On Michelle's campus formal structures exist to support students' mental health needs. When Michelle became overwhelmed by stressors, she eventually accessed the professional services provided by her institution and this became a part of her formal social support network. She disclosed how the counseling staff helped her with her immediate psychological and physical concerns. Michelle told me:

> Eventually I did go to the counseling center and they gave me something for anxiety and something to help me sleep, so at least that covered the physical issues but then there was still the emotional stuff about being away from my mom and trying to be an emotional support for her while not letting her know that this [mom's breast cancer diagnosis] really, really shattered me. It really did.

Peer Interactions as a Source of Social Companionship Support

Social isolation has been shown to be a stressor for graduate students. Friends serve as a gauge by which people determine who they are or are not, and can be

sounding boards and support systems as people change and try on new identities (Bilecen, 2014; Kelly, 2005; Waldinger, 2004). Peer interactions can be informal support systems outside the university walls and offer a chance to unwind, relax, and socialize. Michelle indicated:

> I also have a very close friend from back home. I've known her since I was 11 years old, who lives here [city in southeast, United States], has her family here, so they're like my surrogate family. I think my connection with my friends and my family is what makes me rich. There are friends that I could call on in the middle of the night and they would be there for me.

Social Media as a Channel of Social Companionship Support

Some immigrants to the United States construct geographically and politically borderless transnational social networks (Basch, Schiller, & Blanc, 1994; Waldinger & Duquette-Rury, 2016) because of increased global internet capacity and the pervasiveness of social media platforms (Hossain & Veenstra, 2017; Keles, 2016). Social media sites provided a stable mechanism for Michelle to continue these vital relationships. She said "I'm also still very much in contact with my friends back home. We use WhatsApp; I talk to my friends almost every day so they're still very much there."

Friends and Family as a Source of Financial/Instrumental Support

International students often leave well-developed careers behind when they decide to pursue graduate studies in the United States. This decision has far-reaching effects because financial obligations may continue unabated in their native countries while they matriculate abroad. Michelle detailed financial issues that arose and the ways in which her social networks, including her parents, supported her. She articulated her experiences like this:

> I have the use of my friend's car and just have to maintain it and put gas in it. It has made my life exceedingly easier as quite a few of my classes end late at night. Without their generosity I'd be at the mercy of the local bus system to get around. My parents have also been generous even though I take their help with great reluctance. They give me an airline ticket home each Christmas as my gift and are currently helping me with my mortgage back home as my savings ran short before I'd planned. For conference travel, I've applied for every possible financial assistance offered by the department, college, [other institutional funding source], and even the association whose conference I'll be attending. It really takes a village to get through and finish a doctoral degree.

In summary, the data revealed that while Michelle encountered multiple stressors that drove her to consider attrition, she accessed and, in some instances, constructed various social support networks comprised of friends and professional services. Social support networks served to mitigate the effects of on- and off-campus stressors during the first year of her doctoral program. According to Michelle, existing and

developing social support networks became valued systems of encouragement, collaboration, and assistance. In the next section I discuss the findings and their congruence or incongruence with Cohen and Wills' stress buffer hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

This research study investigated the stress-related adjustment experiences, construction of social support networks, and academic progression of an Afro-Caribbean woman at a predominantly white institution (PWI)in the United States through the lens of the triple bind phenomenon and the stress buffer hypothesis. Some of the stress-related experiences described in this project were unique to Michelle because she is a female, Black international student. Michelle's minoritization experience is a phenomenon different from that of African American students (Asher, 2010). While African American students move in and out of majority contexts, their larger ever-present environment in the United States is as minorities in a White majority country (Harper, 2013). Michelle's cultural and socio-political background was different (Asher, 2010). She has been surrounded by Blackness for most of her life and interactions with Whiteness were few. Her friendship with Kayla, in particular, moderated the minoritization experience and provided Esteem Support. Michelle's culture and difference was shared by and through Kayla in a co-constitutive and co-evolving understanding of what it means to be an Afro-Caribbean woman in U.S. postsecondary education. Michelle's experiences, especially those associated with minoritization and race, suggest that researchers should and could adjust their perceptions of "minorities," a term Michelle rejects, when considering diversity projects (Harper, 2013).

Michelle also described financial challenges especially during her first year and received some financial support that helped her through a difficult time. This type of support is captured in Cohen and Wills' Instrumental Support. Not many studies of any methodology have investigated international students' experiences with U.S. institution-based financial aid or financial precariousness similar to the study of college costs for American domestic students by Sara Goldrick-Rab (2016). Such an omission is a problem given the importance of international students' contribution to diversity of thought and cultural perspective in the U.S. postsecondary enterprise. Persistence and retention efforts should include recognition of the possibility of various forms of postenrollment precarity.

Undoubtedly, students must be agentic in creating networks of support but even at the Ph.D. level it would be a mistake to assume that international students in the United States intuitively know how to do this well. Michelle accessed counseling services, and therefore Informational Support at her institution, when she recognized that she was experiencing mental health challenges. However, were the counselors at her campus knowledgeable about the tension of responsibility and loyalty to the "there and then" even as students navigate the "here and now" in U.S. higher education (Mitchell et al., 2007; Waldinger, 2004, 2008)?

As predicted by Cohen and Wills' (1985) Social Companionship category, Michelle's friendships buffered feelings of isolation. However, Michelle's preference to socialize with Black students presents a numerical challenge at PWIs where Black

students frequently report being the only Black student in classes (Esping, 2010; Harper, 2013; Strayhorn, 2008). Student programming should be designed to teach students how to traverse cultural divides. Transnational friendships (Bilecen, 2014; Pachucki & Breiger, 2010) forged across racial boundaries can provide support during times of distress and isolation before academic downward spirals occur.

Finally, aligning with literature (Ali & Kohun, 2006; Hawlery, 2003; Lovitts, 2001) Michelle's academic progression stood in jeopardy because of several incomplete and failing grades at the conclusion of this study. Her capacity to persist and eventually graduate came into question. Yet, she was a very able student as evidenced by grades in coursework prior to the onset of health symptoms (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Schnurr & Green, 2004; Thoits, 2010). The ability/capability disjuncture should alert stakeholders that stressors have an adverse influence on student progress.

CONCLUSION

In this study, I have explored the groundwork for a larger, mixed-methods study on female English-speaking Afro-Caribbean students and the connection between their socio-cultural and psychological adjustment patterns and achievement outcomes in U.S. postsecondary education. Stress-related factors associated with adjustment to university life, academic expectations, and the temporary (for some) minoritization of status in U.S. society led Michelle to consider attrition. To fully support international students, particularly female English-speaking Afro-Caribbean students, scholars must scrutinize the oppressive systems that envelop these students, who are already tackling demanding doctoral programs. In particular, I suggest studying tuition and fees, financial aid processes, as well as food and housing insecurity through an international student lens. Research on female English-speaking Afro-Caribbean students who successfully navigate contradictory paradigms of being both insiders and outsiders of privileged systems can inform institutional decision-making that might lead to increased student retention, graduation, and successful transfer into the marketplace not only for current but for future collegians as well. Such studies would be important contributions to the corpus of literature on student development, network theory, resilience, and perseverance.

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Demographic Correlates of Acculturation and Sociocultural Adaptation: Comparing International and Domestic Students

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between international and domestic students' demographic factors on acculturation and sociocultural adaptation. It also examined the extent to which cultural values, uncertainty avoidance (UA) and power distance (PD), might explain two types of sociocultural adaptation: social interaction and localizing. A sample of 207 international and 173 domestic students from a northern California university completed a self-report survey. As expected, international students had higher sociocultural adaptation than U.S. students, but this difference did not vary by marital status or length of stay. Also, women who came from high UA and large PD countries (vs. low UA and high PD countries) had greater social interaction adaptation. These findings demonstrate that students' cultural backgrounds play an important role in their adaptation. This is an important finding as it signals that counselors in higher education institutes might need to collaborate with academic staff to help international students adjust. Female students from high UA and large PD countries may be especially in need of assistance to cope with sociocultural adaptation. Additional implications and future research needs are discussed.

Keywords: acculturation, counseling, international students, sociocultural adaptation

INTRODUCTION

According to the 2018 Institute of International Education's (IIE) annual report, international students constituted 5.5% (nearly 1.1 million students) of the total U.S.

higher education population. Although international students come from different cultural backgrounds, they experience similar adjustment problems and they experience them more than their domestic peers, who may also be adjusting to a new higher education setting (Duru & Poyrazli, 2011). According to Tummala-Narra and Claudius (2013), international students face challenges including problems with immigration status, coping with new foods and customs, limited English proficiency, and separation from their families and friends. These challenges constitute acculturation stressors of adjusting to a new culture (Yakunina, Weigold, & Weigold, 2013).

Acculturation refers to a process of cultural changes due to contact with others (Berry, 1997). Healthy acculturation is evidenced in making new friends in the host environment and engaging with the host culture. Acculturation problems are evidenced by loneliness, lack of confidence in English, lack of contact with the host culture, lack of social support, and stress-related illnesses (Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker, & Al-Timimi, 2004; Ward & Searle, 1991). These problems also signify sociocultural adaptation problems (Constantine, Okazaki, & Utsey, 2004; Duru & Poyrazli, 2007; Wilton & Constantine, 2003; Wu & Mak, 2012). Sociocultural adaptation refers to "how well an acculturating individual is able to manage daily life in the new cultural context" (Berry, 2005, p. 709).

Although there is considerable research on sociocultural adaptation (e.g., Berry, 1997; Ward & Kennedy, 1994; Ward & Searle, 1991) among international students and sojourners, there is minimal research identifying demographic correlates of self-identified international students' sociocultural adaptation in the United States (exceptions include Duru & Poyrazli, 2007; Mokounkolo & Taillandeir-Schmitt, 2008; Polek, Berge, & Van Oudenhoven, 2008; Wilton & Constantine, 2003). Examples of demographics that have been studied in relation to immigrant and international student acculturation include age, sex, length of residence, and education (Duru & Poyrazli, 2007; Polek, Berge, & Van Oudenhoven, 2008; Ponterotto et al., 2001; Wilton & Constantine, 2003). Additionally, studies that look at college students' acculturation (e.g., Ponterotto et al., 2001; Wilton & Constantine, 2003) have tended to focus only on internationals and have not considered whether acculturation for domestics might be different (Ponterotto et al., 2001's, study, however focused on self-identified Greek Americans and Italian Americans). Fritz, Chin, and DeMarinis (2008) found that internationals compared with domestics had more difficulties on social issues and being apart from family, but the existing literature has generally not paid great attention to domestics. Therefore, this study examines the extent to which self-identified international students' (here on out referred to as "internationals") demographic factors relate to acculturation, specifically their identity with the host culture and their level of sociocultural adaptation in the United States. These relationships are also compared with a sample of self-identified domestic U.S. students (here on out referred to as "domestics"), that is, students who indicate that they were born and raised in the United States or identify themselves as American by nationality.

College students, whether domestic or international, likely experience sociocultural adaptation during their transitions to college life. Some adjust to increased independence to fulfill academic needs, whereas others adjust to the

experience of separating from their families and to their new social environment for the first time. Moreover, internationals deal with language barriers, potentially less social support, and all other aspects of living in a new culture (Duru & Poyrazli, 2007; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Acculturation research has tended to focus on a person's identity to both host and home country, and only internationals can report on both host and home country; domestics can only report on home country. It is important, therefore, to increase understanding on how both internationals and domestics adapt to a new environment and demographic factors related to this process. To be able to compare internationals and domestics, we focus on how students identify with the host culture, in this case the U.S. culture. It is important to compare self-identified domestics and internationals in terms of demographic variables and their level of identification with U.S. culture in order to avoid erroneous conclusions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Acculturation

The acculturation process includes two primary dimensions, (a) maintenance of original cultural identity and (b) maintenance of relations with other groups (Ward & Kennedy, 1994). Within these two dimensions are four categories or acculturation strategies: integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). Integration refers to maintaining normative practices and attitudes from one's native culture while concurrently adopting normative practices and attitudes from one's host culture. With the separation strategy, individuals avoid involvement with people in the new culture, but maintain relationships with people from their original culture. Assimilation refers to a preference to interact with the larger society, accompanied by little interest in maintaining connections with the original culture. Finally, in marginalization, individuals neither seek to maintain their original culture nor interact with the new society (Berry, 1997).

Several factors have been found to influence acculturation strategies. They include demographics, such as sex, length of residence, education, ethnic identity, values, public or private life domain, communication, participation in host culture, food choices, desire for children, and availability of co-ethnics (Berry, 1997; Krishnan & Berry, 1992).

Sociocultural Adaptation

People who have difficulty adapting to their host environment often experience acculturation problems (Berry, 2005). Levels of sociocultural adaptation differ across individuals and likely due to differences in individuals' psychological characteristics, attitudes of the dominant group, attitudes of their own cultural group, acculturation strategy, and demographic factors (Castillo, Zahn, & Cano, 2012). Searle and Ward (1990) developed the sociocultural adaptation scale (SCAS) to assesses respondents' feelings about how they fit in with the host culture and with their life in the host culture. In order to compare sociocultural adaptation between self-identified internationals and domestics, only items related to adapting to social interactions and

the local culture (referred to as "localizing") were retained. Thus, the study compares internationals and domestics on their levels of social interactions and localizing.

Hypotheses

Cultural Exposure and Biographic Data

The few studies that compare international and domestic students on sociocultural adaptation have shown that internationals have a tendency to experience more psychological and adjustment problems than domestic students (Poyrazli et al., 2004; Yeh & Inose, 2003). On the basis of the above findings, the first hypothesis is a general one to confirm prior results.

> **Hypothesis 1a:** Internationals will have more sociocultural adaptation difficulty than domestics.

> **Hypothesis 1b:** Internationals will identify less with the host culture than domestics.

Parental Residence

There is little research on the effects of parental residence on student adjustment, but Kagan and Cohen's (1990) work suggests a possible connection. Association with the host culture and divergence from one's own ethnic community helps individuals adjust to a host culture, and studies of first, second, and third generation ethnic groups usually support this idea (Kagan & Cohen, 1990). Although no studies have directly examined the extent to which a person's caregiver is acculturated into U.S. culture, it is likely that caregivers who were not born in the host culture are less able to support the child's acculturation into the host culture. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

> **Hypothesis 2:** For either internationals or domestics, caregivers who have lived in the United States at some point in their lives (i.e., first, second, or third generation U.S.-born or immigrant to the United States) will have greater identification with the host culture (an indicator of integration or assimilation) and less sociocultural adaptation difficulty than students whose caregivers never immigrated to the USA (i.e., never lived in the USA).

Length of Stay

Length of stay is another demographic factor that may be related to acculturation and sociocultural adaptation difficulty. Wilton and Constantine (2003) found that Latin American and Asian students reported lower levels of distress the longer they resided in the USA. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

> **Hypothesis 3:** Internationals' length of stay in the USA will negatively relate to sociocultural adaptation difficulty and positively relate to identification with the host culture. The more time the internationals live in

the USA, the greater their identity with the host culture and the less sociocultural adaptation difficulty.

Marital Status

Marital status is another potential correlate of sociocultural adaptation difficulty. Among students, previous research offers mixed findings. In one, Asian students found that social support negatively correlated with sociocultural adaptation difficulty and that married students reported higher levels of social support than single students (Poyrazli et al., 2004). Thus, married students might have less sociocultural adaptation difficulty than single students. However, in another study, married students reported higher levels of sociocultural adaptation difficulty (Duru & Poyrazli, 2007). Despite the equivocal results and given that literature on spousal or partner support shows ameliorative effects, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4: Married internationals will have lower mean scores on sociocultural adaptation difficulty and greater identification with the host culture than single internationals.

Role of Sex

Some studies comparing male and female internationals did not find any differences in terms of acculturation or sociocultural adaptation (Duru & Poyrazli, 2007; Yeh & Inose, 2003). However, Cakir and Guneri (2011) found that Turkish female (compared to male) immigrants to the United Kingdom or USA did not have positive acculturation (i.e., they did not identify with the host culture). This study seeks to add incremental findings regarding female (vs. male) internationals', as well as domestics' (for which there is no research), sociocultural adaptation difficulty, which could serve as a foundation for further studies of international students in comparison to immigrants from the same countries or domestic students.

Research Question 1: Do international and domestic female students differ from international and domestic male students on sociocultural adaptation difficulty?

Cultural Differences

When internationals enter a new culture, they could experience uncertainty about the culture, which could create anxiety. For example, Yeh and Inose (2003) found that compared with students from Asia, Africa, and Central America, students from Europe were significantly less likely to experience acculturative distress. According to Hofstede (2001), every society reinforces its own ways to adapt to uncertainty. Uncertainty avoidance (UA), that is, a tendency to escape from ambiguous situations (Hofstede, 2001), is one type of (culture-level) adaptation. Different cultures reinforce different ways to react to ambiguous situations. Hofstede defined low UA cultures as those where people are less resistant to change, have lower levels of anxiety and strain, and have greater subjective well-being than people in high UA

cultures. Cultures rated high on UA encourage certainty in social and institutional processes in order to enable individuals to know how to behave in various situations (Hofstede, 2001). On Hofstede's (2001) scale of 0 to 100, a low score means that the people in the country are more comfortable with ambiguity, more likely to take risks, and less dependent on structured rules. Countries with high scores on UA reinforce stability, structured rules, and its people are less comfortable taking risks (Hofstede, 2001).

Power distance (PD) is another salient cultural value that evaluates the degree to which less powerful members in a society accept and expect power to be spread unequally (Hofstede, 2001). Low PD cultures emphasize equality and openness between boss and subordinate, whereas high PD cultures emphasize hierarchy, power, and wealth (Hofstede, 2001). In countries where men and women are not equal and rules for interacting with others are strict, women are less likely to be independent decision-makers (Mann et al., 1998) and, if alone in a host culture, are likely to experience a great deal of sociocultural adaptation difficulty (Lee & Padilla, 2014). However, there is little research on this topic; therefore, we pose the following question:

> **Research Question 2:** Do female internationals differ on sociocultural adaptation as a function of their countries' rankings on UA and PD cultural values?

METHODS

Procedures

This study used archival data obtained from the second author. Surveys were distributed directly to undergraduate and graduate domestics and internationals in a northern California university classroom setting and also via the U.S. Postal Service to international students for whom the International Students Services office had addresses. In the domestics' survey, participants compared their experiences and behaviors with other people from the USA whereas in the internationals' survey, participants compared their experiences and behaviors with other people from their home country and also with people from the USA.

Participants

The archival dataset used for this study included 406 students. Data for 26 participants were discarded because the participants completed less than two-thirds of the survey. The final dataset included 380 students: 173 domestics and 207 internationals. Among the domestics, 39.4% were male, and 60.6% were female. Among internationals, 45.1% were male, and 54.9% were female. The length of internationals' current stay in the USA ranged from less than a year to 23 years (M = 4.33, SD = 3.37). The majority of domestics were single (90.17%), and 4.04% were married, remarried, or living with a partner. Among internationals, 81.46% were single, and 16.10% were married, remarried, or living with a partner.

Most (60.5%) internationals were born in East Asia/Pacific Islands, 16.6% were born in West Asia, 10.2% were born in Europe, and 6.3% were born in Latin America/Caribbean. Furthermore, the majority (85.4%) of students who completed the domestic survey were born in the USA; 10.5% were born in East Asia/Pacific Islands. Students who were born outside of the USA but completed the domestic survey did so because they self-identified as U.S. students.

Internationals' and domestics' caregivers' immigration status (i.e., the number of generations in the USA) were also gathered. Caregiver refers to the primary person who raised and took care of the study participant. Typically, the caregivers are the parents. Among domestics, 43.3% of primary and 42.1% of secondary (meaning the 2nd most relevant person who raised the participant) caregivers are immigrants to the USA. For domestics, 29.2% of primary caregivers are third generation U.S. born, 15.2% are second generation U.S. born, and 12.3% are first generation U.S. born. Among the secondary caregivers of domestics, 37.2% are third generation, 7.6% are second generation, and 13.1% are first generation U.S. born.

Among internationals, the majority of students' caregivers had never immigrated to the USA; however, at least 12% of the internationals' caregivers had immigrated to the USA. Specifically, among the persons perceived as primary caregivers, 11.3% were immigrants to the USA, 1.0% were first generation U.S.-born, and only 0.5% were third generation U.S.-born. None of the internationals had second generation U.S.-born primary caregivers. Among secondary caregivers, 11.2% were immigrants to the USA, and only 0.6% were third generation U.S.-born. None of the internationals' secondary caregivers were first or second generation U.S.-born.

Measures

Acculturation Index

The Acculturation Index (AI) contains 21 cognitive and behavioral items related to current life (e.g., language, self-identity, cultural activities, clothing, and recreational activities; Ward & Kennedy, 1994). When responding to each of the 21 items, internationals rated the similarity of cultural experiences to people from their home country and to people from the USA, whereas domestics provided similarity ratings to people from the USA. Participants evaluated their current lifestyle and then rated their agreement on a 7-point scale from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). Higher mean scores represented stronger identification with the home and/or host country. The co-national identification (i.e., identifying with one's home country) mean item score for internationals was 4.70 (*SD* = 0.87), host-national identification (i.e., identifying with one's host country) mean item score for internationals was 4.13 (*SD* = 0.90), and the mean item score for co-national identification among domestics, indicating identification with home country, was 4.34 (*SD* = 0.71). Internal consistency coefficients were strong. Among internationals, $\alpha = .91$ for co- (home)-national identification and $\alpha = .89$ for host-national identification. For domestics, $\alpha = .86$ on identification with the USA.

Sociocultural Adaptation

The SCAS (Ward & Kennedy, 1999) attempts to tap into intercultural competence and, per the originators of the measure, contains anywhere from 10 to 41 items reflecting behavioral and cognitive aspects of adaptation. It "is a flexible instrument and can be easily modified according to the characteristics of the ….sample" (Ward & Kennedy, 1999, p. 662). A 40-item measure of SCAS was included in the survey completed by the current sample population (not included is "living with your host family," as the item was not relevant to the international student population at the university). Most of the 40 items attended specifically to adaptation factors of foreign nationals, rather than locals. For example, "adapting to local etiquette," "getting used to the pace of life," "Getting used to the local foods," and "using the transportation system" were not clearly relevant for a comparison with domestic students of a primarily commuter university (i.e., a university to which most students drive from their homes and do not live on campus). The scale measures the extent to which participants feel they fit in with U.S. culture. On a 5-point scale, ranging from *no difficulty* (1) to *extreme difficulty* (5), participants evaluated the amount of difficulty with behavioral and cognitive adjustment to each of 40 life factors. Higher mean item scores represent more sociocultural adaptation difficulty, and lower mean scores represent less difficulty, indicative of greater adjustment.

Given the aim of this study was, in part, to compare sociocultural adaptation between domestic and international students, the authors *a priori* identified items from the 40-item measure that appeared to be potentially relevant to both samples. This process resulted in 19 items that were then subjected to an exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Five items[1] did not load on to any factor. After a 14-item EFA six additional items[2] were omitted because they did not clearly load on to the two expected factors related to social interactions and local adjustment (or localizing). Social interaction refers to the process by which we act and react to those around us and includes four items that are related to social situations, including making friends, making yourself understood, going to social events/gatherings/functions, or talking about yourself with others. Factor loadings for the four items on social interaction ranged from .72 to .78 among internationals and .71 and .80 among domestics. The internal consistency for social interaction was .74 for internationals and .75 for domestics in the current sample. Localizing refers to adjusting to a particular area and includes four items, including understanding locals' world view, taking local perspective on the culture, understanding the local value system, and seeing things from the locals' point of view. Factor loadings for the four items on localizing ranged from .84 to .89 among internationals and .81 and .92 among domestics. The internal

[1] The items included: "dealing with foreign staff at the university," "understanding the local accent/language," "finding your way around," "being able to see two sides of an intercultural issue," and "dealing with unsatisfactory service."
[2] The items included: "following rules and regulations," "dealing with people in authority," "adapting to local accommodation," "communicating with people of a different ethnic group," "understanding jokes and humor," and "dealing with someone who is unpleasant/angry/ aggressive."

consistency of localizing was $\alpha = .88$ for internationals and $\alpha = .89$ for domestics in the current sample.

Uncertainty Avoidance and Power Distance

In order to address the second research question whether sociocultural adaptation difficulty varies by countries' rankings on UA and PD culture values, we categorized internationals' home countries as high, medium, or low on UA and PD based on Hofstede's (2001) rankings and website (https://www.hofstede-insights.com/) rankings of countries. To have adequate cell sizes, we created three clusters consisting of low UA and high PD cultures (China, Vietnam, India, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, and Kenya), high UA and medium PD cultures (Iran, Thailand, Taiwan, and Pakistan), and high UA and high PD cultures (Argentina, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Colombia, Greece, Hungary, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Burma, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, and Turkey).

Data Analysis

Independent samples two-tailed *t* test and Pearson correlation were used to test Hypotheses 1 to 4. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for the research questions. In order to address Research Question 2, we used a one-way ANOVA to test for differences among the three clusters: low UA and high PD, high UA and medium PD, and high UA and high PD on social interaction difficulty and localizing difficulty**.**

RESULTS

Cultural Exposure and Biographic Data

Hypothesis 1a stated that internationals will have more sociocultural adaptation difficulty than domestics. An independent samples *t* test supported the hypothesis, $t(377) = -3.55$, $p < .05$; $t(376) = -2.48$, $p < .05$. Internationals ($n = 206$) had significantly more difficulty than domestics ($n = 194$) on both social interaction ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 0.82$ versus $M = 1.94$, $SD = 0.75$) and localizing ($M = 2.01$, $SD = 0.85$ versus $M = 1.79$, $SD = 0.82$) measures. Hypothesis 1b stated that internationals will identify less with the host culture (U.S. culture) than domestics will. An independent samples *t* test, however, yielded no significant difference between internationals ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.67$) and domestics ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.71$), $t(373) = -0.95$, *ns*.

Parental Residence

Hypothesis 2 stated that students who self-identify as either international or domestic and for whom one or both caregivers are first, second, or third generation U.S.-born or immigrants to the USA will (a) identify more with the host country (i.e., the USA) and (b) have less sociocultural adaptation difficulty than students whose caregivers never immigrated to the USA. Because in this sample, all caregivers of students who identify as domestic were living in the USA, this hypothesis could be

tested only for the internationals. Hypothesis 2 was partially supported. Internationals whose first primary caregivers were immigrants to the USA (n = 24; M = 4.84, SD = 0.81) reported greater identification with the USA than internationals whose first primary caregivers never immigrated (n = 168; M = 4.35, SD = 0.64; t(190) =3.33, p < .05). Identification with the USA did not differ between internationals whose second primary caregivers were immigrants to the USA (n = 20; M = 4.59, SD = 0.67) and internationals whose second primary caregivers never immigrated to the host country (n = 147; M = 4.37, SD = 0.66, t(165) = 1.35, *ns*.

The second part of the hypothesis, which stated that internationals whose caregivers are first, second, or third generation U.S.-born and immigrants to the USA, will have less sociocultural adaptation difficulty than students' whose caregivers never immigrated, was not supported. The means are in the predicted direction, with internationals whose first caregiver was an immigrant to the USA, (n = 25; M = 2.12, SD = 0.92) having less social interaction difficulty than those whose first caregiver never immigrated to the USA (n = 170; M = 2.22, SD = 0.80), t(193) = −0.58, *ns*, but the difference was not significant. Also, internationals whose second caregiver was an immigrant to the USA (n = 20; M = 2.21, SD = 0.97) did not differ on social interaction from internationals whose second caregiver was never an immigrant (n = 149; M = 2.17, SD = 0.77), t(167) = 0.24, *ns*.

Likewise, localizing difficulty did not differ between internationals whose first primary caregiver was an immigrant to the USA (n = 25; M = 2.00, SD = 1.02) and international students whose first primary caregiver never immigrated (n = 169; M = 1.99, SD = 0.82), t(192) = 0.04, *ns*. Localizing difficulty also did not differ significantly between internationals whose second primary caregiver was an immigrant to the USA (n = 20; M = 1.87, SD = 0.98) and those whose second primary caregiver never immigrated (n = 148; M = 2.00, SD = 0.84), t(166) = −0.61, *ns*.

Length of Stay

Hypothesis 3 stated that internationals' length of stay in the USA will negatively relate to sociocultural adaptation difficulty. It was expected that the more time students lived in the USA, the more they would have identified with the country and the less social interaction and localizing difficulty they would have reported. Pearson correlation analyses did not reveal a significant correlation between length of stay and sociocultural adaptation difficulty (see Table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations Among Study Variables for International Students *(n* = 207)

Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1. Length of stay(months)	51.97	40.42	—			
2. Social interaction	2.23	0.82	−.01	.**74**		
3. Localizing	2.01	0.85	−.12	.43*	.**88**	
4. Host country identity	4.41	0.67	.07	−.21*	−.32*	.**91**

Note. $p^* < .05$. Coefficients in bold represent Cronbach's alpha (α) internal consistency coefficients.

Although not hypothesized, host country identity negatively correlated with social interaction and localizing difficulty. Furthermore, localizing and social interaction difficulty positively correlated with each other.

Marital Status

Hypothesis 4, that married internationals will demonstrate less sociocultural adaptation difficulty and greater identification with the host culture than single internationals, was not supported. Married internationals (n = 33; M = 2.20, SD = 0.78; M = 2.05, SD = 0.77) did not differ significantly from single internationals (n = 167; M = 2.22, SD = 0.82; M = 1.99, SD = 0.86) on either social interaction and localizing difficulty, respectively, $t(198) = 0.14$; $t(197) = -0.31$, *ns*. Also, married internationals (M = 4.35, SD = 0.65) did not differ significantly from single internationals (M = 4.43, SD = 0.69) on identification with the host culture, $t(194) = 0.60$, *ns*. A post hoc power analysis shows that the effect sizes (Hedge's g) of .025 and .071 (on localizing and social interaction, respectively) are trivial. Observed power of 3.4% and 5.9%, respectively, (at $p < .05$) indicates very low likelihood of Type I error.

Role of Sex

The first research question indicated if self-identified female internationals and domestics differ from male internationals and domestics on sociocultural adaptation difficulty. Two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine main effects for sex (male or female) and student type (international or domestic) on sociocultural adaptation. Significant main effects emerged for both sex $F(1,370) = 6.60$, $p < .05$ and student type $F(1, 370) = 6.66$, $p < .05$ on social interaction difficulty. Male students had higher social interaction difficulty than female students. Internationals had higher mean scores on both social interaction and localizing difficulty than did domestics (see Table 2). The interaction between sex and student type was not significant on either sociocultural adaptation component.

Table 2: Analysis of Variance for Two Types of Sociocultural Adaptation Difficulty

Source of variation	*SS*	*Df*	*MS*	*F*	ω^2
Social interaction difficulty					
Main effects					
Sex (a)	3.99	1	3.99	6.59*	.02
Student type (b)	6.66	1	6.66	10.99*	.03
a × b	1.22	1	1.22	2.01	.00
Residual	224.36	370	0.61		
Total	1882.48	374			
Localizing Difficulty					

Main effects					
Sex (a)	0.63	1	0.63	0.89	.00
Student type (b)	3.60	1	3.60	5.13*	.01
a × b	0.37	1	0.37	.52	.00
Residual	259.53	369	0.70		
Total	1633.37	373			

*$p < .05$

Cultural Differences

Research Question 2 asked if female internationals' sociocultural adaptation differs due to their home countries' scores on UA and PD. A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect for countries' UA/PD category on social interaction difficulty ($F[2, 100] = 3.21$, $p < .05$; see Table 3). A Bonferroni *post hoc* test revealed that social interaction difficulty was significantly lower for the low UA high PD cluster ($M = 1.95$, $SD = 0.61$) than for the high UA high PD cluster ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 0.84$, $p < .05$). Mean scores on localizing did not differ across culture clusters, $F(2, 99) = 0.41$, *ns*.

Table 3: Female International Students' Mean Scores on Sociocultural Adaptation Difficulty Across Three Cultural Clusters

	Sociocultural adaptation difficulty		
Variables	HUAHPD	HUAMPD	LUAHPD
Social Interaction			
M	2.41[a]	2.26	1.95[a]
SD	0.84	0.92	0.61
n	40	28	35
Localizing			
M	2.11	1.95	1.97
SD	0.89	0.71	0.79
n	40	28	34

Note. HUAHPD = High Uncertainty Avoidance High Power Distance; HUAMPD = High Uncertainty Avoidance Medium Power Distance; LUAHPD = Low Uncertainty Avoidance High Power Distance. [a]The shared superscript denotes a significant difference between the means, $p < .05$.

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which demographic factors, including sex, length of stay, marital status, and parental background, relate to internationals' acculturation and sociocultural adaptation to the USA. These relationships were compared to a sample of domestics in order to demonstrate that internationals' sociocultural adaptation difficulty is, in fact, due to being an international student and not merely because the person is a student. Until now, most researchers (e.g., Duru & Poyrazli, 2007; Yeh & Inose, 2003) have studied

internationals without comparing their responses to those of domestics. One study that compared internationals and permanent U.S. resident students did not find any significant differences in terms of their state of mood and irritability; however, internationals found it harder to acculturate than domestics (Fritz et al., 2008).

Sociocultural Adaptation, Acculturation, and Demographic Factors

Cultural Exposure and Biographic Data

It was expected that internationals in the USA would have more sociocultural adaptation difficulty and less identification with the host culture compared with their U.S. domestic counterparts. Hypothesis 1 was partially supported; internationals had more sociocultural adaptation difficulty than domestics, as measured in terms of social interaction and localizing. This result supports previous findings (Duru & Poyrazli, 2007; Poyrazli et al., 2004; Yeh & Inose, 2003) asserting that internationals in the USA have a greater tendency than domestics to experience psychological and adjustment problems. However, there were no differences between internationals and domestics in terms of identification with the host culture. Internationals are likely to be familiar with the U.S. culture before their arrival. Once in the host country, they may find that making cognitive and behavioral changes to align with U.S. culture is desirable and may "adopt" these attributes rather easily. Thus, they may report similar levels of identification with the USA on the Acculturation Index. However, making these changes may be both difficult and stressful. The items retained from the SCAS reflect both personal and cultural challenges. Going to social events and making friends in a new culture may be more difficult and challenge internationals at a deeper level than reporting an "identification" with a new culture. Fritz et al. (2008) found that Asian students had a harder time making new friends than European or U.S. students. Making friends is not easy, and it could be harder for people from some cultures than other cultures.

Parental Residence

It was expected that self-identified internationals' and domestics' caregivers who are first, second, and third generation U.S.-born and immigrants to the USA will have greater host national identification and less social interaction and localizing difficulty than students' whose caregivers never immigrated to the USA. In this analysis domestics' data could not be included because their parents were all U.S.-born or immigrated to the USA. For this reason, only internationals' data were used, and the hypothesis was partly supported. Internationals whose primary caregivers were immigrants to (or born in) the USA had greater host national identification than those whose caregivers never immigrated to the USA. This result supports previous findings that found internationals who are English speaking at home had greater host national identification than students with non-English speaking parents at home because speaking the host language facilitates and contributes to cultural adjustment such as acculturation (Kagan & Cohen, 1990). Although it is not definitively known if the students who are more self-identified with the host culture spoke English at

home, the mere connection with the USA clearly played a role in their identification. In addition, the study revealed that primary caregivers influence students' identification with the host culture, but secondary caregivers do not. Only the primary caregiver's status made a difference in students' identification.

Parental residence did not affect students' sociocultural adaptation, on either social interaction or localizing dimensions. While caregiver residence related to student acculturation/identification, different acculturation strategies did not translate to differences in sociocultural adaptation. Sociocultural adaptation difficulty is likely a result of more factors than simply one's degree of "identification" with the host culture.

Length of Stay

It was expected that internationals' length of stay in the USA would negatively relate to sociocultural adaptation difficulty and positively with host country identification. The more time the student had lived in the USA, the more they were expected to identify with it and the less sociocultural adaptation difficulty they would experience. However, like Ward and Searle (1991), as well as Zhao (2010) and Wilson (2011), no significant relationship was found between length of stay and either identification with the host culture or sociocultural adaptation. These results, therefore, do not support other findings (e.g., Kuo & Roysircar, 2004; Wilton & Constantine, 2003) that internationals report lower levels of distress if they resided in the USA for longer periods. These equivocal results may be due to certain cultural and individual factors combining in ways that we have not detected yet, which may variably affect sociocultural adaptation for some internationals and not others, regardless of length of stay. Perhaps additional (unmeasured) factors are influencing how and whether length of stay affects adaptation and sociocultural adaptation.

Marital Status

The fourth hypothesis, that married internationals would report less sociocultural adaptation difficulty and greater identification with the host culture than single internationals, was not supported. Married and single internationals did not differ on identification with the host culture, localizing, and social interaction difficulty. Lack of support for the hypothesis is unlikely due to sample size (n_{single} =167 vs. $n_{married}$ = 33) of internationals in the study. Thus, per the effect sizes and power analyses, even a reasonably larger sample size for the two groups would unlikely yield significant differences. It may be concluded, therefore, that sociocultural adaptation and host-culture identification does not differ based on marital status. Thus, neither findings indicating that married students report higher levels of sociocultural adaptation difficulty (Duru & Poyrazli, 2007) nor the suggestion that married students experience more stress due to family obligations (Yellig, 2010) were supported. Mohd-Yusoff (2010) did not find significant differences on sociocultural adaptation by marital status among international undergraduate students, surmising that students might have social support from their families, friends, and university personnel. Also, Alshammari (2012) and Thangiah (2010) did not find any relations between marital

status and sociocultural adaptation. Perhaps marriage in itself can be a stressor for some and a support resource for others.

Role of Sex

Experiencing sociocultural adaptation difficulty is a normal process for both female and male students. Two research questions were posed in this study: (1) How do self-identified international and domestic male and female students compare on sociocultural adaptation? (2) Do female internationals differ on sociocultural adaptation as a function of their countries' rankings on UA and PD cultural values? The answer to the first research question is that male and female students, whether domestic or international, did not differ on sociocultural adaptation. However, when combining internationals and domestics, male students had greater social interaction difficulty than female students. This result corroborates previous research findings that there is a difference between male and female students, in general, on sociocultural adaptation (Crockett et al., 2007; Lee & Padilla, 2014). One possible explanation is that women, whether international or domestic, may have better coping skills and may be more open to seeking support than men (Ye, 2006).

The analysis of responses to the second research question suggests that female internationals from cultures with high UA and large PD, such as Argentina, Japan, and South Korea, had greater social interaction difficulty than female internationals from cultures that were low on UA value and high on PD value, such as China, Vietnam, and India. People from high UA cultures tend to see difference as dangerous (Hofstede, 2001), so the current results, wherein the women from high UA cultures had greater social interaction difficulty than others, is consistent with Hofstede's (2001) assertions. Internationals from high UA cultures tend to be less comfortable taking risks, and they usually desire more stability. In contrast, people in cultures with low UA value tend to be more comfortable with ambiguity and like to take risks. This description of UA cultures might explain why internationals who are coming from China, Vietnam, and India have less sociocultural adaptation difficulty than their counterparts. People from some cultures or national groups might be more adaptable to a new culture than others because they have cultural knowledge and intercultural skills (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). However, caution is warranted in generalizing these cultural characteristics to forecast sociocultural adaptation difficulty because the sample in the current study consisted of individuals who came from a fewer array of low UA/high PD countries (i.e., 35 people from seven countries) than high UA/high PD countries (40 people from 17 countries).

Implications of Findings

The present study has important implications for personnel in higher education, such as faculty, advisers, and counselors. That internationals reported more sociocultural adaptation difficulty than their domestic counterparts suggest they may need more support from the institution to cope with the unique stressors. Moreover, internationals' difficulties probably stem from different stressors than do domestics' difficulties. Internationals' unique stressors might include language barriers, cultural

differences, education system, and the physical environment. It is imperative that counselors meeting with students of any cultural background know to expect that different cultural norms, ideas about counseling services, and values held could affect how well interventions intended to mitigate sociocultural difficulties would work out (Olivas & Li, 2006). Research on internationals' psychological needs has shown that they face adjustment difficulties more than their native-born counterparts (Yakushko, Davidson, & Sanford-Martens, 2008). Unfortunately, however, internationals are less likely than domestics to use counseling services (Hyun, Quinn, Madon, & Lustig, 2007; Yakunina & Weigold, 2011), because either internationals are not aware of their need for mental health services (Hyun et al., 2007) or they could experience cultural stigmas for seeing a therapist (Constantine et al., 2004; Hyun et al., 2007).Therefore, college counselors should be prepared to understand the variety of stressors internationals face and their conceptions of therapy in order to help internationals cope with the stressors and perceived stigma of counseling services.

Furthermore, male internationals and domestics reported more social interaction difficulty than female students, which suggests that they might need more help with social situations. This highlights the important role of sex in stress-related social interactions. Having a caregiver who has immigrated to the USA was associated with internationals' identification with the host culture. However, it did not make a difference in terms of sociocultural adaptation. Counselors should be ready to investigate difficulty with sociocultural adaptation whether or not students with caregivers who immigrated to the USA report high levels of identification with the host culture.

Likewise, it is recommended that internationals could use blogging for social support when they are adjusting to a new culture. They can share their experiences and help others to deal with uncertainty and anxiety. According to Nardon, Aten, and Gulanowski (2015), expatriates gain knowledge, new perspectives, and new understanding through blogging, and they feel comforted. Moreover, they suggest that blogging could be an alternative to face-to-face communication to provide social support for adjustment.

Finally, female internationals coming from countries high on UA and high on PD have greater social interaction difficulty than female students from low UA and high PD countries. This result provides a new depth to simply labeling students international or domestic; it provides greater awareness that students' cultural backgrounds play an important role in their adaptation. This cultural nuance is important because it could also explain why internationals' acculturation might differ and why students from some countries might have more difficulty than others. Using this finding, academic staff and counselors can look into how to support internationals who are coming from low versus high UA countries.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has a number of limitations. First, the present dataset is made up of internationals primarily from Asian countries, which means that the conclusions

should be considered tentatively, as more varied representation of cultures are needed to reduce potential bias. Future studies should attempt to survey a larger number of internationals studying in the USA from the Middle East, Africa, South and Central America, and Australia. Further studies also should gather more information about domestics' adaptation process to college or university. Although domestics are staying in the same country, they often leave their homes for a college and still have to adapt to life at a university. Their sociocultural adaptation and adjustment to college life may also be a kind of culture shock that, while not necessarily different at the national level, is different at social and contextual levels.

A second potential constraint is that most of the students in the dataset were single; however, despite this limitation, a power analysis shows that even with an equal number of participants in both categories, differences on sociocultural adaptation among single and married students would not differ. Future research should look more in-depth into the marital life effect, such as marital stressors and marital support on sociocultural adaptation because factors beyond being married itself could be an explanation for mixed results. Third, research to date has yielded equivocal findings regarding the effects of length of stay in the USA on internationals' adaptation patterns. Future research should look into factors that might interact with length of stay, including personal characteristics, such as shyness or assertiveness, and cultural variables, such as UA or PD.

Fourth, the entire sociocultural adaptation measure was not used for the analysis because some items were only relevant to internationals. The eight items retained had good psychometric properties, but it may be beneficial to create a measure *a priori* that aims at assessing both internationals and domestics' sociocultural adaptation, to determine whether it is due to being in a new country or to the situation. Finally, another path for future research may be to employ a longitudinal design that tracks the same study participants over a single year or several years from the time they enter the USA and observe changes that happen over time.

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Portuguese Institutions' Strategies and Challenges to Attract International Students: External Makeover or Internal Transformation?

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ABSTRACT

Public institutions in Portugal have not invested in strategies to attract international students until recently, when the adoption of new legislation and a national strategy for internationalization created more appealing conditions for it. This article aims to study the strategies institutions employ to recruit international students in a country less attractive than the major receiving countries and the main challenges they encounter. The study draws on interviews with top and middle managers in two public universities. The findings identify three types of strategies: institutional branding, revision of admission procedures, and curricular adjustments. The main challenges are the creation of institutional structures with an exclusive remit for international students and the choice of teaching language, despite a prevailing opinion that the Portuguese language should be maintained as a competitive advantage.

Keywords: challenges, institutional strategies, international student recruitment, Portugal, small countries

INTRODUCTION

The geography of international student mobility is in a state of flux, as an increasing number of countries are now actively engaged in the recruitment of international students. This is evident in the diminishing global share of the four key players—the

USA, the UK, Australia, and Canada (Choudaha, Chang, & Kono, 2013)—and in the diversification of mobility destinations (Börjesson, 2017; Brooks & Waters, 2011; França, Alves, & Padilla, 2018). A tendency toward regionalization has also been observed recently (Becker & Kolte, 2012; Kondakci, 2011), as certain countries become regional education hubs, which recruit students from neighboring countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore, or the United Arab Emirates (Cross-Border Education Research Team, 2018). Having improved their higher education offerings, countries that were traditionally sending students abroad (e.g. China, Mexico or South Korea) are now also becoming receiving countries (Becker & Kolte, 2012). In Europe, the big player countries like the UK, France, or Germany are also losing their lion's share of international students. With a declining young population and reduced public funding for higher education, European countries with little incentive and tradition for enrolling international students in the past are taking measures to boost their attractiveness (Cox, 2012; França et al., 2018; Frølich & Stensaker, 2010; Kubiciel-Lodzińska & Ruszczak, 2016; Urbanovič, Wilkins, & Huisman, 2016).

In Portugal, too, the recruitment of full-degree international students is gaining importance for higher education institutions (Guerreiro, 2015). Changes in the environment, on the one hand, and political actions, on the other, have favored this recent priority; these changes include diminishing state funding; declining enrollments and pessimistic demographic projections (Dias, Mendes, Magalhães & Infante, 2013); the prioritization of international recruitment in the recent strategy for the internationalization of Portuguese higher education (Ministry of Regional Development & Ministry of Education, 2014); and the Statute of the International Student, a new piece of legislation from 2014, which allows public institutions to charge higher fees for international students. However, in the European higher education landscape, when compared to Northern European countries, Portugal is less appealing for foreign students because of its less productive and competitive economy and lower spending on higher education and research (Fonseca, Esteves, & Iorio, 2015). Since international student recruitment is a new priority for Portuguese institutions, their activities in this respect are likely to be recent; therefore, research is also lacking into the strategies institutions use to attract and recruit international students. Therefore, this article aims to answer the following research questions: What strategies do Portuguese institutions employ to overcome the lower appeal of the country and to become attractive for international students? What are Portuguese institutions' main challenges for the recruitment of international students?

The article first presents an overview of the main strategies targeted at improving attractiveness and recruitment of foreign students, as reported by the literature. A brief account of Portuguese policies and institutions' activities in the area of international student enrollment then follows. The article continues with the methodology employed in this study, the presentation and discussion of the findings, and the conclusions about institutional strategies and challenges for the recruitment of international students, specifically for Portugal.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategies for the Recruitment of International Students

Several studies have approached international student recruitment from the perspective of marketing and competition in the global arena (Asaad, Melewar, Cohen, & Balmer, 2013; Ross, Grace, & Shao, 2013; Ross, Heaney, & Cooper, 2007; Russell, 2005). In this respect, the need to increase the visibility of the institution by creating a distinctive image has become apparent. Materials such as prospectuses, websites, exhibition stands, stationery, and business cards are important to international students, particularly since they are usually unable to visit the institution before making their choice (Russell, 2005). Branding has thus become an essential means of reaching out to international publics. With the intensification of competition, institutions, including countries that are major players such as the US, have started to adopt more proactive and aggressive marketing campaigns (Choudaha et al., 2013).

The literature identifies a wide range of strategies, from traditional models of attending international recruitment fairs/tours or working with agents (Gök & Gümüş, 2018; James-MacEachern, 2018) to emerging practices (Choudaha et al., 2013). Agents serve as influential intermediaries whose value resides in their knowledge of the local environment and student preferences in the sending countries (Falcone, 2017; James-MacEachern, 2018). They are key players in the 'international student migration industry' (Beech 2018), signaling the commodification of higher education (Hulme, Thomson, Hulme, & Doughty, 2014). For instance, in countries like India or China the agent model is highly entrenched, as students generally resort to them to make their higher education choices (Beech, 2018).

Choudaha et al. (2013) identified three categories of emerging recruitment practices: technology for expanding reach in a cost-effective manner, partnerships for creating pathways and visibility, and research to prioritize efforts and measure return on investment. Regarding technology, various authors have identified online recruitment techniques (Gök & Gümüş, 2018; Yang & Akhtaruzzaman, 2017; Zinn & Johansson, 2015;). A user-friendly website allowing online applications is now enriched by virtual college fairs, web-based presentations, webinars, videos, web-chats, Skype calls, blogs, YouTube channels, etc. Technology allows universities to reduce response time and personalize communication, which meets international students' expectations of a fast turn-around service.

Partnerships are another way of improving an institution's visibility, possibly signaling "a general shift in international recruitment to long-term and interdependent relationship-building strategies" (Choudaha et al., 2013). Partnerships with foreign secondary and higher education institutions, government agencies, or other organizations help institutions to secure a steady flow of international students. Moreover, there are institutions that encourage their academics to engage with prospective international students during their visits abroad, suggesting a greater reliance on academics to drive recruitment (Beech, 2018).

Finally, a research-based approach to recruitment implies the use of data to help focus efforts and to make informed decisions regarding the target audience, rather

than relying on uninformed methods such as generic promotions (Choudaha et al., 2013; Falcone, 2017). Falcone (2017) highlighted the relevance of having in-depth knowledge about the educational systems of the sending countries and having cultural awareness of students' and parents' perspectives and needs. Similarly, Asaad et al. (2013) stressed how important it is for institutions to be responsive to the complex nature of the international environment, which entails market research and information-generating activities such as surveys, focus groups with international students, or participation in international fairs in order to gauge the different needs of potential candidates from different countries. Ross et al. (2007) found a relationship between institutions with greater market focus and institutions with greater percentages of international students. According to these authors, the existence of an international marketing strategy and a marketing department with staff who understand the marketing concept and are able to apply it in a higher education institution to generate a competitive advantage and improve recruitment in the long term.

Besides marketing and branding, international students' interaction with an institution in the early phases (but also later on) is highly crucial for the institution's attraction capacity. Russell (2005) argued that the service students experience—its bureaucracy and complexity—may influence their initial decision to apply for a program. Their satisfaction following enrollment is also important, as it leads to positive word-of-mouth and to students acting as advertisers, which gives the institution a competitive advantage. Engaging alumni can therefore represent a powerful tool to convey a positive image of the institution, as word-of-mouth is perceived as more reliable than official institutional information (Chankseliani & Hessel, 2016; Gök & Gümüş, 2018; James-MacEachern, 2018; Yang & Akhtaruzzaman, 2017).

It therefore appears imperative that institutions should provide international students with the necessary information and support in the early days of interaction. As Ross et al. (2013) argued, international students come across numerous entry barriers, which determine whether they eventually enroll or not. They have to interact with various departments within the institution, but also with government bodies and agencies, thus experiencing a variety of points of contact before they even start their studies. For this reason, it is important that the information that they get from these multiple sources is consistent and supportive (Ross et al., 2013). This requires, however, effective internal organization and sharing of information and collaboration among all staff and departments involved in international student recruitment, as well as less reliance on traditional bureaucratic structures. Such aspects favor a perception of diminished entry barriers which, in turn, can provide competitive advantage over other institutions (Ross et al., 2013).

The recruitment of international students has mostly been researched in the context of English-speaking countries, which are the major receiving countries (França et al., 2018). However, in recent years, researchers from countries with lower shares of international students (but with an ambition to boost their numbers) have also started to pay attention to this aspect (Cox, 2012; Kondakci, 2011; Kubiciel-Lodzinska & Ruszczak, 2016; Mosneaga & Agergaard, 2012; Urbanovič et al., 2016; Wilken & Dahlberg, 2017). According to Urbanovič et al. (2016), small countries

face different challenges in recruiting international students compared to their major counterparts. To begin with, they are late-comers in international recruitment, implying that they lack the worldwide recognition for quality higher education and the "first-mover advantage" of countries like Australia, Canada, the UK, and the US. Moreover, for many countries, limited financial resources and a lack of economies of scale may mean an inability to invest in infrastructure (e.g., accommodation and library facilities), marketing/branding, and human resources. For example, Urbanovič et al. (2016) found that recruiting faculty with good English language skills from overseas was seen as a challenge by Lithuanian institutions because of their inability to pay sufficiently high salaries. Additionally, many students—both domestic and international—also lacked sufficient competency in English, which meant that many programs taught in English operated with small class sizes. Therefore, cultural and language issues can also be significant. The concern with the dominance of English in higher education has been expressed, for example, in Sweden and Denmark (Kuteeva, 2014; Werther, Denver, Jensen, & Mees, 2014). It may thus be difficult for small countries to strike a balance between being international and preserving their national identity (Urbanovič et al., 2016).

As to the concrete strategies employed by institutions in countries with less visibility, these include traditional strategies, but also strategies that are rather creative and based on the aforementioned market research (Chouhada et al., 2013). Among the traditional ones, participation in student fairs and meetings has been noted in institutions from Poland (Kubiciel-Lodzinska & Ruszczak, 2016), Sweden, and Finland (Cox, 2012). New administrative resources and structures to support foreign students—such as staff employed solely to work with these students in Polish institutions (Kubiciel-Lodzinska & Ruszczak, 2016) or the establishment of international services in Finnish institutions (Cox, 2012)—are indicative of the novelty of international student recruitment in some smaller countries. Some institutions in Poland have additionally simplified recruitment procedures and offer help to international students to legalize their stay in the country (Kubiciel-Lodzinska & Ruszczak, 2016).

More creative strategies, such as making use of market research and technology, are also documented in the literature. For example, the prestigious Danish Technical University proactively targets prospective students from European countries where unemployment rates among engineering graduates are high and where hierarchical labor market structures make recognition difficult. This allows them to attract students for whom the Danish labor market might be appealing after graduation (Mosneaga & Agergaard, 2012). Online scholarship competitions, aimed at students in specific countries, or cooperation agreements with companies to give foreign students an entry into the labor market, are examples of more targeted recruitment strategies in Swedish institutions. These latter also resort to scholarship schemes and tuition waivers, while some universities have joined efforts and merged their international recruitment activities (Cox, 2012). Similarly, having the "right degree program" is a powerful pull factor for international students, as was the case of some UK universities that prided themselves in their vocational focus and stressed workplace opportunities (Beech, 2018). A Norwegian institution has found a market niche and developed study programs that are unique in Norway—for example, a new

program in aviation (Frølich & Stensaker, 2010). Taster online programs—meant to give students a flavor of the institution's offerings—have also been used to attract prospective students (Papagiannidis, 2013). Institutions are also resorting to technology (the web and digital media) and to new partnerships (Cox, 2012).

International Students in Portugal

Portugal receives two thirds of its international students from the former Portuguese colonies, in the following descending order: Brazil, Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, Guinea Bissau, and East Timor. Except Brazil, which gained independence in the 19th century, and East Timor in 1999, the other countries became independent in the 1970s, around the time of the Portuguese democratic revolution. After some initial tensions between Portugal and these countries, relations have progressively improved and cooperation intensified. This culminated in the establishment of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (Comunidade de Países de Língua Portuguesa [CPLP]) in 1996. The prevalence of students from Portuguese-speaking countries reflects a shared history, culture, and language and an interest in preserving cultural and political relationships with the CPLP (França et al., 2018). This interest was evident in the scholarships that the Portuguese government offered to students from former Portuguese territories (Veiga, Rosa, & Amaral, 2006). In addition, the insufficient development and capacity of higher education in these countries acted as a push factor for students to seek education in Portugal (França et al., 2018).

Proactive recruitment was not a common practice in Portugal, especially in public institutions. The landmark year for change was 2014. At the time, international students in Portugal amounted to 4.1% of enrollments (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2016). The majority came from Portuguese-speaking countries, with Brazilian students becoming more numerous, while the number of African students was decreasing following the growth of higher education in their home countries (Fonseca et al., 2015). Chinese and Iranian students were on the rise, pointing to Asia as a potentially important source of future enrollments. Several developments awakened policy makers' and institutions' interest in proactively recruiting international students: a demographic decline predicted to reduce severely the number of national candidates (Dias et al., 2013), the economic crisis and the decreasing public funding for higher education (Teixeira, 2012), and the need for institutions to supplement revenues (Sin, Veiga, & Amaral, 2016).

In 2014, a long overdue national strategy for the internationalization of higher education was launched jointly by the Ministries of Regional Development (MADR) and of Education and Science (MEC) (MADR/MEC, 2014), filling a political void in nation-wide orientation of institutional policies and activities in this field. Recruitment of international students represents a main dimension of the strategy, as the ambition is to double their number by 2020. Among the strategy's recommendations, the most relevant ones are the promotion of the country and its institutions; cooperation strategies with specific world regions (beyond CPLP countries); better and comprehensive information provision to potential applicants; streamlining bureaucratic processes for obtaining visas, accommodation, fiscal

numbers, etc., through cooperation with public entities (e.g., Immigration and Border Service, consular units, High Commissariat for Migrations, and local authorities); creating a "green channel" for the admission of international students in order to ease their entry and residence in Portugal; and increasing the provision of education in English.

Also in 2014, the Statute of the International Student (Decree-Law 36/2014) was adopted. Per the Statute, the term "international students" applies to all students from foreign countries, except students from European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA) countries. These latter cannot be charged different tuition fees from national students because of EU law. The Statute defined a new entry regime for international students, different from the admission procedures applicable to home/EU/EEA students. This entry regime facilitates recruitment by giving institutions more flexibility to set the admission criteria for international students. Moreover, the statute has given public institutions the possibility of raising tuition fees for these students, based on the real cost of education. Nonetheless, the Statute maintains a special scholarship program for students coming from the Portuguese-speaking African countries and East Timor in order to preserve the privileged relationship with these countries. However, this program has not yet been implemented (França et al., 2018).

Before the new legal framework, differences were obvious between the motivations and behavior of public and private institutions regarding international student recruitment. Public institutions felt no urge to enroll international students in addition to those already coming from Portuguese-speaking countries with Portuguese government grants, and who were included in the funding formula on an equal foot with national students. Private institutions, in contrast, were highly interested in recruiting international students, as tuition fees contributed to their budget and they had started to experience the loss of national candidates after the turn of the century (Sin et al., 2016, pp. 185–186). However, the Statute of the International Student now validates the profit argument in the case of public institutions, too. Mainardes, Alves, Raposo, and de Souza Domingues (2012) referred to the emergence of a market logic in Portuguese higher education further to financial constraints and growing competitiveness, evidenced, among others, by the desire to attract international students as a source of revenue. Indeed, the president of the Internationalization Commission of the Representative Body of Portuguese Public Universities (CRUP) made a telling remark: "There is a mentality to change and an idea to bear in mind: higher education is exportable" (Assunção, 2017, p. 7). Coordinated by CRUP, 15 public universities have recently joined forces and created the initiative "Universities Portugal" to boost their attractiveness. They also summoned the help of other actors (government, Camões Institute, Portuguese Agency for Foreign Investment and Trade, Tourism of Portugal, embassies, etc.); defined priority target countries (Angola, Brazil, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Luxembourg, Macau, Mozambique, and Peru); secured EU funding; created a brand and a website; are active in social networks (including the Chinese ones); and set a timetable for marketing and promotion in the target countries (Assunção, 2017). The newly created website presents affordable living, inclusive healthcare, and safety as

the advantages of choosing Portugal over other destinations. Polytechnic institutions plan a similar strategy for joint promotion abroad (Mourato, 2016).

Regarding the recruitment strategies of Portuguese institutions, literature is scarce, exposing a large knowledge gap in this area. Intensifying the recruitment of foreign students stands out as a priority in the internationalization strategies of several institutions (Guerreiro, 2015). Having interviewed leaders of 10 institutions about their internationalization strategies, Guerreiro (2015) found some initiatives that were clearly aimed at attracting international students: creation of a "year zero" for the integration of foreign students to allow them to learn Portuguese, courses in other languages (French, Italian, or English), or international marketing campaigns. The former two reveal an intention of widening the net beyond Portuguese-speaking countries. The study also found Asia to be an "appetizing market," but the slowness of visa and residence regulations and the lack of articulation between the Statute of the International Student and the Borders' Service were criticized. Institutional leaders also lamented the financial constraints to implement an international marketing strategy, to employ sufficient and qualified staff, and to provide the necessary support to international students, reminiscent of the challenges identified for small countries (Urbanovič et al., 2016). Language is another challenge: On the one hand, institutions want to exploit the potential of Portuguese as one of the most spoken languages in the world; on the other, they want to promote English as a second language, but both students and teaching staff can be reticent or uncomfortable with learning and teaching in English (Guerreiro, 2015; Pinto & Araújo e Sá, 2018).

Although Guerreiro's study (2015) gives some insights into recruitment strategies and challenges, its focus is broader, on internationalization strategies in general, from the perspective of top institutional leaders. This article concentrates on student recruitment as a specific area of internationalization, eliciting primarily the opinions of middle managers responsible for transposing institutional strategies into practice.

METHODS

This is a small-scale qualitative study based on eight semistructured interviews, conducted in 2017, with institutional representatives in positions of management and decision-making related to international student recruitment in two institutions. Since the study focuses on recruitment strategies and challenges, it was deemed important to gather not only the opinions of top leaders, who are in charge of drafting policies, but also the perceptions of middle managers, who are responsible for the implementation of strategies and whose daily job is to operationalize them. In each institution, all key managers with a role in international student recruitment were interviewed. Besides, the interviews in the second institution did not yield different or new results from those in the first one. Thus, doing more interviews in the same or in other institutions was considered unlikely to add new information, as data saturation appeared to be reached (see Saunders et al., 2018). The converging perceptions of interviewees (Crabtree & Miller, 1992) ensured the trustworthiness of the data collected.

Several procedures were used to ensure the validity and robustness of the research. The inclusion of two different institutions allowed comparing and contrasting different contexts, thus ensuring mutual reinforcement and consistency of the data. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in order to allow meticulous record keeping and repeated revisiting of the data to check emerging themes and to remain true to participants' accounts and consistent and transparent interpretations of the data. Moreover, the different life experiences of the authors ensured counterbalancing perspectives. None of the authors is a former international student in Portugal, but one of them has double nationality (but not from a former Portuguese territory) and has studied abroad in several countries, which enabled a high level of awareness and sensitivity toward issues related to international students. As the data analysis involved the three authors, the emerging themes in the interpretation of the data were reached through consensus during several discussions, which allowed challenging assumptions and reduced possible individual biases. Finally, verbatim descriptions of interviewees' accounts were used to support findings to assists readers to make their own judgments about the validity of the interpretations that were put forward. Although data triangulation was not possible due to the inexistence of other data sources—for instance, institutional documents—the previous procedures ensured the reliability, credibility, and richness of the study.

The interviewees belonged to two public universities in the north of Portugal (four interviews in each; see Table 1). The choice of public institutions is justified by the fact that international student recruitment has become a priority recently and, therefore, these institutions are now taking their first steps in this area, contrary to private institutions, which have long been interested in attracting international students as sources of revenue. For logistical reasons, the choice rested on northern Portugal, specifically on two universities that are different in size and age, in order to see if such institutional characteristics give rise to different approaches and challenges.

Table 1: Interviewed Institutional Representatives

University A	Vice-rector for internationalization
	Vice-rector for academic affairs
	Head of international office
	Head of academic affairs
University B	Internationalization advisor to rector
	Head of international office
	Head of academic affairs
	Head of communication, image, and public relations unit

The interviews (see questions in Appendix), lasting 1 hr on average, were conducted, recorded, and fully transcribed by one of the authors, an experienced qualitative researcher. Data was organized and coded with the help of the software MaxQDA, following a grounded theory method adapted from Strauss and Corbin (1990). The qualitative analysis was carried out by the three authors and involved discussion to reach agreement on interpretations. Analysis involved open coding and

selective coding. During the former, the data from interviews were broken down into coded segments to yield categories. The codes and relationships between categories were constantly cross-checked against the data to ensure consistency. Then, selective coding generated the final categories and the final analytical framework, organized under three major dimensions regarding international student recruitment: recruitment policies/strategies, facilitators/drivers, and challenges. The analysis grid with the dimensions and categories is shown in Table 2. Codes with examples, leading to one category, are presented in Table 3.

Table 2: Dimensions and Categories of Analysis

Dimensions	Categories
Recruitment policies/strategies	Revised admission procedures
	Curricular adjustments
	Institutional branding
Recruitment facilitators/drivers	Previous collaborations/bottom-up initiatives
	Changes in external environment
	Country/institution characteristics
	Demography
	International Student Statute
	Portuguese language
Challenges	Staff competences
	Market research
	Cultural diversity
	Student profile
	Mindset/changing paradigm
	Teaching in English
	Recruitment of international staff
	Financial resources
	Operational structures

Table 3. Example of Coded Segments Leading to the Category Revised Admission Procedures

Segments	Codes	Category
Every year we do something else, we create faster electronic platforms, we abandon paper-based forms, we speed up communication…but it is still work in progress (University A).	Simplification of information	Revised admission procedures
We already recognise the ENEM, the national secondary school leaving exam in Brazil. And we accept the Gaokao or the JAE, which are the exams in China (University A).	Recognition of secondary education diplomas	

Segments	Codes	Category
There were 30 or 50 scholarships for Brazilian students. In fact, these scholarships were a reduction of the international tuition fee, and the university supports the difference (University B).	Fee reduction	
We have created different application timings which allow applicants from certain countries, from the Southern hemisphere, for instance Brazil, to apply when they finish secondary education. It is different from here, they finish in December–January (University B).	Application timings	

FINDINGS

This section starts by presenting the main recruitment policies/strategies and the facilitators/drivers for international student recruitment. It then discusses the key challenges.

Recruitment Policies/Strategies

As the Portuguese context already seemed to anticipate, neither of the two universities has integrated and clearly articulated policies or strategies for the recruitment of international students, according to the interviewees. Several times, interviewees acknowledged the fact that more forward-planning and coordination were necessary, rather than ad hoc measures. The following statement by the internationalization adviser at University B illustrates the need for strategic thinking:

> It is all very new, we have only recently started to look at it with a more proactive attitude and we have to bring in a strategic sense, an idea of the actions we can develop, the creation of mechanisms and instruments to advertise the university, its quality, etc.

In University A, the elaboration of an institutional strategy had also been hindered by the organizational structure, with individual faculties having a high degree of autonomy and different expectations, capacity, and experience of receiving international students. At the same time, however, the recruitment of international students was described as a recent priority, triggered by drivers such as the Statute of the International Student and the financial incentives implied therein, as well as by the diminishing population of national students (Dias et al., 2013). Thus, the two institutions were in the process of organizing themselves in order to tackle international student recruitment. Existing international students had usually arrived as a result of pre-existing collaborations of individual academics and/or faculties, and less so due to concerted institutional action. This is indicative of the novelty that international recruitment represents for Portuguese universities as a strategic area. Factors perceived as attractive for international students were also identified: the

characteristics of the country (safety, quality of life, low cost of living), the institution (e.g., presence in international rankings, reputation, and the perceived quality of the institution), and the Portuguese language as one of the most spoken in the world.

However, both universities already took a considerable number of initiatives; although coordinated centrally, these were not systematic, but rather ad hoc initiatives, continuing previous trends observed around a decade ago (Veiga et al., 2006). Three categories of initiatives emerged from the data: institutional branding, revision of admission procedures, and curricular adjustments. The former two are dominant, while the third one has a more modest expression.

Regarding institutional branding, the two institutions have intensified their participation in international fairs, entered into agreements and partnerships with schools and institutions in target countries, created promotional material to advertise the institution, increased their presence in social networks, and have also started to visit secondary schools or other organizations in target countries. The Head of the Communications and Public Relations unit in University B states:

> The Unit has produced materials, has done interviews with students which can be posted in social networks, there are materials which can be taken to fairs and which are available for teaching staff and researchers when they travel abroad and can take and distribute, there is printed stuff, PowerPoint presentations, films.

All these initiatives, already identified in the literature (Choudaha et al., 2013), are meant to increase the institutions' visibility in target countries by creating a recognizable image. As expected, the target countries are mainly Portuguese-speaking, especially Brazil, followed by the African Portuguese-speaking countries (Cape Verde, Angola, and Mozambique). However, Asia represents a very appealing market for these two institutions, especially China and, in to a lesser degree, India and Indonesia (see also Guerreiro, 2015). In Latin America, Colombia and Peru were also mentioned, although with less emphasis. Another ambition, expressed by the Head of the International Office and the Internationalization Adviser in University B, was the recruitment of not only more, but also better students, as a way of improving the reputation of the institution abroad.

The second category refers to the revision of admission procedures. In this sense, care was taken to simplify information for potential international students—for example, to clarify who counts as an international student and to guide them through the application process. Then, to cater for the interests of students from different countries, with different structures of the academic year, both institutions revised the application schedule. Previously tailored to the timetable of national students, it now includes different timings. This allows enough time for students to go through all the formalities and bureaucracy necessary to move from one country to another. This simplification and reorganization of the application process aligns with the recommendations made in the literature (Ross et al., 2013; Russell, 2005) about the minimization of complexity and bureaucracy in the interaction with the institution. Another measure to ease admission was the automatic recognition of secondary school leaving examinations in some main target countries (e.g., Brazil and China).

Regarding the adjustment of application timings, the Head of Academic Affairs in University A said:

> We are concerned with tailoring administrative processes to the characteristics of international students, namely by anticipating the schedule of applications, taking into account the mismatches between academic years in Portugal and in other countries.

The reduction of the fee for applicants from Portuguese-speaking countries was mentioned by both institutions as a way of increasing their attractiveness. This may be a strategy employed to preserve the historical and cultural relations with these countries (França et al., 2018), concomitant with a broadening of the recruitment base to other countries.

Finally, the category related to curricular adjustments almost exclusively revealed language concerns. Portuguese classes were offered to international students. In University B the creation of a year zero allowed students to learn Portuguese before enrolling in their study program (see also Guerreiro, 2015). According to the Head of the International Office in University B:

> We are alert to the fact that there are students who would like to study in Portugal and do not speak Portuguese. So the university (…) has made rules and conditions for students to be able to learn Portuguese before coming, to take the exams after their arrival and does not make the language a condition for admission to university.

Teaching in English was not a common practice at undergraduate level (for which the International Student Statute applies), but was more common in postgraduate and research degrees. This may be related to the reluctance of teaching staff and students to use another language than Portuguese (see also Guerreiro, 2015; Pinto & Araujo e Sá, 2018), but may also be due to the perceived advantage represented by the Portuguese language on the international student market, discussed below.

Challenges

The major challenge that interviewees highlighted was the creation of an institutional structure (or structures) with dedicated remit and competence to recruit international students and support them in their interaction with the institution, from the stage of application to the completion of their studies. Such a structure could centralize all the information that international students need and ensure that it is consistently and clearly communicated (Ross et al., 2013; Russell, 2005). Currently, during the application phase, these students fall under the remit of academic services, which also deals with national recruitment, but has no expertise to meet the needs of international students. International units, which have experience of working with foreign students on temporary mobility, are only now starting to be summoned to help with the reception and integration of international students, although without a formal remit to do so. According to the Head of the Communications and Public Relations unit in University B:

> It is all scattered at the moment, because there is no specific office to deal with international students coming via the Statute (…) We are in charge of communication and attraction; then, when they apply, it is the academic services that take over and we stand back, although applicants sometimes end up asking us for information. Then, when they arrive, it is the turn of the international relations office to help with reception. So at the moment various offices are involved, in a manner not as articulated as it could be. Maybe an office which could integrate all this could guide international applicants from the beginning to the end, this would allow giving them the information they need.

Language was understood by the interviewees as another important challenge, for various reasons. A frequent opinion was that teaching in Portuguese should be maintained and promoted as a competitive advantage to continue attracting not only students from Portuguese-speaking countries, but also other students interested in learning Portuguese, aware of its potential as one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. This opinion emerged clearly from several interviewees—for example the Head of International Office in University A and the Internationalization Adviser in University B:

> This means that one of the strategies is not to compete with other countries that are clearly ahead of us in terms of English usage, we have more advantages competing in Portuguese (…), thus avoiding ludicrous situations such as the emergence in London of Portuguese language schools which attract Chinese students to learn Portuguese in London with Brazilian teachers.

> Do we have competitive advantages compared to Denmark or the Netherlands because we have another public who does not speak English? If they gave me money to invest in the promotion of the university, I would invest in Brazil, Latin America, Spanish-speaking countries, Angola, regions of Portuguese language. I would also invest in countries like China, because they are trying to teach Portuguese to students, even in different disciplinary areas, because of the potential market that the Portuguese language could open. So I would not ignore Portuguese.

However, even for students from Portuguese-speaking countries, the language can be a problem because the same words can have different meanings, and several interviewees admitted that they often became aware of communication failures. At the same time, teaching in English was identified as another challenge that could broaden the institutions' recruitment area beyond Portuguese-speaking countries. In order to avoid the detrimental effect that this could have on recruitment from Portuguese-speaking countries, one possible measure could be to offer the same study program both in Portuguese and in English to different student cohorts. The teaching staff's ability to deliver classes in English emerged as another challenge related to language.

Another perceived challenge—given the fact that public universities receive most of their revenue from the State and are, thus, largely dependent on public

funding—was the need to invest more financial resources in infrastructures and personnel necessary to support international students, ranging from the recruitment and/or training of administrative staff with intercultural competences to the recruitment of international teaching staff. This would also improve the institutions' capacity of catering for culturally diverse students.

In University A, the importance of undertaking market research was underlined in order to better adjust admission requirements and, consequently, to improve the institution's attractiveness. In University B, one of the interviewees stressed the fact that a change of mindset was paramount to embrace international recruitment as a legitimate objective and not as an unworthy endeavor for institutions working for the public interest. This is reminiscent of the position of the representative body of Portuguese universities, according to which higher education is exportable (Assunção, 2017).

CONCLUSION

This article has aimed to examine how institutions in Portugal approach the recruitment of international students and the challenges they encounter. Portugal is at a disadvantage compared with the major recruiters in the world and also to the more well-off countries in Europe for several reasons: a weaker economy, a less renowned higher education system (Fonseca et al., 2015), a small country, and a late-comer in international recruitment (Urbanovič et al., 2016). Thus, Portuguese higher education institutions need to ensure that they are prepared to attract and receive international students, as well as to find means of standing out in order to increase their attractiveness.

Despite the difference in size, tradition, and level of centralization between the two selected institutions, the strategies and challenges revealed by this study are similar. The analysis has allowed drawing some conclusions about the initiatives taken to create differentiation and attractiveness. The Portuguese language appears to be the institutions' best and taken-for-granted ally in the recruitment of international students, who mostly come from Portuguese-speaking countries due to the historic links reinforced by the establishment of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (França et al., 2018). However, the Portuguese language does not only come in handy for the recruitment of Portuguese-speaking students. The analyzed institutions are also aware that they can strategically use Portuguese to attract especially students from China, a country where the potential of the language as a door opener for business in Portuguese-speaking countries is valued. Therefore, the apparent disadvantage of Portuguese (as one would expect international students to prefer English tuition) becomes an attractiveness factor. Despite this, the two institutions also recognize the importance of teaching in English in order to attract more diverse students, but always as an add-on to Portuguese, especially at the undergraduate level. The strategies related to the revision of admission criteria reinforce the preference for the two above-mentioned publics: students from Portuguese-speaking countries and Chinese students. Thus, fee reductions are applied to the former, while students from China and Brazil benefit from the automatic recognition of secondary school leaving examinations.

Institutional strategies appear to target both an external makeover, via branding initiatives, and an internal transformation of processes and structures, although this latter is still in an early stage. As for the marketing and branding strategies employed by the two Portuguese universities, they are generally similar to those already reported in the literature. Beyond the traditional methods of participation in international fairs or distribution of promotional material, both institutions also resort to emerging strategies (Choudaha et al., 2013): the use of technology, especially web-based social networks and media, and partnerships with institutions in the target countries. These universities appear to be less involved in market research, although data gathering is acknowledged as a challenge to address in order to help them to make informed decisions about the target regions and students. An international marketing strategy could therefore be important to boost attractiveness (Ross et al., 2007). The major challenge, however, is the establishment of an infrastructure capable of offering a consistent and seamless support to international students in the different phases of interaction with the institution. A unit with an exclusive remit for catering for these students' needs could also gather, systematize, and share information and ensure its consistency within the institution, thus improving international students' experience (Ross et al., 2013; Russel, 2005).

It is possible to argue that the analyzed institutions have become more proactive in recruiting international students, although still largely reliant on the advantage given by the Portuguese language. Their main international publics are students from Portuguese-speaking countries, in alignment with Portuguese policies on international student mobility that aim to maintain Portugal's leading role in the Lusophone space (França et al., 2018). Moreover, there is a growing interest in new countries, especially China, and institutions have taken concrete steps to widen their recruitment area accordingly. Given the asset represented by the language, Portuguese institutions appear to be exploiting a niche in the market of international students and positioning themselves as an emerging competitor.

This article tries to fill a gap in the knowledge about institutional strategies for the recruitment of international students in countries that are not among the key global players. However, the study was limited to two public universities, not representative of the Portuguese higher education system as a whole. They may, however, be indicative of trends among Portuguese public institutions, as they appear to follow the evolution noted in previous research (Veiga et al., 2006; Sin, Veiga & Amaral, 2016). The findings of this study can provide helpful peer learning material for other Portuguese institutions to reflect on and inform their approaches and practices for the recruitment of international students. Specifically, it points to the key areas that need attention and development in institutions from a country which, as discussed above, is less attractive and in an early stage of internationalization of the student body: defining the target publics through market research in a context of high competition; creating adequate and competent support structures for the recruitment of international students; and identifying and capitalizing on the best assets that can help institutions stand out. In this respect, it is important that institutions see Portuguese (one of the most widely spoken languages in the world) as a unique advantage that can enable them to attract a different public than the students seeking tuition in English.

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Teaching for Transfer to First-Year L2 Writers

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies have identified that genres and genre knowledge are not only pivotal for the development of writing expertise but also for facilitating writing-related transfer. However, little research concerns issues of teaching genres for writing transfer to first-year English as a second language (L2) writers at universities in the US. This article attempts to develop a genre-based pedagogic framework for L2 transfer teaching, aiming to help first-year L2 students address linguistic, rhetorical, and genre-bound challenges they confront and improve their writing expertise, as well as develop their ability of writing transfer across disciplines. The goals of this article are dual: (a) to address an existing gap in the literature and research on transfer, and (b) provide academic writing instructions for teaching first-year L2 writers at universities in the United States.

Keywords: genre, genre-based pedagogic framework, L2 writers, writing transfer

Transferability is a key issue for both educators and learners because the goal of education is to help students apply learned knowledge to other situations beyond classrooms (Perkins & Salomon, 1992). Therefore, research on the transfer of learning, starting in the early 19th century, has been a central concern for scholars in the fields of experimental psychology and education (DePalma & Ringer, 2011). In the past decades, rhetoric and composition scholars have developed robust theoretical frameworks and conducted numerous studies on writing-related transfer involving various aspects such as learners, writing knowledge, and contexts. Most studies have focused on writing knowledge being transferred from first-year composition (FYC) courses to other disciplines or to workplaces (Beaufort, 2007; Clark & Hernandez, 2011; Driscoll, 2011; Nowacek, 2011; Robertson, Taczak, & Yancey, 2012; Rounsaville, 2012). Other research has examined the factors that affect writing transfer, including learners' personal connections, dispositions, motivations,

metacognition, effective reflection, and social identity (Beaufort, 2007; Clark & Hernandez, 2011; Driscoll, 2011).

Research on English as a second language (L2) writers and their writing has been growing as more and more L2 students have enrolled in the United States. Varied terms such as L2, English as a second language (ESL), international students, and multilingual writers are used to refer to students whose first language is not English. In this article, I use L2 to refer to students who use English as a second language. Among the literature regarding L2 students, some studies have focused on how to improve L2 students' writing ability (DasBender, 2016; Habib, Hanan, & Mallett, 2015; Johns, 2011; Tardy, 2006, 2009). For example, in DasBender' study (2016), a group of L2 students who faced linguistic and rhetorical challenges were placed in a specially designed writing course so that they could have additional time to work on their writing skills. DasBender's study showed that metacognitive tasks, such as writing reflective essays, could help improve her L2 students' writing knowledge. Similarly, DasBender (2016) and Habib et al. (2015) were concerned about international students' writing development. They applied Tardy's (2009) model in their "bridge program" to assist multilingual graduate students in building genre knowledge and developing language proficiencies.

Other scholars have investigated L2 students' learning transfer (DePalma & Ringer, 2011; James, 2009; Leki, 2007). For instance, James (2009) examined a group of L2 students' learning transfer from an ESL writing course to an academic writing task and found that the strategy of looking for similarities between different writing tasks did not promote his participants' transferability to a significant extent. Like James (2009), Leki's (2007) study not only was concerned about L2 students' writing transfer but also their academic literacy development and their personal, social, and academic experiences at an American university. Leki (2007) explained that the L2 students applied the writing knowledge such as essay structure and invention that they learned from their ESL classes and first-year writing classes. However, these students did not apply genre knowledge in their wring for other courses because these ESL and first-year writing classes did not teach the same genres that student encountered in their disciplinary or workplace writing. L2 students' writing transfer is more difficult and complicated because it involves not only writing knowledge and genre knowledge, but also L2 students' "socioacademic relationships and the ideological assumptions" (Leki, 2007, p. 261) held in new academic communities.

Compared with studies on English as a first language (L1) students' transfer, a critical gap exists in studies concerning how L2 students—in particular, first-year L2 undergraduates at the universities in the US—learn and build their writing knowledge and then transfer it to other disciplines or academic and professional settings. Considering the great number of L2 students at universities in the United States, it is worthwhile investigating how writing instruction and pedagogic strategies can help L2 students develop their writing expertise and facilitate their writing-related transfer.

The purpose of this article is to identify variables that may influence L2 students' development of writing expertise and knowledge transfer and provide a framework of language teaching strategies that merge theories and practices from writing transfer, genre learning, and genre-based pedagogies. Specifically, the goals of this article are dual: (a) address a gap existing in transfer research, and (b) provide

academic writing instructions for teaching first-year L2 writers at universities in the United States.

This article consists of four parts. First, I will analyze the relationship between transfer, genre knowledge, and L2 writers, attempting to clarify the importance of genre knowledge for writing transfer and L2 writers. Second, I will compare four prevalent genre-based pedagogies, systemic functional linguistics (SFL), English for specific purposes (ESP), the New Rhetoric, and the Brazilian educational model, from which I will offer strategies specifically suitable for L2 writers. Finally, based on the four genre traditions and transfer theory, I will develop a genre-based pedagogic framework for L2 transfer teaching, aiming to satisfy L2 writers' needs for improving English proficiency, as well as enhancing their transferability beyond first-year writing classes. This pedagogic framework focuses on genre awareness and linguistic and rhetorical conventions of genres, as well as the reflective interaction between genre knowledge, writing-related knowledge, processes, and contexts.

GENRE KNOWLEDGE, WRITING TRANSFER, AND L2 WRITERS

Genre and Writing Transfer

The current scholarship on writing-related transfer indicates that among factors, such as learners' personal connections, dispositions, motivations, and social identity, genres and genre knowledge are not only fundamental and paramount for improving writing expertise, but they also play a crucial role in writing transfer (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010; Beaufort, 2007; Johns, 2011; Nowacek, 2011; Rounsaville, 2012; Tardy, 2006). First, genres and genre knowledge contribute to writing-related transfer. Rounsaville (2012) argued that "transfer and rhetorical genre studies have found an especially productive partnership for exploring together whether and in what ways students transfer writing-related knowledge from one context to another" (p. 2). Perkins and Salomon (1992) claimed that "transfer of learning occurs when learning in one context or with one set of materials impacts on performance in another context or with other related materials" (p. 3). Therefore, to ensure that transfer happens, the primary step is to identify the similarities between prior learning contexts and new writing contexts. However, writing contexts are often very different from each other and it is difficult to recognize their resemblances, which means "far transfer (transfer between contexts that seem remote and alien to one another)" rarely happens (Perkins & Salomon, 1992, p. 4). In this case, genres can act as cues helping students identify connections between prior learning situations with new writing contexts because "genres' typified rhetorical features help us recognize, respond to, … and reproduce recurrent situations" (Barwarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 69).

The second advantage of genre knowledge for writing transfer is that metacognitive genre awareness can activate "high road transfer" (Perkins & Salomon, 1992, p. 8). Perkins and Salomon (1992) contended that "high road transfer depends on mindful abstraction from the context of learning or application" (p. 8). To realize high road transfer, which occurs in dissimilar contexts, individuals are required to have "reflective thought in abstracting from one context and seeking connections with others" (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 190). In other words, individuals need to discover

the connections between contexts to assess what prior resources can be used, and then to extract knowledge, skills, or strategies from memories for effective writing in other contexts. On the one hand, genres' identifiable features can function as clues for learners to identify and assess unfamiliar writing situations, which is the precondition for "high road transfer" (Perkins & Salomon, 1992, p. 8). Beaufort (2007) stated that "genre [knowledge]" could serve as a tool for students to "analyze similarities and differences among writing situations they encounter" (p. 149). On the other hand, metacognition cultivated from genre analysis binds new and already-acquired knowledge, which allows students to transfer pre-existing knowledge to a new situation. In the process of learning genres, students analyze genres, abstract their typified structures, and search for connections with prior knowledge, which is referred to as the "bridging strategy" that contributes to "high road transfer" (Perkins & Salomon, 1992, p. 10). In other words, genre knowledge and metacognition actualize high road transfer through learners' identifying similarities between contexts and then retrieving relevant knowledge and skills from prior resources for new writing tasks.

Finally, the significance of genre knowledge for transfer lies in that genre knowledge is imperative for students to engage successfully in new writing situations. Beaufort (2007) claimed that knowledge about discourse communities, subject matter, rhetoric, and writing processes, together with genre knowledge are the five domains of knowledge that students must develop to analyze new writing tasks and be successful in writing performance. Beaufort elucidated the five domains of knowledge as follows: (a) discourse community knowledge entails understanding of the shared goals, values, interests, expectations, means of communication, and established norms for genres; (b) subject matter knowledge involves knowing the shared background knowledge among members of a discourse community; (c) rhetorical knowledge includes considering the audience, purpose, the best way to communicate rhetorically, and the social and material conditions within the discourse community; (d) writing process knowledge means knowing how to proceed through a writing task, given specific social and material conditions; and (e) genre knowledge embraces linguistic, textual, and rhetorical features shared with members of a discourse community (pp. 18–20). Among the five domains of knowledge, genre knowledge is the "key to understanding how to participate in the actions of a community" (Miller, 1984, p. 165). Genre knowledge empowers students to communicate effectively by providing them with tools to articulate their opinions in a way that conforms to the expectations and assumptions within a discourse community. In addition, when students reflect on appropriate rhetorical responses to a context, including writing purpose, audience, subject matter, tone and diction, they "simultaneously bring multiple knowledge domains—subject matter, rhetorical knowledge, discourse community knowledge, and writing process knowledge—into dynamic interaction" (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 192).

Genre and L2 Writers

Genre knowledge is essential for L2 students to achieve academic success at universities in the US for the following reasons. First, L2 students are obligated to

master genres and genre knowledge because, at universities, the genre has become a popular organizing principle for textbooks and course syllabi (Tardy, 2009, p. 6). Some course books targeting FYC students "use genre as a frame for formulating rhetorical strategies and responding to various communicative situations, reinforcing the transfer value of genre knowledge"; some books "integrate rhetorical" and textual features as well as social functions of genres, aiming to emphasize the importance of genre knowledge (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 195).

Second, genre knowledge is a rudimentary tool for L2 students to finish writing tasks at universities. All of the university graduates, including L2 students, are expected to "be able to write" (Leki, 2007, p. 83). Therefore, they are expected to accomplish diverse writing assignments in various courses. At universities, one challenge students must face is to write essays in various genres based on their disciplines and academic levels. L2 students may find this difficult because the rhetorical styles required at U.S. universities may be absent or conflict with those in their home countries (DasBender, 2016; Hyland, 2003; Kubota, 2001; Matsuda, 2001; Silva, 1993). Besides, insufficient lexical and grammatical knowledge, which can be acquired from genre analysis, may prevent them from expressing their ideas distinctly and appropriately.

Third, genre knowledge allows L2 students to participate in American academic communities smoothly. What complicates L2 students' writing development lies in their lack of genre knowledge, which inhibits them from writing essays that are in line with professors' expectations. Teaching genre can help L2 students become aware of texts' forms, functions, and social contexts (Hyland, 2003), and help them better understand conventions of American academic writing. Therefore, genres and genre knowledge can assist L2 students in developing writing expertise, help them more "readily gain access to [American academic] writing situations and genres" (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 191), and get access to a "variety of realms of social power" (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, p. 8). Though genre-based approaches are widely advocated in L1 and L2 writing instruction and have enjoyed more favor in second language classrooms, genre-related theories and pedagogical practices vary greatly in terms of teaching focus, methods, and target learners (Tardy, 2006).

Genre-Based Pedagogies and Writing Transfer

Genre was first introduced into L2 writing and the field of English for specific purposes (ESP) in the 1980s by the research of John Swales (Paltridge, 2014). Since that time, interest in genre-based approaches and their application in writing instruction has been on the rise (Feez, 1998, 2002; Feez, Iedema, & White, 2008; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Hyland, 2002, 2007; Hyon, 1996; Martin, 1993, 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2001, 2009; Martin & Rose, 2007a, 2007b, 2008;). Genre theorists and practitioners were divided into three camps: (a) the Sydney School, which was based on the systemic functional linguistics (SFL) work of Halliday; (b) the ESP camp, whose most famous contribution was Swales' approach of genre analysis; and (c) the New Rhetoric group, centered in North America, that based its major tenets upon rhetorical rather than linguistic theories (Johns, 2011). The SFL and ESP camps, concentrating on text and language register, were the best known and the most

successful with L2 populations. SFL has been the most popular among novice and L2 learners; ESP achieved considerable success among graduate students and professionals, while the New Rhetoric approaches have been best known in FYC courses in North America (Johns, 2011). Furthermore, Bawarshi and Reiff (2010) introduced another genre theory, the Brazilian educational model, which "has synthesized various traditions: the French and Swiss genre pedagogical traditions, European philosophical traditions, critical discourse analysis, the systemic functional linguistic genre tradition, ESP, and New Rhetoric" (p. 76). In the next section, I will summarize the features and principles of these four genre traditions, based on which I will advocate a framework of pedagogical strategies for teaching L2 students, seeking to help them build genre knowledge and facilitate their writing transfer.

Systemic Functional Linguistics and English for Specific Purposes

Theorists of SFL and ESP have both emphasized the importance of teaching and learning "specified text types" (Johns, 2011, p. 57), with which L2 students can "communicat[e] effectively in particular, professional, academic, and occupational communities" (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 42). Both SFL and ESP approaches "seek to offer writers an explicit understanding of how target texts are structured and why they are written the way they are" (Hyland, 2003, p. 11), thereby "demystify[ing] the kinds of writing that will enhance learners', [in particular disadvantaged students'], career opportunities and provide access to a greater range of life choices" (Hyland, 2004, p. 24). However, SFL and ESP theories are different in target learners, focused genres, and understanding of contexts. Comparatively, ESP approaches are more suitable for first-year L2 students at US universities in two aspects. First, ESP genre approaches generally "target more advanced, often graduate-level, international students in British and US universities, who, as non-native speakers of English, are linguistically disadvantaged" (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 43). That is to say, ESP focuses on structural and linguistic features of genres, especially for fulfilling the requirement of L2 writers whose English proficiency needs to be improved to live up to academic expectations at universities.

Second, to meet the L2 college students' demands from their disciplines, academic fields, and other social spheres, ESP approaches teach genres, such as research essays, literature reviews, conference abstracts, grant proposals, job application letters, and so on, where the genres' "communicative purposes are more specified and attributable" (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 44). In other words, ESP emphasizes genres that are broadly required in various disciplines for communicative purposes within academic communities. In accordance with its communicative purpose, ESP scholars consider genres as linguistic and rhetorical actions, involving the use of stable linguistic and rhetorical conventions to respond to and participate in academic and professional discourse communities (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010; Hyland, 2004). As indicated by previous literature (Ahn, 2012; Cheng, 2006; Hyland, 2003, 2007; Yasuda, 2011), teaching textual features and specific genres could raise L2 students' genre awareness and enhance their chances of succeeding in academic discourse communities.

Despite their initial intention of equipping L2 students with available language and structures to participate in discourse communities effectively, both ESP and SFL have been critiqued for enhancing prototypical textual and linguistic features, which tend to be memorized as rigid formats, thus preventing transfer (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010). This issue is complicated by the reality that "authentic texts tend to be an amalgamation of different and yet related genres, instead of an individual one with the rigid and identifiable format" (Bhatia, 2002, p. 281). Though ESP approaches emphasize linguistic and textual features of genres for communicative purposes, which are crucial and indispensable to L2 writers, ESP pedagogy is limited in underscoring the dynamic relationship between genres and discourse community (Hyland, 2004), thus thwarting students' transferring of genre knowledge to other situations. On the contrary, New Rhetoric scholars consider genres not only as "situated within contexts but also as constitutive of contexts" (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 54). That is to say, a genre is not only a way to respond to a situation but also a vehicle to reconstruct the situation through students' transferring pre-existing knowledge to the new writing situation. ESP and the New Rhetoric pedagogies have different but complementary focuses; therefore, they can work together to meet L2 students' demands' for developing language proficiency as well as for employing genre knowledge to fulfill social functions.

The New Rhetoric Pedagogy

In FYC courses in North America, the most widely used genre-based approach is the New Rhetoric pedagogy (Johns, 2011). The New Rhetoric approach, influenced by poststructuralism, rhetoric, and first language composition, focuses on "rhetorical contexts rather than detailed analyses of text elements" (Hyland, 2003, p. 21). Perceiving genres as "multi-modal, process-based and situated in mediated activities," New Rhetoricians advocate the development of students' metacognitive awareness of genre knowledge, which entails examining the relationships among texts, rhetorical purposes of texts, ideologies, and the broader political, cultural, and social contexts in which texts are produced (Freedman, 1999; Johns, 2011). In this way, students can recognize that genres are neither isolated nor static; instead, genres are in dynamic interaction with other relevant factors and can be transferred to other contexts.

Metacognitive genre awareness can be developed through genre analysis in New Rhetoric approaches. New Rhetoricians have built effective methods for cultivating metacognitive genre awareness, which provides "guidance to structure specific problems and learnings into more abstract principles that can be applied to new situations" (Beaufort, 2007, p. 15). Genre analysis in New Rhetoric approaches includes four steps: (1) collect the genre samples from various contexts to help students notice patterns within the genre; (2) identify and describe the situations the genre is used, like setting, subject, participants, and purposes; (3) identify and describe patterns in the genre's features such as content, rhetorical appeals, structure, format, types of sentences, and diction; and (4) analyze what these genres patterns reveal about the situation and scene (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010).

The steps of carrying out genre analysis reflect the interaction-orientated trajectory of New Rhetoric approaches, which stress the dynamic relationship between genres and contexts by asking students to analyze genre, then context, then genre again. In other words, students first analyze genre patterns to locate contexts, then contexts for rhetorical characteristics, and then return to genre analysis to learn genres' linguistic and textual features. In so doing, students can realize the interdependence between genres and contexts, and students are able to "abstract" the general principles of genres as well as see how rhetorical features connect to social actions that genres embody, which are prerequisites for students to materialize "high road transfer" (Perkins & Salomon, 1992, p. 8). Then, students can use acquired genre knowledge to "participate and intervene in [new writing] situations they encounter" (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 192).

The Brazilian Educational Model

The Brazilian educational model "has synthesized the linguistic, rhetorical, and social/sociological traditions" (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 74). Therefore, it shares some common attributes with SFL, ESP, and the New Rhetoric theories. For example, it emphasizes linguistic conventions analysis of SFL and ESP, as well as genre awareness and attention to the social context of the New Rhetoric (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 177). However, what distinguishes the Brazilian educational model from the other three genre traditions is that it is characterized by embracing learners' previous knowledge and experiences. Taking into consideration students' previous knowledge, cultures, and experiences is of vital importance to L2 students with diverse cultural and academic backgrounds because research in composition studies indicates that students' prior knowledge has both positive and negative impact on their writing transfer (DasBender, 2016; Robertson et al., 2012; Zamel, 1997). The central steps of the Brazilian Educational Model include: (1) initial production of a genre based on writers' previous knowledge and writing experiences; (2) analysis of textual and rhetorical features of the genre; (3) analysis of the communicative situation; and (4) students' final production of the genre (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010). Though there are overlapping features between the Brazilian educational model and other genre pedagogies, its concern about students' prior knowledge is especially illuminating for L2 writing instruction.

Genre-Based Pedagogic Framework for First-Year L2 Writers

The above four genre-based pedagogies are designed for specific learners and contexts. Each has its specific advantages and can promote L2 students' writing ability (Ahn, 2012; Cheng, 2006; Hyland, 2003, 2007; Liu, 2018). However, none of the above genre-based pedagogy explicitly reveals how to use genre knowledge to help students transfer writing knowledge to other writing tasks or settings. Therefore, a framework that combines the above four types of genre-based pedagogy and transfer theory is needed to not only embrace these L2 students' previous experiences and address challenges they confront, but also to satisfy their academic needs at

universities, especially their ability to transfer what they learn across diverse writing contexts.

Challenges to First-year L2 Writers

According to the literature on genre learning and teaching, as well as L2 students' writing transfer, L2 students mainly face three challenges. The first challenge is language proficiency. L2 writers have admitted that when they face writing tasks, difficulties include linguistic elements such as vocabulary, grammar, language structures, and so on (DasBender, 2016; Leki, 2007; Tardy, 2006). In addition, L2 writers tend to be "preoccupied with developing their expertise in the domain of formal knowledge, neglecting rhetorical and subject matter knowledge" (Habib et al., 2015, sec. 4). It may become more problematic when students think that "with a set of grammatical rules and vocabulary lists, they can unequivocally and seamlessly transfer meaning from L1 to L2" (Cozart, Jensen, Wichmann-Hansen, Kupatadze, & Chiu, 2016, p. 314). Nevertheless, many L2 students believe that inadequate linguistic and textual knowledge is a big impediment to their writing development, so they give first priority to lexical and grammatical elements over other domains of writing knowledge. Their obsession with English language proficiency development explains why L2 writers tend to exploit "other texts for conventional expressions and terms" (Tardy, 2006, p. 96). If L2 students overemphasize how to say what they want to say, they may ignore that they have to say it in a way/form that meets the expectations of their instructors and other academic community members.

The second difficulty that L2 writers face is that prior writing experiences and cultural backgrounds may constrain and prevent L2 students from "re-engaging any prior writing knowledge and adapting such knowledge for new rhetorical purposes" (DasBender, 2016, p. 289). Though many L2 writers are successful in their first language writing and have obtained sophisticated cognitive abilities and metacognitive strategies of writing (Leki, 1992), their linguistic and rhetorical conventions do not always transfer successfully across languages or may actually interfere with their L2 writing (Connor, 1996). It is a "truism that students draw on prior knowledge when facing new tasks" (Robertson et al., 2012, p. 4); therefore, in spite of the enormous differences of writing knowledge between two languages, some L2 writers tend to directly transfer what they have learned from L1 writing to L2 writing tasks. For example, the L2 writer in DasBender's study used a Chinese rhetorical pattern in his English writing, which generated "cross-cultural barriers" (Cozart et al., 2016, p. 326). In other words, if the L1 writing style is at odds with the expectations of readers from L2, utilizing their prior L1 writing experiences may result in "negative transfer" (Perkins & Salomon, 1992, p. 3). However, even advanced L2 writers may draw on their L1 when writing generic texts (Tardy, 2006, p. 96). Additionally, their previous experiences of taking English examinations may negatively impact L2 students' writing transfer when they study at universities in the United States. For example, in order to study at U.S. universities, most multilingual students, if not all of them, have to take language proficiency exams such as TOEFL and IELTS, whose writing sections are characterized by limited types of genre. Actually, at universities, students will encounter quite a number of genres—personal

writing, academic writing, popular culture, public affairs/civic writing, and professional/workplace writing (Bean, 2011). Consequently, L2 students' previous experiences with the genre in the exams may limit their perceptions of a genre, hence causing negative transfer when they attempt to use their prior genre knowledge in new writing tasks.

The third problem facing L2 writers at U.S. universities is that L2 writers may become "passive recipients of the knowledge and conventions of a discourse of power" (Depalma & Ringer, 2011, p. 142), which hinders writing transfer from one situation to another. If writing instructors accommodate traditional English academic practices, ignoring the ideological implications hidden in its academic culture and excluding L2 writers' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, L2 writers may tend to see the relationship between texts and contexts as static and fixed, rather than dynamic and complex, thus failing to transfer. For example, there are rigid format and linguistic requirements for research papers in English, which actually marginalizes writers from other cultures or classes who follow different academic conventions. If L2 students fail to realize that genres are tools, serving particular discourse communities and "perform[ing] social actions and relations" (Barwarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 59) through established linguistic and rhetoric symbols, they will be constrained by the set rules and can neither transfer genre knowledge nor reconstruct situations with their writing. In regard to the interrelationship between genres' linguistic conventions and rhetorical and sociological attributes, Barwarshi and Reiff (2010) offered a sound argument:

> Genres are not only communicative tools but also socially derived, typified ways of knowing and acting. Therefore, to study and teach genres in the context of [the] socio-rhetorical understanding requires both a knowledge of a genre's structural and lexico-grammatical features as well as a knowledge of the social action(s) a genre produces and the social typifications that inform that action. (p. 77)

A PEDAGOGIC FRAMEWORK FOR L2 TRANSFER TEACHING

In spite of the advantages of the above genre-based pedagogies, none of them is a one-size-fits-all pedagogy and none of them "can be realized in their purest form in the actual classroom" (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 29) because of "the complexity of language, learning, and language learners" (Larsen-Freeman, 1991, p. 269). Therefore, instead of proposing a specific pedagogy, I advocate for a framework that I call "pedagogic framework for L2 transfer teaching," based on the above four genre-based pedagogies together with transfer theory. This pedagogic framework is inspired by Kumaravadivelu's (1994) concept of "postmethod condition" which aims to "empower teachers with knowledge, skill, and autonomy … [so that they can] devise for [their classes] a systematic [and] coherent" pedagogy (p. 27). Like Kumaravadivelu's (1994) framework for second/foreign language teaching, I am proposing this pedagogic framework for L2 transfer teaching, aiming to offer some strategies and tactics based on which instructors who teach L2 students can "design

varied and situation-specific microstrategies or classroom techniques to effect desired learning outcomes" (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 27).

Abstracting from the four genre-based pedagogies and transfer theories, pedagogic framework for L2 transfer teaching consists of six strategies, highlighting genres' linguistic and rhetorical conventions, learners' previous knowledge and experiences, genre awareness, critical literacy, and reflection, as well as dynamic interactions between genre knowledge and discourse community. The six strategies for teaching L2 transfer comprise the following: (a) analyze textual and linguistic patterns; (b) build on previous cultural and academic knowledge; (c) raise genre awareness; (d) emphasize the diversity and dynamics of genres; (e) foster critical literacy; and (f) engage students in reflection.

Strategy 1: Analyze Textual and Linguistic Patterns

The first strategy concerns the analysis of textual and linguistic patterns. The analysis of linguistic features addresses the challenge of language proficiency facing L2 writers. Linguistic structures and textual patterns can provide L2 students with diction and structures to conform to the expectations of a particular discourse community so that they not only can articulate themselves accurately and distinctly but also gain access to the discourse community. For example, when writing an academic essay, lexical-grammatical and textual conventions, such as tense, person, vocabulary, and structure, should be congruous with requirements of professors or editors of a specific journal. These writing conventions remain opaque for L2 students until their instructors teach them explicitly (Paltridge, 2007). Furthermore, the analysis of textual and linguistic features equips L2 students with "meta-linguistic resources that assist them in producing genres while also developing long-term rhetorical competence that transfers to other writing situations" (Barwarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 180). Though formal knowledge such as structure, textual, and grammatical rules are critiqued and scorned by some compositionists and rhetoricians, "novice writers have a great need for form because form makes students feel safe and can help them craft an effective text" (Clark & Hernandez, 2011, p. 74). Sommers and Saltz (2004) affirmed the idea that "encourage[ing] students to use structure relieves students of the responsibility of inventing the field for themselves" (p. 138). To put it differently, L2 students can start with and then go beyond the analysis of textual and linguistic features.

Strategy 2: Build on Previous Cultural and Academic Knowledge

The second strategy is to incorporate L2 students' cultural and previous academic experiences into genre instruction. Consciously invoking students' prior writing experiences and comparing the differences of rhetorical traditions in two languages can help alleviate L2 students' confusion when they strive to situate themselves in new writing contexts. For example, if the Chinese student in DasBender's (2016) study had been taught the differences of rhetorical styles between English and Chinese language before he wrote the essay, he would not have failed to realize his communicative purpose because of using Chinese rhetoric in English writing.

However, comparing different linguistic and rhetorical differences does not mean to devalue L2 students' prior knowledge. Instead, it is essential for both L2 students and their instructors to be aware that those differences could be regarded as resources or "evidence of alternative patterns and understandings, rather than of individual inability or poor study habits" (Hyland, 2003, p. 37). Furthermore, instructors should help L2 students build up confidence and offer opportunities for them to realize that being an L2 student is an advantage, not a deficiency.

Strategy 3: Raise Genre Awareness

The third strategy suggests that genre analysis should be employed to develop L2 students' metacognition of genre awareness. Metacognition has proven to be an "important component of knowledge transfer, especially across dissimilar contexts such as FYC courses, courses in different academic disciplines, and workplace settings" (Barwarshi & Rieff, 2010, p. 190). Metacognition is especially significant when students encounter unfamiliar writing tasks or contexts because metacognition assists students to assess what prior knowledge or concepts can be applied in new writing situations (Tinberg, 2015). Genre awareness can be promoted through consciously conducting genre analysis. In the process of genre analysis, students examine a specific genre's rhetorical patterns, content, and linguistic and textual conventions. More importantly, students also learn to analyze the interactive relationships between genre conventions, contexts, and discourse community. Through examining the interaction between genre conventions and discourse community, students can see that "discourse community goals and values were manifested in the genres of the discourse community" (Beaufort, 1997, p. 521). Despite the constantly changing nature of a discourse community and genre, genre analysis enables L2 students to analyze various situations and discourse community, hence producing appropriate texts accordingly.

Strategy 4: Emphasize the Diversity and Dynamics of Genre

This strategy highlights that genre conventions are fluid and flexible, as well as co-constructed. When teaching genre, teachers should be cautious that "repeated practice of the same genres may become entrenched" (Anson, 2015, p. 77). That is, students tend to take genres as static, "solidified," or "sedimented" and apply the fixed pattern of genres in any writing situation, "resulting in a mismatch between what they produce and the expectations or norms of their new community" (Anson, 2015, p. 77). The social relations among a discourse community are dynamic in the long term, though they are stable in the short-term. Correspondingly, in addition to the current wide range of genres across disciplines and cultures, new genres are constantly being created and repurposed as discourses increasingly become culturally, linguistically, and multimodally diverse. It is unlikely to master all types of genre. However, being aware of the dynamic nature of genre allows students to see the similarities and connections between various genres and writing settings, thus promoting their writing transfer across writing tasks and contexts.

Strategy 5: Foster Critical Literacy

According to Luke (2012), critical literacy aims to recognize, critique, and transform dominant ideologies, cultures, economics, institutions, and political systems by using literacy for social justice in marginalized and disenfranchised communities (p. 5). When L2 students acquire genre knowledge and other forms of academic discourses and conventions, they also internalize the embedded English ideologies that produce, remain, reproduce, and reinforce hegemony of dominant classes. To reshape and transform social injustice, both instructors and L2 students should commit to critiquing ideologies and include "cultural and linguistic minorities, indigenous learners, and other marginalized [groups]" (Luke, 2012, p. 6). Therefore, genre awareness should involve analyzing attitudes, values, and ideology embedded in the genres' rhetorical patterns, content, and linguistic and textual conventions (Barwarshi & Rieff, 2010). Like Freire and Macedo (1987) stated, "Reading the word, [then] reading the world." In so doing, students can realize the power relationships between genre conventions, discourse community, and texts. Furthermore, students can better understand that genre is a "social action" (Miller, 1984), reacting to the specific rhetorical situation and subject to changing, reshaping, and transforming across communities, cultures, societies, and time. As many genre scholars have agreed, genres are socially derived (Barwarshi & Rieff, 2010; Beaufort, 1997; Hyland, 2003; Miller, 1984), reflecting "social, political, and historical realities" (Threadgold, 1989, p. 106) and serving the interests of particular institutions and groups. Though genre knowledge allows L2 students to gain access to academic discourses and achieve success in their writing, ignoring the social and political purposes of written and spoken discourses will not only put L2 students at a disadvantage, but also prevent their writing transfer across assignments and contexts. What's worse, if L2 students cannot critically consider genre conventions and discourse community, the embedded ideology that privileges certain type of writing practices or language varieties over others may be "reproduced" and enhanced (Emery, 2016, p. 8) through the marginalized themselves. In the same manner, the superiority of the dominant class and the inferiority of other language varieties, as well as the speakers of those languages, are reproduced and reinforced (Kubota & Okuda, 2016, p. 172).

In brief, genre analysis can help L2 students deepen their understanding of genre knowledge, including the types of genre and their relationship with the value and ideology of dominant discourse community, as well as how genre is interwoven with audiences, composing purpose, and contexts.

Strategy 6: Engage Students in Reflection

The last strategy, the key to promoting learning transferability, is to engage students in the reflective interaction with genre knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, discourse community, and different writing contexts through reflective essays. This reflection, referred by Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak (2014) as "big-picture thinking" (p. 4), enables students to analyze the similarities and differences between prior, current, and future writing situations, then determine whether or not, and how,

to apply their prior knowledge into new writing situations (Beaufort, 2016; Yancey et al., 2014). Students not only examine what they learn about writing, genres, and rhetorical situations, but also reflect on their successful/unsuccessful practices and "the qualities and components that contribute in significant ways to the production of effective writing," (Tinberg, 2015, p. 76) as well as how they can transfer what they learn to other disciplines or workplaces.

Based on the above pedagogic framework for L2 transfer teaching, the pedagogical steps to teach L2 learners writing transfer can be rendered into the following learner actions. Step 1 is to build connections between students' previous writing experiences and their new writing tasks. Students compare the genres and rhetorical considerations in L1 and L2 writing, through which students can become aware of the different conventions and rhetorical styles in L2 writing. Accordingly, L2 students can choose to avoid or draw on or adapt their previous knowledge for new readers and purposes in new rhetorical situations. Step 2 is genre analysis. Students analyze rhetorical moves and linguistic features of the L2 genre, which provides students with linguistic and rhetorical resources to construct texts. In Step 3, students analyze the context in which the genre is used to understand the interdependent relationship between genres and contexts as well as to establish connections with their prior learning contexts. In Step 4, students analyze the interrelationship between genre and context to gain insight how the linguistic and textual patterns of the genre "suit rhetorical purposes and situations" (Devitt, 2004, p. 213), and how in turn, these generic forms can be utilized to reconstruct situations. Finally, through reflective assignments or activities, students "abstract" what they learn about genres and writing skills, "detect" the similarities and differences between prior and new writing situations, then "select" applicable skills and knowledge to transfer to novel writing contexts (Perkins & Salomon, 2012). The above pedagogical steps are not linear nor static. Instructors of L2 students can modify and/or add steps or materials to adjust to their students' individualized needs, considering L2 students' specific cultural and rhetorical background, as well as teaching circumstances.

CONCLUSION

This article suggests a pedagogic framework for teaching first-year L2 writers in U.S. universities. Research on transfer in rhetoric and composition studies has achieved rich findings, but only a few of them have concerned first-year L2 students at universities. Because increasing numbers of international students are enrolling at U.S. universities, it is imperative to offer pedagogical approaches to address these L2 students' academic demands and help them reach institutional expectations. In this article, I have developed a pedagogical framework that consists of six teaching strategies, drawing on transfer theory, previous literature on L2 students, and genre theories—SFL, ESP, the New Rhetoric, and the Brazilian educational model. Focusing on metacognitive genre awareness and linguistic and rhetorical conventions of genres, as well as the dynamic interaction across writing-related knowledge, this framework targets first-year L2 writers at U.S. universities, aiming to propose a tool to help students work toward analyzing writing assignments and situations, including their "hidden ideological dimensions" (Leki, 2007, p. 285). The strategies in this

framework not only help L2 students develop their writing expertise and promote their transferability, but also help instructors and institutions recognize these students' challenges and accommodate their need for academic success and social equality.

However, the framework described above is "an open-ended set of options" rather than "a closed set of formulae" (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 43). These strategies should be contextualized and classroom-oriented. This pedagogic framework is designed for instructors to adopt, modify, expand, and enrich through experimenting and exploring in their classrooms. With ongoing exploration, effective pedagogical approaches can be devised to help develop L2 writers writing expertise and transferability.

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Academic Stressors as Predictors of Achievement Goal Orientations of American and ESL International Students

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ABSTRACT

This study explores academic stressors and achievement goal orientations of college students, and the relationship between these variables using academic stressors as predictors. As the number of English as a Second Language (ESL) international students has increased rapidly in the US, students' status (American or ESL international) was also examined. A total of 715 students participated in the study from two universities in the US. Results show that ESL international and American students have different achievement goal orientations and academic stressors. Additionally, student status and academic stressors predict college students' various goal orientations. The implications provide useful suggestions to higher education professionals in order to better understand and assist diverse students to succeed in academia.

Keywords: academic stress, achievement goal orientation, American students, college students, ESL international students, higher education

INTRODUCTION

Achievement goal orientation (AGO) helps explain individual differences in academic motivations, referring to the specific purposes with which students engage in academic work that result in various motivations and achievement-related behaviors (Ames & Archer, 1988). AGOs are standards that individuals use to determine success (Duda & Nicholls, 1992; Nicholls, Patashnick, & Nolen, 1985; Nolen & Haladyna, 1990), and they play a significant role in students' academic achievement, well-being, and academic engagement. Meanwhile, academic stress is an inevitable part of college students' lives that can influence their academic performance. Studies have explored AGOs and academic stress among college students, but limited research has investigated the *relationship* between AGOs and academic stress, especially whether academic stressors might predict students' AGOs. Students vary in their motivations, work behaviors, and attitudes toward their academic workload, especially when students are from different cultural backgrounds. English as a second language (ESL) international students have become an important student population in American institutions. Thus, this study also explores whether there is any difference in the relationships between AGOs and academic stress among American and ESL international college students.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

AGOs are used as the theoretical framework in this study as they have been widely used to explore relationships between students' goals and academic achievement, adjustment, well-being, and engagement in their academic work (Ames, 1992; Aspinwall & Taylor, 1997; Midgley, Arunkumar, & Urdan, 1996; Nurmi, Salmela-Aro, & Ruotsalainen, 1994). AGO is comprised of mastery and performance goal orientations. The mastery goal orientation is "a desire to develop competence and increase knowledge and understanding through effortful learning" (K. P. Murphy & Alexander, 2000), and the performance goal orientation is "a desire to gain favorable judgments of one's competence" (K. P. Murphy & Alexander, 2000). Approach and avoidance motivations were added on to mastery and performance goal orientations later on (Elliot & McGregor, 2001) to make it a four-factor model that includes mastery approach, mastery avoidance, performance approach, and performance avoidance (Figure 1). Elliot (2006) defined approach motivations as "the energization of behavior by, or the direction of behavior toward, positive stimuli (objects, events, possibilities)," while the avoidance motivation is "the energization of behavior by, or the direction of behavior away from, negative stimuli (objects, events, possibilities)." According to this 2 × 2 model of AGO, students with mastery approach goal orientation prefer mastering academic tasks, while students with mastery avoidance goal orientation intend to avoid misunderstanding an academic task. Performance approach goal-oriented students want to demonstrate that they are more competent than other students, whereas students with performance avoidance goal orientation intend to avoid appearing incompetent in comparison to their peers.

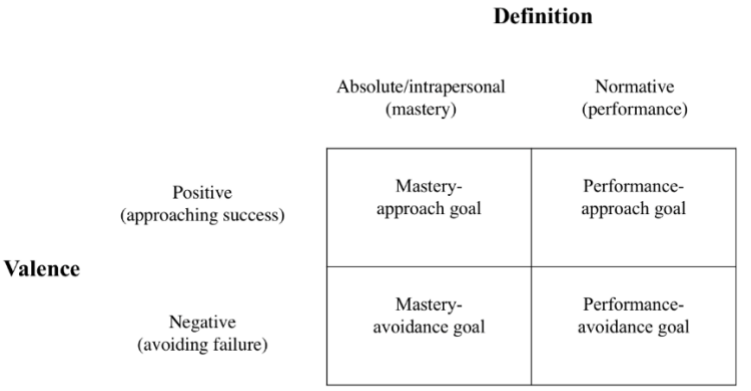

Figure 1: An adapted 2 × 2 Achievement Goal Framework (Elliot & McGregor, 2001)

Achievement Goal Orientations of College Students

Studies indicate that undergraduate students often adopt both mastery approach and performance avoidance goal orientations (Remedios & Richardson, 2013). Church, Elliot, and Gable (2001) investigated undergraduate students' adoption of AGOs for courses, and found that students' perceptions of certain characteristics of classroom environments determine their goal adoption. Specifically, students often hold mastery goals when lectures are engaging and when an evaluation focus and harsh evaluation are absent, while they endorse performance approach goals when there is an evaluation focus in the classroom. Additionally, if students perceive a presence of evaluation focus and harsh evaluation, they usually adopt performance avoidance goals. Another study measured the role of AGOs among college students, and the results revealed that those goal orientations contribute unique variance in predicting students' initial and long-term educational outcomes (Harackiewicz, Barron, Tauer, & Elliot, 2002).

Among college students, international students are often driven by motivations to learn a different culture and language, or to acquire advanced knowledge and skills (Lin & Wang, 2015). In terms of the AGOs of this population, studies havev identified international students, specifically, ESL international students who study in the US, display both mastery and performance goal orientations, and they often strive for excellence (Shi et al., 2001). For instance, Lou and Noels (2016) examined the goal orientations among 150 university-level students in language learning courses and revealed that ESL students use both mastery and performance approach goal orientations, and those who have a strong intention to learn the target language often have a high level of mastery goal orientations. In addition to varying approaches or motivations to learning, students will invariably experience and cope with academic stress differently.

This study summarizes that both mastery and performance approach goal orientations are positively associated with college students' motivation and performance in academic courses. Although previous studies explored AGO among college students, limited studies examine AGO by dividing students into American and ESL international student groups, and no known studies investigate the AGOs of ESL international students. As ESL international students have become an important student population in U.S. institutions, investigating the AGOs of these students will fill the gap in the literature and help college service providers better understand and assist them.

Academic Stressors Among College Students

Stress is an inevitable part of life and it is increasingly prevalent among college students (Blanco et al., 2008; Gallagher, 2012; Mackenzie, et al., 2011). Changes in personal relationships, employment, and finances often bring stress, even if it is positive change (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Academic stressors are obvious among college students, which often comes directly from their coursework. These stressors include meeting grade requirements, test taking, the volume of materials to be learned, time management, and job seeking (Crocker & Luhtanen, 2003; Kumaraswamy, 2013; Misra & McKean, 2000).

Several factors can lead to academic stressors among university students. For instance, Carveth, Gesse, and Moss (1996) noted that students understand the requirement to develop an extensive knowledge base, yet they perceive they have inadequate time to develop this body of knowledge. Additionally, students who experience academic stress often have less time to study for exams, complete assignments, and master course content. One reason students have less time to focus on academic work is that the majority of college students hold either part-time or full-time employment with only about 35% of college students reporting that they do not work (Nonis & Hudson, 2006). Similarly, Robotham (2009) found that 68% of the sample held at least one part-time job during term-time and that the majority were employed in excess of 10 hr per week. Specifically, research indicates that students often spend more hours working and fewer hours studying (Nonis & Hudson, 2006).

Academic stress is also associated with competition among classmates (Abouserie, 1994; Archer & Lamnin, 1985; Britton & Tesser, 1991; Kohn & Frazer, 1986). It is true that competition could drive students to put more effort in school work, but it could also generate unhealthy levels of stress and discourage persistence (Posselt & Lipson, 2016). In fact, high academic competition among peers is associated with underrepresented students' motivation and self-efficacy (Baldwin, 2009; Washburn & Miller, 2004). Furthermore, a degree is considered to be a necessary milestone to find a job for college students, thus, job seeking pressure also contributes to students' academic stress as they have to study and obtain the degrees for their future career (Kumaraswamy, 2013). Because of their nonresident status, ESL international students usually find it more difficult to find full-time jobs after graduation than American students in the US (Lee & Rice, 2007). As a result, job seeking is often a major concern and stressor for many ESL international students who desire to stay in the US after receiving their degrees (Shen & Herr, 2004).

Studies indicate that academic stressors can be detrimental to students' mental health (Kumaraswamy, 2013; M. C. Murphy & Archer, 1996) and academic performance (Campbell, Svenson, & Jarvis, 1992). For instance, Sohail (2013) examined stress levels and academic performance among 250 first-year medical students and found that academic performance is negatively correlated with level of stress. That is, a higher level of stress is linked to lower academic performance. Moreover, students' perceptions of stress as negative can impair their physical and psychological well-being (M. C. Murphy & Archer, 1996). Beiter and colleagues (2015) stated that college students must have a healthy attitude toward their academic goals, otherwise students could become overwhelmed by stress. This is important because student mental health contributes largely to the future well-being of society as students enter the workforce (Kumaraswamy, 2013). The level of stress a student faces can vary depending on many personal factors including whether or not they are an ESL international student.

Stressors of ESL International Students

ESL international students who study in U.S. institutions may encounter general challenges similar to American students such as financial issues, academic coursework, and interpersonal relationships. However, they also may face some unique issues such as language difficulties, cultural differences, and lack of social and academic supports (Baba & Hosoda, 2014; Brauss, Lin, & Baker, 2015; Lee & Rice, 2007). International students usually feel a sense of loss when leaving their families and friends behind and starting from scratch to establish a new and comparable social and academic support system in the US (Sandhu, 1995; Mesidor & Sly, 2016). These challenges are usually considered primary sources of stress for ESL international students, which can influence academic performance.

Language

Language difficulty is considered to be the primary challenge for a majority of ESL international students (Mori, 2000; Leong, 2015), which can prevent social interactions with American peers (Hayes & Lin, 1994). Students from non-English speaking countries, especially from Asian countries, usually struggle with language proficiency in English and this could influence their academic pursuits as they may not effectively embark on their academic programs (Stevens, Emil, & Yamashita, 2010; Zua, 2016). Additionally, language barriers might also lead to feelings of exclusion by other students during classroom discussions (Lee & Rice, 2007).

Culture and Social Support

ESL international students usually come from different cultural backgrounds, and cross-cultural differences in social interactions can make it difficult for them to establish close relationships with local students and find strong social supports (Baba & Hosoda, 2014; Thurber & Walton, 2012). When entering a new culture, many ESL international students need to deal with different beliefs and value systems,

communication patterns, signs and symbols of social contact, and interpersonal relationship patterns (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015). Wu and colleagues (2015) also noted that stereotypes sometimes lead to prejudice and discrimination, which hinder international students from receiving social support.

Besides, ESL international students often perceive isolation and loneliness when studying in the US (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015). For example, Yi and colleagues (2003) examined reasons why international students seek counseling services and found that many international students seek help when they have difficulties or psychological concerns and no way to lean on family and friends. However, Wu and colleagues (2015) noted that sometimes international students are not able to have the support they need because many people were not empathetic for hosting this student population, and counseling services are not widely used by international students.

Culture and Academic Support

ESL international students' academic experiences are influenced largely by their peers, faculty, and administrators (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). However, many ESL international students encounter difficulties in social interactions because of language and culture barriers; it is very challenging for them to interact with faculty members, college staff, and administrators (Lewthwaite, 1997). Furthermore, ESL international students have been reported to struggle in communicating with instructors because of the differences in collectivism and individualism across cultures. For example, Wu and colleagues (2015) indicated that some international students consider it rude to interrupt a professor when speaking, let alone to disagree or challenge their peers or professors. However, classroom discussion is a very commonly used teaching method in U.S. colleges, and is encouraged by professors. Because international students are afraid of expressing their opinions and avoid confrontation, they are usually considered not actively participating in the class. To bridge this culture gap, international students reported it would be helpful to have professors recognize them and provide more accommodation at the beginning of the class (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015; Mesidor & Sly, 2016).

Academic Stressors and Achievement Goal Orientations

Previous studies note that stressors, especially academic stressors, are negatively associated with motivation (Kleen, Sitorner, Killeen, & Conrad, 2006). For instance, Liu and Lu (2011) examined how high school students' academic stress affects their academic motivation in China and found that students' academic stressors negatively predicted intrinsic motivation. However, some studies argued that moderate stress would lead to high achievement motivation (Ramaprabou & Dash, 2018). Similarly, Struthers and colleagues (2000) investigated 203 college students and found that students' academic stressors have a direct positive relationship with motivation. Meanwhile, others discovered that academic stressors have no significant relationship with achievement motivations among undergraduate students (Karaman, Nelson, & Cavazos Vela, 2017). Thus, empirical evidence regarding the impact of academic

stressors on college students' motivation is mixed, and no firm conclusion could be reached.

Current Study

Due to mixed results in previous research and limited investigations of the relationship between academic stressors and AGOs, it is important to explore whether academic stressors predict college students' AGOs. As more and more international students travel and study in the US (Institute of International Education, 2017), it is also significant to examine their academic stress and goal orientations to better help them thrive in a new culture. Because of cultural influences, the differences in this association between international students and American students is also worth examining. International students are often defined as "nonimmigrant" visitors who choose to undertake all or part of their education (e.g., pursue degrees, take short-term classes) in a foreign country and move to that country temporarily for studying (Clark, 2009). In this study, we examined international students who were originally from non-English speaking countries and held a nonimmigrant visa to study in U.S. institutions. Finally, as students' goal orientations are meaningfully related to academic outcomes (Mega, Ronconi, & De Beni, 2014; Vecchione, Alessandri, & Marsicano, 2014), it is important to explore the relationship of academic stressors and students' goal orientations to help promote better academic outcomes among both American and ESL international students. To address these issues, the research questions guiding this study are:

1. Do American and ESL international students perceive academic stressors differently?
2. Do American and ESL international students have different AGOs?
3. Do levels of perceived academic stressors and student status (American or ESL international students) predict levels of AGOs?

METHODS

Participants

The target population of this study is students enrolled in two universities in the US. Student populations in these universities were divided into American and ESL international student samples. In this study, participants who originally came from non-English speaking countries and held nonimmigrant visa during their study are identified as ESL international students. A total number of 754 students participated in this study with 715 usable respondents (usable response rate equals to 94.8%).

Most participants were aged between 18 to 23 (92.3%). Among them, 133 (18.6%) reported being international students who originally came from non-English speaking countries including China, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and Vietnam, and 582 (81.4%) identified themselves as American students. The majority of participants were female students (81.1%). Additionally, most participants reported enrollment in undergraduate or university accelerator programs (95.3%) with 30.9% as freshman,

30.1% as sophomore, 15.8% as junior, 7.6% as senior, and 10.9% as university accelerator programs. An accelerator program involves training ESL international students with intensive academic English skills and/or American culture before beginning regular academic courses. In addition to taking language classes, students in accelerator programs also take one or two regular academic courses each semester in their chosen majors.

Instruments

Perception of Academic Stress Scale

The Perception of Academic Stress Scale (PAS) was developed by Bedewy and Gabriel (2015). The PAS is an 18-item 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). These items assess four perspectives of students: pressures to perform, perceptions of workload and examinations, self-perceptions, and time restraints. Pressure to perform consists of five items and assesses excessive stress from competitive peer pressures, parents' expectations, and teachers' critical comments on students' performance. Perceptions of workload and examinations consists of four items and measures stressors related to excessive workload, lengthy assignments, and worry about failing exams. Self-perceptions consists of five items and captures academic self-confidence and confidence for success as a student and in their future career and confidence in making good academic decisions. Time restraints is assessed by six items and refers to stressors as a result of limited time allocated to classes, inability to complete homework, difficulty catching up if behind, and limited time to relax. In each subscale of the PAS, higher scores indicate a higher level of stress. Five items were reversed-scored to make consistent with the AGO instrument scoring pattern. This inventory has an original Cronbach's alpha ranging from .5 to .6, and the Cronbach's alpha of the instrument in this study ranges from .60 to .63.

Achievement Goal Questionnaire

The Achievement Goal Questionnaire (AGQ) was developed by Elliot and McGregor (2001). The AGQ-R is a 12-item 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). These items assess students' four AGOs (mastery approach, mastery avoidance, performance approach, and performance avoidance) regarding their academic performance. According to this 2 × 2 model of AGO, mastery approach goal orientation indicates students are interested in truly mastering an academic task. Mastery avoidance goal orientation refers to students who are trying to avoid misunderstanding academic tasks. Students who hold performance approach goal orientations prefer to demonstrate that they are more competent than other students, while performance avoidance goal-oriented students are interested in avoiding appearing more incompetent than their peers. Higher scores imply higher levels of a specific AGO. The original internal consistency Cronbach's alpha of mastery approach goal orientation (MAP), mastery avoidance goal orientation (MAV), performance approach goal orientation (PAP), and performance avoidance

goal orientation (PAV) were .84, .88, .92, and .94, respectively (Elliot & Murayama, 2008). Cronbach's alpha for each AGO in the current study was .75, .81, .86, and .75, respectively.

Procedure

Following Institutional Review Board approval, researchers conducted an online survey ($N = 754$) at two universities to assess students' college experiences. Because the majority of international students in the US are from China, the measures were translated into Chinese by two researchers who are fluent in both English and Chinese using the translation and back-translation technique to ensure translation accuracy. The survey allowed participants the language choice of English or Chinese. Data collection took place in March and April 2018 at two universities.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS 23.0. One-way multiple analyses of variance (MANOVA) was used to explore the levels of PAS and AGOs between American and ESL international students to investigate the first and second research questions. A series of multiple regression using stepwise procedure was conducted to investigate the relationships between predictors (student status and four academic stressors) and criterion variables (four different AGOs) in order to find the best prediction model for each criterion variable. The significant level of Box's M was set as .001 (Mertler & Vannatta, 2002), whereas the alpha level was set at .05.

RESULTS

RQ1: Do American and ESL international students perceive academic stressors differently?

We investigated Research Question 1 by conducting one-way MANOVAs. Box's M test indicated that covariance matrices of the dependent variables were not equal across groups ($p < .001$), hence Pillai trace was used to assess the multivariate effect. There was a statistically significant difference in AGOs between American and ESL international students with a small effect size, Pillai's Trace = .03, $F(4, 708) = 4.45$, $p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$. Univariate ANOVA follow-up results indicated that only the levels of time restraints, $F(1, 713) = 9.07$, $p = .003$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$, were significantly different between American and ESL international students with a small effect size (see Table 1). Results indicated that American students had a slightly higher level of stress related to time restraints ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 0.63$) than that of ESL international students ($M = 2.51$, SD = 0.56).

Table 1: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of Perception of Academic Stress

Stress	American students (n = 581)		ESL international students (n = 132)				
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	$F_{(1, 713)}$	*p*	Partial η^2
Pressure	2.87	0.68	2.85	0.65	1.51	.70	<.001
Workload	3.21	0.76	3.14	0.64	0.93	.34	.001
Self-perception	2.50	0.69	2.60	0.62	2.18	.14	.003
Time restraints	2.69	0.63	2.51	0.56	9.07	.003	.01

RQ2: Do American and ESL international students have different AGOs?

We investigated Research Question 2 by conducting one-way MANOVAs. Box's M test indicated that covariance matrices of the dependent variables were not equal across groups ($p < .001$), hence Pillai trace was used to assess the multivariate effect. There was a statistically significant difference in the AGOs between American and ESL international students with a large effect size, Pillai's Trace = .242, $F(4, 708) = 56.5$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .24$.

Univariate ANOVA follow-up results indicated that the level of MAP, $F(1, 713) = 33.92$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$; PAP, $F(1, 713) = 4.46$, $p = .04$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$; and PAV, $F(1, 713) = 147.96$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .17$, were significantly different between American and ESL international students with a small to large effect size (Table 2). The results indicated that ESL international learners had a higher level of MAV and PAP than American learners. However, American students had a higher level of PAV than that of their ESL international counterparts.

Table 2: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of Achievement Goal Orientations (AGOs)

AGO	American Students (n = 580)		ESL International Students (n = 133)				
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	$F_{(1, 713)}$	*p*	Partial η^2
MAP	3.84	0.70	3.94	0.67	2.44	.12	.003
MAV	2.96	0.86	3.52	0.82	46.66	<.001	.06
PAP	3.07	1.00	3.27	0.77	4.46	.04	.01
PAV	4.05	0.75	3.16	0.83	147.96	<.001	.17

Note: MAP = Mastery Approach Goal Orientation; MAV = Mastery Avoidance Goal Orientation; PAP = Performance Approach Goal Orientation; PAV = Performance Avoidance Goal Orientation.

RQ3: Do levels of perceived academic stressors and student status (American or ESL international students) predict of the level of AGOs?

We conducted a series of multiple regression using stepwise procedure to investigate this research question. American students were coded as 1, and ESL international students were coded as 0.

Master Approach Goal Orientation

Results indicate that levels of students' pressures to perform, perceptions of workload and examinations, self-perceptions, and time restraints can predict levels of MAP, $F(4, 711) = 9.36$, $p < .001$. Five percent of variance in the level of MAP can be accounted for by the linear combination of the levels of all four academic stressors ($R_2 = .05$). For every unit the level of pressure to perform increases, the level of MAP increases by 0.14 units while the level of other stressors remains the same ($\beta = 0.14$, $t[711] = 2.91$, $p = .004$). For every unit the level of perceptions of workload and examinations increases, the level of MAP increases by 0.10 units while others stays the same ($\beta = 0.10$, $t[711] = 2.29$, $p = .02$). For every unit the level of self-perceptions increases, the level of MAP decreases by 0.17 units while others stays the same ($\beta = -0.17$, $t[711] = -3.91$, $p < .001$). For every unit the level of time restrain increases, the level of MAP decrease by 0.20 units while the level of other stressors remains the same ($\beta = -0.20$, $t[711] = -3.89$, $p < .001$.

Master Avoidance Goal Orientation

Results indicate that levels of students' pressures to perform, perceptions of workload and examinations, and student status can predict levels of MAV, $F(3, 711) = 58.27$, $p < .001$. Twenty percent of variance in the level of MAP can be accounted for by the linear combination of the levels of these variables ($R_2 = .20$). For every unit the level of pressure to perform increases, the level of MAV increases by 0.19 units while the level of other variables remains the same ($\beta = 0.19$, $t[711] = 2.63$, $p < .001$). For every unit the level of perceptions of workload and examinations increases, the level of MAV increases by 0.32 units while others stays the same ($\beta = 0.32$, $t(711) = 6.75$, $p < .001$). Additionally, American students had significantly lower levels of MAV compared with ESL international students ($\beta = -0.59$, $t[711] = -7.68$, $p < .001$).

Performance Approach Goal Orientation

Results indicate that levels of students' pressures to perform, self-perceptions, and student status can predict levels of PAP, $F(3, 711) = 39.19$, $p < .001$. Fourteen percent of variance in the level of MAP can be accounted for by the linear combination of the levels of these variables ($R_2 = .14$). For every unit the level of

pressure to perform increases, the level of PAP increases by 0.56 units while the level of other variables remains the same ($\beta = 0.56$, $t[711] = 10.37$, $p < .001$). For every unit the level of self-perceptions increases, the level of PAP decreases by 0.32 units while others stays the same ($\beta = -0.32$, $t[711] = -5.95$, $p < .001$). Additionally, American students had significantly lower levels of PAP compared with ESL international students ($\beta = -0.23$, $t(711) = -2.71$, $p = .007$).

Performance Avoidance Goal Orientation (PAV)

Results indicate that levels of students' pressures to perform, perceptions of workload and examinations, and student status predict levels of PAV, $F(3, 711) = 78.35$, $p < .001$. Twenty-five percent of variance in the level of MAP can be accounted for by the linear combination of the levels of these variables ($R_2 = .25$). For every unit the level of pressure to perform increases, the level of PAV increases by 0.23 units while the level of other variables remains the same ($\beta = 0.23$, $t[711] = 4.80$, $p < .001$). For every unit the level of perceptions of workload and examinations increases, the level of PAV decreases by 0.15 units while others stays the same ($\beta = 0.15$, $t(711) = 3.34$, $p < .001$). Additionally, American students had significantly higher levels of PAV compared with ESL international students ($\beta = 0.88$, $t(711) = 12.5$, $p = .001$).

Table 3: Multiple Regression Results

DV	R_2	F	df	p	Predictors	β	$t(711)$	p
MAP	.05	9.36	4,711	<.001	Pressures to perform	0.14	2.91	.004
					Perceptions of workload and examinations	0.10	2.29	.02
					Self-perceptions	-0.17	-3.91	<.001
					Time restrains	-0.20	-3.89	<.001
MAV	.20	58.27	3,711	<.001	Pressures to perform	0.19	2.63	<.001
					Self-perceptions	0.32	6.75	<.001
					Student status	-0.59	-7.68	<.001
PAP	.14	39.19	3,711	<.001	Pressures to perform	0.56	10.37	<.001
					Self-perceptions	-0.32	-5.95	<.001
					Student status	-0.23	-2.71	.007
PAV	.25	78.35	3,711	<.001	Pressures to perform	0.23	4.80	<.001
					Perceptions of workload	0.15	3.34	<.001

DV	R_2	F	df	p	Predictors	β	$t(711)$	p
					and examinations			
					Student status	0.88	12.5	.001

DISCUSSION

Results of this study revealed that ESL international students hold higher levels of mastery goal orientations and performance approach goal orientations than their American counterparts do, whereas American students are more performance avoidance goal-oriented. These findings indicate that ESL international students often have a stronger desire to acquire knowledge and master academic tasks, and they may compete with their peers, while American students are more interested in avoiding appearing that they lack the skills or knowledge to be proficient in a course. Previous studies concluded that better time management usually results in less stress among college students (Nonis, Hudson, Logan, & Ford, 1998; Schuler, 1979). Specifically, findings of the present study also indicate that American students have a slightly higher level of time restraints compared with ESL international students. This finding implies that American students may have more stressors in terms of managing time to allocate to classes and to finish assignments, and they may have more difficulty to catch up if left behind, and may have less time to relax during the learning process.

In terms of the relationship between academic stress and levels of AGOs, results indicate that students' pressure to perform is a positive predictor of all AGOs among both ESL international and American students. In other words, students' excessive stressors from competitive peer pressures, their parents' expectation, and/or instructors' critical comments on their performance positively influence their motivation in acquiring knowledge and mastering academic tasks. This finding echoes previous studies that academic stressors may potentially motivate students' learning desire and competency (Kumaraswamy, 2013; Murphy & Archer, 1996).

Additionally, self-perceptions negatively predict mastery approach goal orientations and performance approach goal orientation. This result indicates that students' academic self-confidence, confidence for success in their future career, and confidence in making the right academic decisions influence their intentions to actively master the knowledge. Meanwhile, these types of confidence prevent them from competing with their peers, but positively drive them to avoid misunderstanding of certain knowledge. Students' perceptions of workload and examinations only predict students' performance avoidance goal orientation positively, indicating that a student with a higher level of stressors relating to excessive workload, lengthy assignments, and panic about failing exams would have a high level of intention to learn a course in order to avoid showing that s/he lacks the skills or knowledge to be proficient in this course. This finding in some level demonstrates previous conclusions that students' psychological experiences would be impaired if stress is perceived negatively (Murphy & Archer, 1996) as their attitudes and intentions toward learning becomes passive. Time restraints only predict mastery approach goal orientation, revealing that fewer stressors of time management would result in a higher level of actively approach learning.

Finally, students' status predicts levels of the four goal orientations. ESL international students have a higher level of mastery goal orientation and performance approach goal orientation than American students, while American students have a higher level of performance avoidance goal orientation than their ESL international counterparts. These findings indicate that ESL international students are probably more likely to show their competitiveness in learning with other students and they try to avoid misunderstanding or misusing certain knowledge. These findings mirror previous studies that international students, especially ESL students, adopt both mastery and performance approach goal orientations, and these students often strive for excellence (Lou & Noels, 2016; Shi et al., 2001; Woodrow & Chapman, 2002). Meanwhile, American students were found to have a lower score of performance avoidance goal orientation, meaning that they tend to avoid showing that they may not learn well in a course compared with their peers. It is possible that peer pressures would contribute to this finding as peer pressures relate with students' performance and competition (Bedewy & Gabriel, 2015). However, more research is needed.

One factor that may contribute to the findings of the present study is the cultural differences between ESL international students and American students. Most participants in this study who identified as ESL international students came from East Asian countries (e.g., China, Korea). Culture could play an important role in motivating them to compete and succeed. For example, parents in many East Asian countries usually have high expectations for their children to be competitive and become successful in school (Boyd, Hunt, Kandell, & Lucas, 2003). More research is needed to explore this interpretation.

IMPLICATIONS

When teaching college students in universities, instructors should establish expectations for students to encourage them to master academic tasks. Because college students often hold performance orientations, competitions or/and group projects could be applied in a course to motivate college students to acquire knowledge. Meanwhile, instructors and advisors should help students to build self-confidence and provide them a proper guidance during their academic and future career path. Higher educational professionals should also encourage students to use resources such as career centers in order to receive useful suggestions and advice for their academic decisions and future careers.

Additionally, students with a heavier assignment and exam workload are more likely to learn because they try to avoid showing that they lack the skills to learn course content. Therefore, assigning a sufficient amount of work and exams is necessary and helps students maintain positive learning attitudes and build self-confidence in learning. Finally, higher educational professionals should consider assisting college students to better utilize their time in order to enhance their motivations in actively approaching learning. As mentioned above, it would be helpful to suggest students visit departments such as career centers to get advice regarding balancing their time in and out of class.

Assisting ESL International Students

Based on these findings, it is significant for faculty to provide learning materials for ESL international students as they are interested in seeking knowledge and mastering an academic task. Additionally, these students desire to show that they are more competent than their classmates in mastering an academic task. Therefore, a proper use of competition in class would be effective to enhance their learning motivation. In terms of academic stressors, ESL international students would better manage their time to allocate classes and complete homework, and they would have less pressure to catch up if left behind and have more time to relax during the learning process. Therefore, instructors could help these students to improve their time planning and provide enough support and assistance such as available office hours and timely feedback.

Assisting American Students

During their learning process, American students try to avoid appearing that they lack the skills or knowledge in mastering academic tasks. As a result, instructors should focus on establishing confidence among these students, and to use competition or group projects in class in order to motivate them to learn. In terms of academic stressors, American students tend to worry about using their time efficiently to finish assignments, catch up with others, and/or they may have less time to relax during the learning process. Therefore, instructors should help these students to develop better time management skills. For example, instructors could assist them to set up long-term and/or short-term goals, and weekly timelines or schedules. Instructors should also show enough encouragement and support to these students including office hours and timely feedback.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDY

This study relied on an online self-report questionnaire, so future research should include qualitative studies such as focus groups or interviews to further explore stressors and AGOs of ESL international and American students. This could illuminate additional findings not shown through quantitative survey data. Additionally, data was collected from two research institutions in the US; therefore, results do not represent all college students in America. Furthermore, most participants in this study were enrolled in undergraduate programs and most of them were female students; therefore, these results may not be generalized to diverse audiences or graduate students. As a consequence, more diverse students should be recruited in future research to explore the association between academic stressors and AGOs. Furthermore, this study only took student status (ESL international or American) into consideration; other variables that may influence their stress and AGOs are not included. Home cultures may also associate with students' academic stress and motivations to learn. Therefore, factors including degrees, gender, majors, and/or cultures should be included to further examine whether those variables have an influence on the relationships between these variables. Finally, students who take

accelerated programs before enrolling into the regular academic programs may have different stressors compared to those who are already in regular degree programs. Future studies should also distinguish students from these programs.

In conclusion, this study examined associations between academic stressors and AGOs of college students. Students' status (ESL international vs. American) was specifically explored as ESL international students have become an important student population in U.S. institutions. Results also indicate that ESL international and American students hold different AGOs, and these two student groups experience different academic stressors. Additionally, student status and academic stressors predict AGOs among college students. Results can help enhance the understanding of these two student groups among higher educational professionals and may help motivate instructors and institutions to better assist international students to succeed in academia.

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Analysis of Social Adjustment Factors of International Students in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

International student mobility is an important issue in many countries. In 2016, the number of international students reached 5 million worldwide. Turkey has attracted international students since the 1990s; however, the influx of such students has increased notably since 2009. In this study, we analyze factors affecting the social adjustment of international students studying at Usak University in Turkey. Participants' questionnaire responses were grouped via factor analysis, and pertinent factors affecting social adjustment were revealed through logistic regression analysis. Results indicate that feeling safe and communicating with counseling services and university lecturers can facilitate international students' social adjustment at Usak University.

Keywords: factor analysis, international students, logit model, social adjustment, Usak University

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics' Global Education Digest (2006), an *internationally mobile student* refers to an individual who has left his/her home country or birthplace to relocate to another country or territory for the purpose of studying. Students traveling to Turkey to pursue education were legally labeled *foreign students* in 1983; since 2011, foreign students in Turkey have been called *international students*. Under the coordination of the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities, Turkey published the "International Students Strategy Paper" in 2012. International students were defined thusly: "Students, who are non-

citizens of the Republic of Turkey, coming to Turkey with a student visa or special permit with Turkey for the purpose of studying in social educational institutions at all levels and branches, [or] cultural [and] professional development of students studying on their own account or with a scholarship" (Üniversitelerarası Kurul (Turkish Interuniversity Council) [ÜAK], 2016). The number of foreign students enrolled in higher education programs worldwide grew from 0.8 million in the late 1970s to 5 million in 2016 (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2018). This increase in foreign registration can be attributed to various internal and external factors, such as push (supporting outward mobility) and pull (supporting inward mobility) factors. As the growing needs of information-based and innovation-focused economies have spurred demand for higher education around the world, local training capacities have not grown fast enough to meet ever-increasing domestic demand. Growing economies in developing countries have caused an increasing population of middle-class children to seek educational opportunities abroad. Additionally, economic, technological, and cultural factors have led international student mobility to become substantially more economical and less irrecoverable than in the past. Initiatives at the national, regional, local, supranational, and institutional levels have also contributed to cross-border mobility (OECD, 2017). The purpose of this study is to identify issues of social adjustment among international students studying at Usak University, Turkey. This paper aims to promote the social adjustment of more than 3000 international students from approximately 90 countries who were registered at the university in 2017.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY IN TURKEY

International student mobility in Turkey has grown since the 1990s. Beginning in the 1992–93 academic year, the number of students coming to Turkey on scholarship under the Grand Student Project grew dramatically (Kavak & Baskan, 2001). The number of international students, which stood at about 48,000 four years ago, now exceeds 148,000 (Yükseköğretim Kurulu (Turkish Council of Higher Education) [YÖK], 2019). However, this figure is quite low compared to the number of international students studying in countries with leading positions in international education such as the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, and Australia. Ebbs and flows in the number of international students in Turkey throughout the past 30 years suggest that the country has not followed a stable policy in this regard (Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı (SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research) [SETA], 2017).

Table 1: Total Inbound and Outbound International Students (World and Turkey)

Years	Total Inbound International Students (Turkey)	Total International Student Mobility (World)	Total Outbound Internationally Mobile Tertiary Students Studying Abroad
1999	18,337	2,009,533	51,299
2000	17,654	2,082,469	51,608
2001	16,656	2,172,735	52,083
2002	16,328	2,468,440	55,457
2003	12,729	2,678,468	55,318
2004	15,298	2,736,306	55,523
2005	18,166	2,853,455	55,412
2006	19,079	2,927,864	37,452
2007	19,257	3,102,835	39,304
2008	20,219	3,316,524	44,030
2009	21,898	3,512,753	49,928
2010	25,838	3,748,260	51,888
2011	31,118	3,940,649	50,932
2012	38,590	4,011,439	48,953
2013	54,387	4,122,176	45,469
2014	48,183	4,337,288	45,326
2015	72,178	4,606,719	45,727

Source: UNESCO: Outbound internationally mobile students by host region, http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?queryid=172;OECD:http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2017_eag-2017-en (16.11.2017).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Adjustment of International Students

Social adjustment can be defined as a psychological process that includes handling of new social standards and values for individual acceptance (Jain, 2012). Integrating into the social life of a university, a city, and a country; building an environmental network; and managing social freedoms in a new environment are important elements of social adjustment (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Thus, social adjustment poses an enduring challenge for international students. These students

may face difficulties in adapting to the host society, establishing and maintaining new social relationships, and developing a sense of belonging. According to recent studies, factors such as language barriers, cultural differences, and perceived discrimination are related to international students' challenges in adapting to a host society (Ma, 2017).

Ward and Kennedy (1993) investigated sociocultural adjustment among 178 New Zealand American Field Service students in 23 countries. Their findings revealed that students' longing for home, external locus of control, life changes, and social difficulties constituted 55% of the variance in psychological adjustment. Searle and Ward (1990) analyzed adjustment problems among international students by distinguishing between psychological and sociocultural adaptation patterns during intercultural transition. They employed multiple regression models and discovered that 34% of the variance in psychological adjustment involved students' satisfaction when interacting with residents of the host country, sociability, life changes, and social difficulties. Additionally, 36% of the variance in sociocultural adjustment consisted of cultural distance, expected difficulty, and depression.

Once international students leave their regional social environment and arrive in the country in which they will be studying, they must adapt socially sooner or later. These students need to adjust to a new environment, socialize independently, communicate and cooperate with strangers, and cope with new environmental pressures and impressions. International students must also adapt to a new culture, individual relationships, dating etiquette, and customs. The success of these adjustments will influence how well students can build a social network (Chen & Chen, 2009).

According to Nasir (2012), international students encounter a variety of social and academic adjustment issues in their new country. Common problems include challenges in language and communication; accommodation-related stress; and adapting to different types of cuisine, climatic conditions, and friendships. International students' academic success is directly related to resolving these problems. Newsome and Cooper (2016) analyzed international students' cultural and social adjustment process and pointed out that students studying abroad confronted a three-stage process: students initially have high expectations, then encounter culture shock, and finally develop possible adjustment strategies.

Social Adjustment of International Students in Turkey

The number of international students enrolled in higher education in Turkey has been increasing, particularly since 2009. Yet this growth has also introduced challenges related to these students' academic, social, and cultural adjustment. Köleoğlu (2018) found that international students' social adjustment issues involve economics, education, and incorrect Turkish language use. Kılıçlar, Sarı, and Seçilmiş (2012) performed factor analysis to examine adjustment problems among students coming to Turkey from the Turkic Republics and Communities and

identified five dimensions: language problems, financial problems, sociocultural adjustment problems, orientation problems, and personal problems. These results were consistent with factors obtained by Kashima and Loh (2006) and Brisset et al. (2010). Kılıçlar, Sarı, and Seçilmiş (2012) also uncovered an inverse relationship between international students' academic achievement and language problems; that is, their academic performance declined as the extent of their language adaptation problems increased.

Cura ve Işık (2016) noted that social support positively affects the academic adjustment of international students studying in Turkey. Specifically, students exhibited a high level of academic adjustment if they had a high level of social support. Although a significant and positive correlation was observed between academic adjustment and perceived social support, academic adjustment showed a negative correlation with cultural stress.

Kağnıcı (2012) explored international students' university adjustment on the basis of demographics (e.g., gender, age, and length of residence) and multicultural personality variables (e.g., cultural empathy, open-mindedness, flexibility, emotional stability, and social initiative). Social initiative and emotional stability contributed significantly to students' social adjustment. Although certain demographic variables did not significantly affect these students' university adjustment, five of Kağnıcı's selected multicultural personality variables (*emotional initiative, emotional stability, cultural empathy and open-mindedness*) did affect their adjustment. Kartal, Işık, and Yazıcı (2018) found that a sample of international students demonstrated a high level of adjustment at a public university in Turkey. Their findings indicated that variables such as gender, economic status, place of residence, and Turkish education exerted important influences on international students' academic and social adjustment.

Studies related to adjustment problems among international students studying at Turkish universities have become increasingly prevalent in recent years. Identifying and resolving such adjustment problems are essential to promoting internationalization of these universities. This study aims to investigate international students' social adjustment at Usak University. Findings also offer insight into international student adjustment at other universities in Turkey.

METHOD

This research involved a quantitative study based on a questionnaire distributed to international students enrolled at Usak University. The instrument, consisting of 117 items, was intended to measure international students' academic and social adjustment. Questionnaires were completed in person, and participants were determined using random sampling. Excluding errors and questions with no responses, 570 questionnaires were retained for analysis. This figure is substantially higher than the minimum value for a population of about 3000 students, according to sampling theory (Fox et al., 2009). Survey participants were included from all departments of Usak University; 77% of students surveyed were men, and 23% were

women. Regarding the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was 0.94, indicating high reliability.

Questionnaire items were grouped via factor analysis, after which logistic regression analysis was applied to the obtained factors. Factor analysis is a statistical technique used to decrease large numbers of variables to fewer, more meaningful variables. This approach aims to reveal hidden dimensions that are known but not directly observable while reducing the total number of variables (Karagöz, 2016). Specifically, factor analysis generates variables (i.e., *factors*) with labels by grouping together variables that are not explicitly related but can be used to describe an event, especially in the social and human sciences.

The linear factor model can be applied to determine the k unobservable factors that are linearly dependent on X data matrix but are independent of one another while considering the error or special factor effect. The linear factor model can be written as follows (Özdamar, 2010):

$$X_1 - \mu_1 = l_{11} F_1 + l_{12} F_2 + \ldots + l_{1k} F_k + \varepsilon_1$$
$$X_2 - \mu_2 = l_{21} F_1 + l_{22} F_2 + \ldots + l_{2k} F_k + \varepsilon_2$$
$$\vdots$$
$$X_p - \mu_p = l_{p1} F_1 + l_{p2} F_2 + \ldots + l_{pk} F_k + \varepsilon_p$$

where l_{ij} denotes a factor loading (i.e., *i* variable loading over *j* factor).

Logistic regression is an extension of multiple regression analysis, wherein the dependent or output variable is categorical. In real life, cases involving categorical output variables are quite common. The logit of Y from X is predicted from the logistic model; the logit is the natural logarithm (ln) of the odds of Y. Odds refer to probability ratios (π), namely the likelihood of Y occurring to the likelihood ($1 - \pi$) of Y not occurring. The logistic model can be simply demonstrated through the following form (Peng et al., 2002):

$$\text{Logit (Y)} = \text{natural log (odds)} = \ln(\pi/(1-\pi)) = \alpha + \beta X;$$

Taking the antilog of the above equation, we obtain the following equation to predict the probability that an outcome of interest will occur:

$$\pi = \text{Probability (Y = interest outcome} \setminus \text{X = x, a specific value of X)} = \frac{e^{\alpha+\beta x}}{1+e^{\alpha+\beta x}}$$

where α is the Y intercept, β is the regression coefficient, and e = (2.71828) is the base of the system of natural logarithms. X can be categorical or continuous, whereas Y is always categorical.

RESULTS

Factor Analysis

The results of our factor analysis revealed 10 factors, nine of which could be labeled; the remaining factor was excluded from analysis because it was comprised of unrelated variables. Factor 1 contained 9 items; Factor 2 contained 6 items; Factor 3 contained 4 items; Factor 4 contained 3 items; Factor 5 contained 4 items; Factor 6 contained 6 items; and Factors 7, 8, and 9 each contained 3 items as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Factors and Variables Constituting Each Factor

Factor no.	Factor name	Constituent variables
1	Psychological adjustment	• I cannot control my emotions • Usually I feel alone • I feel very tired • I make hard decisions about school • I feel I have lost control of my life in general • I feel more pessimistic and depressed since I came to Turkey • I feel culturally disengaged with the environment • I feel more nervous and frustrated since I came to Turkey • University education is not important to me
2	Counseling services	• I think that counseling services are effective in solving my problems • I can reach counseling services when I want

		• When I have a problem, I apply for counseling services • My counselor guides me to improve my performance in my classes • I am generally pleased with the attitudes and behaviors of my lecturers • I am generally satisfied with the attitudes and behaviors of University employees
3	Making friends	• I have many friends at the university • I think that I am capable of establishing social relationships at the university • I usually get along well with Turkish students at the university • I usually get along well with my friends or colleagues that I am living with
4	Getting used to university	• I do not think I can get used to university • I prefer to be at home rather than at the university • I think about leaving the university and returning to my country

5	Feeling safe (province and university)	• I feel safe in Usak • I feel safe at the university • I am pleased with Usak people's attitudes toward foreign organizations • I am pleased with my accommodations
6	Communication with lecturers	• I am usually successful on exams • I can communicate easily with the lecturer • When I do not understand a lecture, I request clarification from the lecturer • I can understand lectures in general • I can easily chat with lecturers about anything • I mostly attend university lectures
7	Skills to build friendships	• I can build friendships • I can build friendships with the opposite sex • I can establish friendships outside my country
8	Social activities	• I am pleased with the social opportunities • I feel like I am at home even when I am at the university • I attend many social activities at the university
9	Discrimination (province and university)	• My university friends are mostly from my own country

	• I think that foreign students are discriminated against outside of the university • I think that foreign students are discriminated against at the university

Logistic Regression Analysis

The problem of social adjustment has been examined from various dimensions in the literature. For example, Gabel, Dolan, and Cerdin (2005) considered the cultural adjustment of international managers from three dimensions. Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou (1991) used a similar method to study social adjustment via the same three dimensions investigated in Gabel, Dolan, and Cerdin(2005): sociocultural adjustment, workplace adjustment, and general adjustment. Accordingly, we analyzed international students' social adjustment in terms of Usak province, Usak University, and environment/friendship. These are dimensions meant to be analogous to sociocultural, workplace, and general adjustment, respectively. Findings appear in Tables 3–5. Table 3 presents factors affecting the provincial social adjustment of the students studying at Usak University. The item "Usak province generally meets my expectations" was taken as the dependent variable.

Table 3: Dependent Variable: "Usak Province Generally Meets My Expectations"

	B	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	Significance	Exp(B)
Factor1	.182	.194	.878	.349	1.200
Factor2	.838	.206	16.618	.000	2.312
Factor3	.315	.197	2.552	.110	1.370
Factor4	.142	.179	.630	.427	1.153
Factor5	1.158	.203	32.628	.000	3.182
Factor6	.736	.182	16.399	.000	2.087
Factor7	.404	.174	5.366	.021	1.498
Factor8	.999	.208	23.119	.000	2.717
Factor9	.499	.198	6.332	.012	1.647

Constant	.908	.190	22.963	.000	2.480

In the model, the reference category was that Usak province generally *did not* meet international students' expectations (i.e., students did not socialize). Results of the omnibus test indicated that the model was significant at the 5% level according to the Chi-square test. The degree of disclosure of the dependent variable of the Nagelkerke $R_2 = 0.51$. The correct estimation of the model was 80.8%, and all variables had positive values; these findings reflect improved provincial social adjustment among surveyed international students because of changes in relevant variables. Factor 5 (*Feeling safe*), Factor 8 (*Social activities*), Factor 2 (*Counseling services*), and Factor 6 (*Communication with lecturers*) had the greatest impacts of all factors. *Feeling safe* exerted the strongest effect on social adjustment. Factor 9 related to expressing discrimination was found to increase social adjustment, but this result was unexpected. The provincial social adjustment variable was particularly influenced by institutional factors. Regulation of institutional factors to increase social adjustment also increased the social adjustment of those expressing discrimination. This pattern underscores the importance of institutional arrangements in countries' efforts to attract international students. International students can enhance their social adjustment when engaging in social activities, counseling, and productive communication with university lecturers, even when they think they are being discriminated against.

Table 4 lists factors affecting university-based social adjustment of international students at Usak University. The item "I think that I have made the right decision by choosing Usak University" served as the dependent variable.

Table 4: Dependent Variable: "I think that I have made the right decision by choosing Usak University"

	B	Standard Error	Wald Statistic	Significance	Exp(B)
Factor1	-.290	.236	1.510	.219	.748
Factor2	.693	.222	9.800	.002	2.001
Factor3	-.085	.212	.162	.687	.918
Factor4	-.390	.225	2.996	.083	.677
Factor5	.944	.230	16.916	.000	2.571
Factor6	.449	.209	4.602	.032	1.567

Factor7	.401	.204	3.866	.049	1.493
Factor8	.532	.206	6.662	.010	1.703
Factor9	.419	.222	3.557	.059	1.521
Constant	2.435	.256	90.647	.000	11.421

In the model, the reference category consisted of students who did not socialize at the university (i.e., lack of agreement with the item "I have made the right decision by choosing Usak University"). The omnibus test indicated that the model was significant at the 5% level according to the Chi-square results. The degree of disclosure of the dependent variable Nagelkerke $R_2 = 0.35$, and the correct estimation of the model was 90.3%.

All variables in the model demonstrated positive values except for those in Factor 1 (*Psychological adjustment*), Factor 3 (*Making friends*), and Factor 4 (*Getting used to university*). Variables in Factors 1 and 3 were statistically insignificant, whereas those in Factor 4 was significant at only 10%. The most important variable affecting international students' social adjustment at Usak University involved Factor 5 (*Feeling safe*). Another important variable affecting dependent variable was counseling services. Discrimination was significant at the 10% level and appeared to promote social adjustment in the university, which was unexpected. However, this finding implies that positive institutional factors will positively affect international students' social adjustment even in the face of discrimination. In this case, institutional regulations can positively influence international students by minimizing potential discrimination. Even if international students encounter discrimination, institutional factors can increase these students' social adjustment to Usak University.

Table 5 displays factors affecting international students' social adjustment relative to their environment and friendships when studying at Usak University. The dependent variable was the item "I have a lot of friends who share my problems and with whom I can communicate."

Table 5: Dependent Variable: "I have a lot of friends who share my problems and with whom I can communicate"

	B	**Standard Error**	**Wald Statistic**	**Significance**	**Exp(B)**
Factor1	-.067	.166	.165	.685	.935
Factor2	.364	.151	5.763	.016	1.439
Factor3	.916	.177	26.867	.000	2.500

Factor4	.560	.164	11.708	.001	1.750
Factor5	.411	.151	7.436	.006	1.508
Factor6	.423	.156	7.367	.007	1.526
Factor7	.210	.149	1.975	.160	1.233
Factor8	.072	.154	.219	.640	1.075
Factor9	-.103	.159	.414	.520	.903
Constant	1.163	.160	52.878	.000	3.199

In the model, the reference category included students who did not have many friends who shared their problems and with whom they could communicate (i.e., limited social adjustment in terms of the environment/friendships). Findings from the omnibus test reveal that the model was significant at the 5% level according to the Chi-square results. The degree of disclosure of the dependent variable of the Nagelkerke $R_2 = 0.31$. The correct predict degree of the model was 80.3%.

In the model, all variables aside from those in Factor 1 (*Psychological adjustment*), Factor 7 (*Skills to build friendships*), Factor 8 (*Social activities*), and Factor 9 (Discrimination) were statistically significant. Factors 1 and 9 showed negative values. As expected, Factor 3 (*Making friends*) was most influential in international students' social adjustment. The model results revealed that variables in Factor 4 (*Getting used to university*), Factor 5 (*Feeling safe*), and Factor 6 (*Communication with lecturers*) significantly influenced international students' social adjustment. Therefore, establishing friendships, getting used to university, communicating with university lecturers, and feeling self were the most important variables shaping international students' social adjustment.

DISCUSSION

In this study, factors affecting the social adjustment of international students at Usak University in Turkey were analyzed. Turkey has attracted international students since the early 1990s; however, the number of international students has not remained stable since. Although international students in Turkey are predominantly from countries that are culturally similar to Turkey, social adjustment remains an important issue.

Our results reveal that feeling safe, participating in social activities, using counseling services, and communication with lecturers were important variables influencing international students' adaptation to their place of residence. Interestingly, feeling safe was the most crucial variable affecting provincial social adjustment. The primary variable informing social adjustment to the university was feeling safe in the university and province. Another important variable influencing the dependent

variables was counseling services. In addition to these variables, social activities, communication with lecturers, and skills to build friendships also influenced students' social adjustment.

As expected, making friends was the most effective factor in social environment adjustment. According to the model results, adapting to college, effective communication skills, and feeling safe each exerted substantial impacts on international students' environmental adaptation. As a result, friendship, adjustment to college, strong communication with lecturers, and self-confidence were the most important variables affecting international students' social adjustment at Usak University. Language barriers for international students in Turkey did not appear to be a major problem, as these students often come to Turkey from areas that share close cultural and historical relations with the country.

Our findings suggest that measures to increase the institutionalization of international student mobility in Turkey will positively affect international students' social adjustment. These results echo those of Ugwu and Adamuti-Trache (2017), who determined that institutional initiatives affect sociocultural and academic support of international students.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Our analysis indicated that the most important factor in terms of international students' social adjustment to Usak University, the province, and friendships/environment was to feel safe in the university and province. In addition, counseling, communication with lecturers, and social activities further enhanced students' social adjustment.

The results also show that institutionalization is important, as evidenced by examples of successful international students. Nasir (2012) argued that, to facilitate international students' adjustment, they should have the opportunity to interact with people of the country in which they are studying. Through educational institutions, orientation courses, and appropriate social activities, international students can learn about the culture of the country they are visiting. The host country should also strive to understand and recognize cultural diversity so international students can adjust more easily to their new landscape.

A limitation of this study is that only students at the University of Usak were considered for analysis. Although the results do not represent all universities in Turkey, the study offers important conclusions that can benefit educational researchers and administrators. This study can be expanded in the future by considering Turkey's regional characteristics, thus ensuring a more comprehensive study that is applicable to wider Turkey.

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International Student Spouses and the English Language: Co-Creating a Low-Stakes Language Learning Community

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ABSTRACT

In the context of the internationalization of U.S. higher education, millions of international students have come to study at U.S. institutions. Some students, particularly those pursuing advanced degree, bring their spouses. As part of a larger study, we set out to examine the experiences of international student spouses at a Midwestern university. This article examines the experiences from the perspective of grappling with the English language, a theme cross-cutting through spouses' experiences. Experiences with English, the focus of this article, are both a discrete element of spouses' lived experiences and a useful way to understand challenges and opportunities not directly related to language. Utilizing qualitative case study techniques, we found that English language is experienced through anxieties as well as ambitions by the participants in our study. Moreover, the site of our analysis, a non-profit faith-based organization, fostered a low stakes language learning community where international individuals interact with each other within a casual setting in a pursuit to better their language abilities, mitigating language anxiety.

Keywords: international mobility, international student spouses, internationalization of higher education, language learning

Internationalization continues to be a hot topic for higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United States (Knight, 2015). For many HEIs, internationalization means recruiting foreign students to their campuses (Brandenburg & De Wit, 2015). Over the last decade, the number of international students at U.S. HEIs nearly doubled

from over 500,000 in 2005–2006 to over 1.1 million in 2017–2018 (Institute of International Education, 2018). A related population that many scholars have overlooked are the spouses of these international students, many of whom travel alongside their partners to the United States. According to one measure, in the 2017–2018 academic year, 95,246 international students or 8.7% of all international students studying in the United States were married (Baer, Bhandari, Andrejko, & Mason, 2018).

While there is some research on international spouses, there has been scant focus by institutions and governmental agencies on collecting data and understanding this group, or on providing supportive services for them (Doyle, Loveridge, & Faamanatu-Eteuati, 2016). Indeed, international spouses are sometimes referred to as an invisible or forgotten population (Lei, Woodend, Nutter, Ryan, & Cairns, 2015; Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2011). International spouses, however, view U.S. HEIs as having a responsibility for providing programming to assist with their adjustment and living (Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2011). Existing research demonstrates that where programming does exist, international spouses report better adjustment, feeling more involved and connected to their communities, and overall contentment with their decision to accompany their student-spouses (Campbell & Prins, 2016).

This article is part of a larger project aimed at understanding the experiences of international student spouses at a Midwestern research university. In this larger study, we sought to explore how spouses of international students navigate the process of finding their place in a new country and make meaning of their changing identities in a new cultural context. During our research, English language emerged as a significant theme. In response, we have dedicated this article to the exploration of the question: *How do participants in our study experience language in the context of their new lives in the United States?*

To answer this question we utilized a case study methodology (Yin, 2009) to examine the experiences of 10 international spouses who attend classes at "Campus Commons," (pseudonym) a non-profit, faith-based organization located near the university that offers English as a second language (ESL) classes to international students and their families. A case study design was deemed appropriate because we wanted to understand the experience of individuals as constrained within the confines of a unique context and setting as this setting and context shapes these experiences (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995) We collected data through individual interviews, a focus group, and site observations. Analyzing our data, we adopted a cross-cutting theme of "language" to interrogate our research question and paint a picture of international student spouses through their own words and experience. Participants shared that opportunities and challenges related to the English language were an important element of their experiences. Moreover, in our data analysis, we found that spouses experienced the ups and downs associated with adjusting to life as a spouse in the United States in ways similar to how they experienced language. Our study builds upon the extant literature on this population with unique insights into how they experience the process of navigating their lives in a new cultural context through English language learning. We also introduce the concept of a low-stakes language learning community to offer explanations for how participants in our study experience

language learning in the context of moving to a new country and interacting with others at Campus Commons.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research on spouses of international students spans various disciplines and fields, but remains an understudied topic (Chen, 2009). Most studies on spouses of international students focus on their acculturative adjustment. Acculturative adjustment is usually operationalized as the psychological (mental and physical well-being) and sociocultural (managing daily life) changes people make in coping with the stress associated with moving to and living in a foreign culture (Berry, 1997). Like international students, international spouses also experience the psychological and sociocultural stress associated with adjusting to a new culture (Myers-Walls, Frias, Kwon, Ko, & Lu, 2011) but experience loneliness and social isolation, a loss of self-esteem and identity, and a change in marital dynamic that is unique to their dependent status (De Verthelyi, 1995; Martens & Grant, 2008; Myers-Walls et al., 2011). International spouses are dependent on their student-spouses for their legal visa status in the US and are sometimes language dependent on their spouses as well (Myers-Walls et al., 2011).

Support and Social Adjustment

Spouses also possess few natural avenues for finding social support since they do not belong to ready-made groups (such as academic programs) to socialize with others, and are often prohibited or excluded from finding employment and are therefore financially dependent on their student-spouses (De Verthelyi, 1995). Finally, a lack of opportunities for socialization can exacerbate isolation and erect barriers for healthy adjustment (Mwale, Alhawsawi, Sayed & Rind, 2018). Thus, the international spouse experience is described as a hardship or sacrifice (Chen, 2009; De Verthelyi, 1995) made for the benefit of the student-spouse's academic and career aspirations. The visa status of international spouses is a major contributor to the struggles they experience. International spouses on the F2 visa are prohibited from working or studying full-time towards an academic qualification (Bordoloi, 2015).

The experiences of international spouses are varied and nuanced based on numerous personal and external factors. Yellig (2011) noted that relocating to the United States as an international spouse brought both positive and negative experiences and that spouses changed how they viewed themselves as a result. Some of the spouses for example described themselves as becoming more independent, self-reliant, resilient, and valuing more their role as spouse and/or parent. Similarly Zhang, Smith, Swisher, Fu, and Fogarty (2011) found that perception of their situation impacted feelings of adjustment. Wives of international Chinese students who viewed their situation as temporary and perceived a better future were more tolerant and reported better adjustment than spouses who viewed themselves as trapped (Zhang et al., 2011).

Second Language Learning

The ability to live and survive in an English-language environment for non-English–speaking spouses of international students has been shown to be significant in terms of adjustment and satisfaction. In research on international spouses in Canada, Lei et al. (2015) described being able to communicate in English as a significant barrier to accessing services, finding that spouses who had been in Canada on average for more than a year still expressed loneliness and a lack of social connectivity but also a desire to learn more about the local culture, the English language, and for more opportunities to connect with their communities.

Scant research has specially looked at English language learning among spouses of international students and its effects for them. Campbell and Prins (2016) is a notable exception. In this study, their participants expressed isolation and loneliness but also described "agency in making the decision to come to the USA and in taking initiative to find and take advantage of myriad opportunities in the university and community" (p. 444). The authors also found that participants did not view their relocation as a burden or sacrifice and speculated that this may be because these international spouses who take ESL classes compared to spouses who do not "may have been more motivated, had more supportive partners, or been more likely to take initiative in crafting a new life" (p. 444). Campbell and Prins' (2016) research sheds lights on how international spouses take advantages of opportunities that are available to them to find new ways of being in their new context.

METHODS

Research Design and Site

Our research was qualitative in nature and utilized a case study methodology (Yin, 2009) within the constructivist tradition (Sipe & Constable, 1996). Such a design advocates the use of a variety of data collection techniques, such as observation, document analysis, and interviews intended to generate an understanding of the case (Yin, 2009). For our study, the *case* was international student spouses taking part in a spouse support group and other activities at Campus Commons (pseudonym). In this case study, we were guided by the following research question: *How do international student spouses experience language in the context of their new lives in the United States?*

Sampling Procedures and Participants

Following IRB approval, we recruited participants by sending emails directly to the director of the "Campus Commons" who forwarded our invitation to their membership email listserv. Interested participants were then contacted in person via a site visit. Once international spouse participants indicated that they would like to participate, they were asked whether they would like to participate in the focus group, the individual interview, or both. Individual interviews for international spouses were scheduled for a convenient time and location for the participant and the researcher.

Our study included 10 participants, one male and nine female, each spouses of international students. Pseudonyms are used in the telling of their stories. In Table 1, we present demographic information for participants which includes the participant's pseudonym, age, highest level of education, visa type, country of origin, the length of U.S. residency, and whether the participant completed an individual interview, focus group, or both.

Table 1: Participants' Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Age	Ed.	Visa type	Country of Origin	How long in the US	Individual Interview	Focus Group
Aditi	31	BA	J2	India	6 mo	N	Y
Anita	45	CC	Green card	South Korea	15 yr	Y	Y
Azra	27	BA	J2	Turkey	2 mo	N	Y
Emilia	26	MA	B1/B2	Italy	5 mo	Y	Y
Ina	35	BA	F2	Indonesia	2.5 yr	Y	Y
Marco	33	HS	J2	Italy	1 yr	N	Y
Mei Lin	39	BA	J2	Taiwan	8 mo	N	Y
Mochi	40	MA	F2	Indonesia	9 mo	Y	Y
Rahima	22	BA	J2	India	2 mo	N	Y
Ria	31	BA	F2	Indonesia	3 yr	N	Y

Note. Ed. = Highest level of education; BA = bachelor's degree; CC = community college; MA = master's degree; HS = high school.

Data Collection

We utilized three types of data collection in this study. First, field observations included a total of four visits ranging from 1–3 hr in duration (Merriam, 1998). Second, we conducted individual interviews with four participants, ranging in duration from 30–90 min. For this, we utilized a semistructured interview protocol, designed to allow participants to respond to questions with their own experience (Yin, 2009). Third, we conducted a focus group with nine total participants over 90 min (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Our initial formal observation took place at the beginning of the study during an English class at Campus Commons. For the first half of the observation we were passive observers. During the second half of the observation we became participant observers (Merriam, 1998) as the class broke up into groups for discussion. Author One conducted five more observations over 3 months. We also

conducted four in-depth, informal, semistructured interviews. Interviews were conducted after our initial observation but prior to the focus group. Finally, the focus group was informal and semi-structured, following a protocol that we designed as a team.

Data Analysis

Our data analysis process began with writing notes about our first observation and discussing our impressions as a group. Following each interview and focus group, which were audiorecorded on several devices—we transcribed the recordings, making sure to create a word-for-word transcript. We wanted to capture exactly what the participants said, not eliminating repetitive words or stumbles. As our participants are second language learners, we felt that correcting grammar mistakes or eliminating stammers could inadvertently alter the meaning contained in an answer. Once transcribed, we read the all transcripts and noted common themes that we found salient (Merriam, 1998). During this initial read-through, we also reflected on how these same themes or ideas were present during our observation, referencing the notes we took.

Through our coding schema, we found the three themes of "Hopes and Desires," "Worries and Anxieties," and "Determination and Motivation" to be the most resonant within the broad category of language. Through notes and group discussion, we examined the ways in which our case of Campus Commons impacted the process embedded within each of these themes.

Ethical Consideration and Trustworthiness

When approaching our study, it was important that we could demonstrate that our research was credible (Creswell & Miller, 2000). One of the major tools we utilized was member checking (Carlson, 2010). From the beginning of this project, we envisioned this research as an opportunity to share the stories of this understudied population. Therefore, it was important to us that we were sharing these stories in a way that is just and representative of the stories our participants wish to be told. After initial data analysis, we returned to Campus Commons to share our emergent findings with our research participants, to thank them for their participation, and to get feedback on the themes we were analyzing. Through member checking, we were able to not only confirm the accuracy of transcribed interviews but also to ensure that our interpretations and understandings were consistent with the individuals actually going through this experience (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

FINDINGS

Through our data analysis, we constructed three major themes present in the process of international student spouses navigating their lives in a new cultural context. These themes were *hopes and desires, anxieties and worries*, and finally *determinations and motivation*s. These three themes will serve to organize the Findings section. Through the data analysis, we also recognized that aspects of English language learning cut

across each of these three themes. We found that language is not only an example of these categories, but also a mitigating factor in other expressions of hopes, anxieties, and determinations. Therefore, we chose to focus on participants' discussion about language for two reasons. First, this was a topic that was brought up in each of our interviews and in the focus group. This was clearly a topic that they wanted to share about as an important element of their experience. Second, language as an analytical code cut across all of the emerging themes in the data. Using language as a lens, we are thus able to understand how each participant can experience a broad range of challenges and opportunities during their experiences as an international student spouse in the United States. Our findings proceed with a description of the theme interwoven with a variety of quotes that demonstrate that although the theme is present for each participant, it manifests in unique ways in each person's experience.

Language Hopes and Desires

All the participants in our study expressed their hopes and desires in terms of wanting to learn or improve their English language abilities. These sentiments were expressed when recalling their expectations for coming to the United States, in assessing their current situations, and in thinking about their goals for the future. Participants also talked about their hopes and desires related to English language learning both when speaking about intentions for their own learning and intentions for their family members.

When discussing hopes or desires for coming to the United States, language learning was identified by multiple spouses as an important consideration. Emilia (female, 26, Italy), for example, when anticipating coming to the US, thought of her new life as a "good opportunity" to "improve [her] English." For different participants, depending on their language level upon arriving in the United States, interacting with English could mean anything from "learning" for those with lower proficiency to "improving" for those like Emilia who were already conversational, and even to "adopting an American accent" for Aditi (female, 31, India) who is highly proficient.

When assessing their current English learning situation, many participants also expressed a genuine desire to learn or improve their language ability. For some, wanting to learn English was a matter of "survival." Ria (female, 31, Indonesia) explained that her desire to learn English was to help her interaction with others: "I want to learn English, so it's make me survive here to speak with people, especially for native speaker, so that's why I come here, I learn here."

In addition to wanting to learn out of necessity, others demonstrated an intrinsic desire to learn. Azra (female, 27, Turkey) exclaimed, "And also, I love speak, but I can English a little. I speak English a little, I love speak. I hope my English more than now." This quote—accompanied with a flurry of hand gestures and a big smile—demonstrated Azra's genuine desire to communicate. Despite true challenges in expressing herself through words, her hope and passion shone through.

Hopes and desires related to English language learning were not limited to past expectations or current assessments but also shaped goals for the future. Several participants had begun planning for employment in the United States and saw English

as an intermediate goal. Anita, for example, planned to take the TOEFL exam in order to demonstrate her English proficiency to future employers. Despite already passing the registered nurse licensing exam, Anita desired a bachelor's degree. Anita (female, 45, South Korea) expressed her plan for continuing her studies in the United States, but desired to learn English as a means to that end:

> Researcher One: Okay, so you are hoping to start that (a nursing degree) maybe soon? Maybe in the next couple years?
>
> Anita: uh... maybe TOEFL, I need the TOEFL first, right?
>
> Researcher One: Ah, TOEFL first.
>
> Anita: Yes, I cannot, maybe, I have to ah, study English, right yeah. And then if I go to the, um maybe, I don't know we have to meet advisor, but I don't know, but anyway, I need a speak and read, I need, I need English. Okay.

From these examples, it is evident to see that hopes and desires for learning or improving English are rooted in a variety of motivations for individual participants. These intentions also spanned beyond individual participants and included hopes for family members. Mei Lin (female, 39, Taiwan), a spouse and mother, talked about English learning as it related to her children:

> But as I have two children, so I was hoping that they can, you know, grab English and you know, speak with native speakers so they can have better pronunciation. One of them is actually picking up pretty quickly, which I'm pretty happy with. The other one, I think she is just trying to use her fingers to point around; she's not really learning, but I mean, they both have fun at school and they have friends so I'm really happy about that.

Within the theme of hopes and desires related to English language acquisition, individuals in our study expressed a variety of positive emotions and plans regarding their language learning. These positive emotions, however, did not exist in isolation.

Language Worries and Anxieties

In addition to hopes and desires expressed in relation to learning English, all of our participants expressed some level of anxiety regarding their perceived English language ability. Although these anxieties and worries may not be explicitly expressed in our interview transcripts, these feelings were palpable through our observations and in informal interaction with international spouses. For example, when recruiting participants for interviews and the focus group, all three researchers were met with apprehension by those we approached. Although enthusiastic about being in our study, participants nearly universally expressed that they did not want their English proficiency to inhibit or hurt our study. It was almost as though they felt that interviewing them would be a burden on us.

Within our conversations, worry regarding the English language was manifested as participants articulated their expectations for their life in the United States before

moving here. Emilia, for example, expressed that "before coming" she was "terrified of the English language" all due to "a bad experience at school with [her] teacher." More commonly, however, individuals expressed anxiety and worry when it came to expressing themselves in English. As Mochi (female, 40, Indonesia) said, "I think I can't speak English, and actually I think I don't want to have mistake about. Because my pronunciation, oh so hard!" She continued,

> The first time and do you know, I am shy, because everybody, Oh oh oh oh, and I'm quiet because what I say? If I want talk about that, I'm very worried, I'm very so so worried if I have mistake about my my English.

The fear of making a mistake or failing to be understood was a consistent worry for all of our participants, regardless of their proficiency. Ria explained how the fear of making a mistake rendered her unable to communicate with others: "So at the time, the first time I cannot speak English, I mean like I'm not confident to speak in front of other people."

These worries and anxieties persisted beyond the language learning environment at Campus Commons to influence their professional plans and interaction with their families. These dynamics were particularly potent for Anita, the green card holder who has been in the United States for 15 years. Despite years in the country, Anita struggled to break beyond her Korean language environment. Korean is spoken in the home and in the church where she is an active member.

> Oh, usually, my husband, he speak Korean, my kids they talk Korean, they bilingual…Yes, when they talk with their friend, they talk English, but when they talk to me, usually they speak Korean. Because, my husband he love English, he is okay, he he's okay, but, um, yeah he is teaching me, he is okay, but um ahhh, my problem…

In this exchange, the tone in Anita's voice moved from pride and admiration talking about her children's bilingualism to despair and desperation when determining that her perceived low proficiency was "her problem." It is particularly noteworthy that Anita labels her husband and children as bilingual, but does not assume the same label herself, even as we had this hour-long conversation in her second language. This speaks to how family and language intersect in her own self-perception. Continuing to tell a story of how her language proficiency affected her relationship with her family, Anita explained:

> ...because my daughter she loves friends, and everyone is American, but sometimes, I like my daughter to, she wants to play date, but sometimes I, Um, don't like to text (laughs). Yes writing, yeah, I ask to my husband to write ah, haha, my husband told me "you live in America 15 years!" he always said to me (shy laugh).

From these short quotes, it is easy to get an idea of Anita's internal struggle of processing her language anxiety in the context of her family relationships. These anxieties also inhibited her professional pursuits and plans. She explained how her low level of confidence caused her to quit a job as a nurse:

Anita: Right, when I work with the patient, he, he is American. Sometimes it is hard to, it is hard to say, it is hard to speak. When I read some, ah, when I read some kind of, how can I say? Sheet, some papers?

Researcher One: His medical papers?

Anita: Yeah, sometimes, I couldn't understand

Researcher One: Oh?

Anita: Yeah. (shy laugh) it is a problem (laugh)... yeah, I quit, haha

Anxieties and worries related to the English language or learning the language were both a spoken and unspoken dynamic throughout our interviews, focus group, and observations. It is clear to see that although participants hoped and desired to learn and improve their English, these positive thoughts and emotions existed simultaneously with negative feelings and apprehension.

Language Determination and Motivation

Finally, language hopes and dreams as well as anxiety and worry were mitigated by a sense of determination and motivation to learn English. While the previous theme depicted language as a barrier to personal, social, or professional development, many participants in our study also recognized language learning as the tool with which to break through that same barrier. Despite speaking to their own perceived deficit in or an initial ambivalence toward their language proficiency, participants also exhibited a sincere motivation to persevere. Mochi said this directly, "But oh! Uh the first time I'm coming here and I think, 'Oh this good' and I, I think I can take motivation, I have motivation. I want to learn English." When asked if they felt they had improved in their English learning, several participants answered in ways that demonstrated their determination:

Researcher One: Do you feel that your English has improved since coming here?

Anita: Yes, I think so.

Researcher One: How do you feel? Do you feel more confident now?

Anita: Yes, when I, well yesterday I felt this, because my daughter goes to Corner Elementary school, in the second grade, I went science fair with my kids and when, sometimes my kids' well parents, well it's hard to say, hard say, it is hard to speak. Everybody, I think everybody very kind, but I'm very nervous. "How can I say? How can I listen?" I always think. And but, yesterday I went to science fair and um, I am getting, I'm getting natural, natural, yeah. Even though I, um, mistake. It's okay, I try and try and try again.

When asking Mochi about whether she felt that she had improved, we received a similar answer:

Researcher Two: Have you found that your English has improved since you've been here?

Mochi: Yes.

Researcher Two: Since you just got here?

Mochi: Yes, improved. And hopefully, if I return to my country, I want translate my book, I want, hopefully.

Like Anita and Mochi, Emilia expressed a sense of determination in her assessment of her own English learning:

> And, so this changed, um, in a better way, because now I like English. I can, I mean, I can speak. And I watch movies in English without subtitles and I'm like ok. And I watch because I want to watch, and not because I have to.4 And yeah, I like this change.

Despite their anxieties, all of our participants acknowledged that they thought their English had improved and exhibited a determination to continue to improve it. Marco (male, 33, Italy) summed it up nicely: "I am very glad about that experience because when I came here I didn't know how to speak English, now I can survive." This determination was reinforced by the environment and community at Campus Commons, discussed in the next section. Regardless of their motivations or anxieties around English language learning, participants all sought out Campus Commons as the place to try and realize their goals to some degree or another.

Mochi found that Campus Commons was a place that enhanced her motivation and determination to learn English. She noted that the peer environment was also something that gave her confidence and eased her initial anxieties:

> And I want share you about Campus Commons for myself, Campus Commons is ah one place good because Campus Commons ah, give everybody motivation, I mean endorsement. I very very not confident, I'm very very afraid if I want speak because my pronunciation I believe, no, not true, it's wrong. And I followed the class and the teacher, the teacher is very very very very nice, friendly, funny and I think it's okay. And I look at it, my friend, the same me, don't know English too, oh the same and Campus Commons if ah, somebody want know who I am, I mean who my English come here and we know, we stay at level basic level, intermediate level, and so on.

Here, Mochi shares how teachers and peers within Campus Commons encourage and support her learning and provide her with motivation. Receiving encouragement from teachers and finding camaraderie with her classmates created the conditions for motivation.

Like Mochi, Ina (female, 35, Indonesia) recognized Campus Commons as a place where she found determination to pursue her goals, but also saw the boundaries of that motivation:

> I like Campus Commons, but at this moment, because ah, sometimes like all the classes is good ...but I felt like some of the classes are too basic… I skip some classes who I think it's too basic for me because I want more challenging classes… Maybe I feel this ah, like the first year, I was so happy because I get Campus Commons, the second year, too. But at the beginning of the this third year, I felt like I want to do something else, like maybe I can say I am getting bored...

The central point here for Ina is that her identity is changing based on her language abilities. When her language ability was low, Campus Commons was a central part of her experience and who she was. Now that her language ability is higher and also perhaps because her life circumstances have changed, she has more time to devote to developing another aspect of herself. She is bored with her current routines. Her language ability seems to allow her to imagine more and want more. Notably though, she still thinks that improving her English in a formal classroom setting is important for her.

DISCUSSION

Language was never an explicit part of our protocol, but became an important element of many of the discussions with and among our participants. In the following section, we discuss major concepts that arose through analyzing our findings and reflecting on our experience. Here, we introduce a concept, a *low-stakes language learning community* (LSLLC) to offer explanations for how participants in our study experience language learning in the context of moving to a new country and interacting at Campus Commons. We ground our discussion in relevant literature and suggest areas and directions for future research.

A Low-Stakes Language Learning Community at Campus Commons

Despite the negative emotions and anxiety related to learning English, the participants in our study expressed hopes and desires to improve their English and a determination to do so. Through our observations, we found the environment at Campus Commons to be particularly conducive to alleviating anxiety and creating an atmosphere where individuals could confidently and comfortably learn and grow (Horwitz, 2001). As a group, spouses of international students under the organization of the Campus Commons created an organic LSLLC. At Campus Commons, spouses gather informally in the welcoming space to chat, do crafts, and cook together, sharing recipes and dishes from their home countries. These friendships, developed in everyday interactions and practices, bolstered learning and development. Research on international students supports the notion that friendships with other internationals and co-nationals is beneficial to learning and development (Montgomery, 2010; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009). Such friendships are also a source of empathy and validation of shared experiences of transitioning to a new learning environment and culture (Hirai, Frazier, & Syed, 2015; Montgomery, 2010). Similarly for these international spouses who are students of English, Campus Commons provided a space to develop the kinds of relationships that are supportive for learning a new

language. A strong sense of multiculturalism has developed in this space. Emily expressed her thoughts on the multicultural environment at Campus Commons:

> So yeah, it was boring before coming here (referring to Campus Commons). And then here I met a lot of new people, I made friends from all around the world. It's beautiful. And we don't meet only here, so we go out and we have dinner together and I made very good friends.

She continued to describe the community of learners as being "like a family" and providing a place where she can "just come here, eat, have lunch, and meet people." In this way, the LSLLC at Campus Commons also filled a social void that many of our participants identified. Ina explained what this meant in her situation.

> But moms who stay in the house for 24 hours 7, it's hard to not meeting a people, not to interact with people and not to socialize but that's why I think Campus Commons is one of the best thing that ever happen to me here because especially in the first year when we just here, if I didn't find Campus Commons I think, I will be very depressed living in here.

This group takes on characteristics of learning community in that they meet regularly to pursue a common goal of learning or improving their English (Tukibayeva and Gonyea, 2014). We introduce the idea of low stakes because English language learning is not explicit in many of the activities of the group. Instead, English is used as it is the common language among the members of the group. Ina discussed the variety of activities available at Campus Commons:

> …and there's Campus Commons where you can meet a lot of people from different countries and do a lot of activities, and also improve your English skill and that's I think the good thing.

In this statement, Ina lists English learning as almost an afterthought of what she gains from participating in activities in the Campus Commons, first citing the multiculturalism and then the variety of interaction among individuals. Without a deliberate focus on language learning, participants in this community can also obtain many of the benefits of language immersion without some of the drawbacks. To this point, Weger (2013) observed that "even when international learners [in an intensive English program] are embedded in an English-dominant community, it cannot be assumed that assignments requiring learners to interact orally with a native-speaking community will be well received" (p. 98). At Campus Commons, there are rarely native English speakers present in group meetings, so the unequal power dynamic of having a native speaker or teacher who possesses the correct answer is removed from the equation. At the same time, because individuals come from a variety of linguistic backgrounds, in order to communicate, they must use their common language and cannot default to their native languages, which is often the case when learners from the same language interact in a second language (MacIntyre & Baker, 2001). As Emilia remarked about the environment, "...in Campus Commons all our, almost all the people are international students. So all are here to learn English, to improve English and no one is judging you and…so it is easy."

Recognizing and appreciating cultures other than one's own also seems to be a product of engaging in this LSLLC. The findings are consistent with Anderson (2008) who found that an intercultural group of women designed to increase interactions between international and local women enabled participants "opportunities for interaction across many lines of difference/dissimilarity" (p. 6), and to develop knowledge of and openness to people and cultures that they would not have encountered without the group. At the same time, a diverse or international environment is also a precondition for the LSLLC. Learners from different linguistic backgrounds come together in an LSLLC, communicating amongst themselves in their common language (English). The result of this communication and interaction is not only improved language skills, but also enhanced confidence for interaction and a tendency to have positive impressions about people from other cultures and countries.

The concept of an LSLLC seems to have promising implications for the study of second language acquisition. Our concept of an LSLLC is similar in some ways to the oasis idea found in Johnson's (1999) doctoral work. In Johnson's research, a university-affiliated ESL program provided a space for many spouses of international students who were marginalized because of their English language status to bond over their shared living experiences and their English language learning goals. A key difference between Johnson's research and ours, however, is that while in Johnson's study learners desired more formality in the form of testing and evaluation of learning, learners in our study at Campus Commons praised the informal, community-based nature of study that allowed them to gain more proficiency in English in a relaxed, low pressure environment. Our observations of the LSLLC are consistent with Merrill Swain's (2000) output hypothesis, or more specifically, second language acquisition through collaborative dialogue. Collaborative dialogue is "knowledge-building dialogue" that encourages learners' "performance to outstrip competence" and where language use is mediated by language learning (p. 97). Collaborative dialogue is the alignment of both cognitive and social activity. While our study sheds some light on the importance of informality and comfort in an LSLLC, further research is necessary to explore how such a community could be effectively organized and facilitated.

Limitations

While our study has begun to elucidate the experiences of international student spouses in acclimating to the context of a large Midwestern university, particularly in regards to the English language, there are several limitations that should be noted. First, this is a single case study and does not include all of the international spouses within the university. However, despite the small sample size, important themes were found about the implications of language learning and the communities in which this learning takes place. These findings, though preliminary, call for more research to be done within a larger, more diverse population in order to broaden conclusions and generate more nuanced findings. A second limitation is that this was a cross-sectional data collection, which provides but a glimpse of the lives of participants. While we were deliberate and reflective in our data collection and analysis, to gain a more

nuanced understanding of international student spouses' experiences over time, future studies should take place over time and include focal respondents to assess how these experiences change over time and how they differ between participants. Finally, the applicability of results could be improved by including multiple sites in order to understand how components of location impact experience. This is of particular relevance to the fact that participants chose to focus on language in reflecting on their experiences. This might have been due to the fact that participants were recruited and interviewed within a language learning space. Had we met in a different space, they may have focused on different elements of their experience.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Our research raises implications for policy, practice, and future research. First, in regards to future programming at the Campus Commons, directors and instructors might recognize the significance of the LSLLC that has formed there. Future programming could be more deliberate in building upon the benefits of the LSLLC. For example, instructors could design opportunities for learners to engage inside and outside the classroom in collaborative projects. These projects could encourage communication and provide learners with an opportunity to more deeply engage in the LSLLC.

In terms of the HEIs from which our participants received their supporting visa documents allowing them to come to the United States, we feel that more deliberate steps should be taken to better prepare and inform students and their spouses about life and potential challenges to expect upon coming to the campus community. Nearly all of our participants noted that their expectations were not met with reality. As the grantor of supporting visa documents, the institution is responsible for investing in the positive well-being of the spouses of international students and not just that of the students. When it comes to language learning, while the university has taken positive steps to a provide low-cost English language program for adult learners through its Linguistics department and a free English tutoring program offered by the university-affiliated international-student-support-focused organization, more needs to be done in terms of coordinating programs and disseminating information to individuals who could benefit from such programming at the university. Furthermore, our concept of the LSLLC could also be adapted and promoted for spouses by the institution. Several of our participants commented that while there was some programming available on campus, these lacked the community feeling that the Campus Commons possesses. If the idea of LSLLC were a component of the campus-based English tutoring programming, spouses might enjoy additional support when it comes to improving their language and finding a sense of community.

For the field of higher education more broadly, our study has implications for recent discussions of internationalization of higher education. As institutions continue to internationalize, a growing number of students from outside the United States are recruited to U.S. campuses (IIE, 2016). Many, particularly those studying advanced degrees, bring their spouses and dependents with them (Farrugia & Bhandari, 2015). As such, HEIs hold not only the responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of everyone coming to the institution, but also possess a significant opportunity for tapping into

the meaningful contribution these individuals can make in the university community. As universities herald the benefits of internationalization as bringing diverse perspectives and insights to their campuses and classrooms (Knight, 2015), they should also recognize the ideas, skills, and perspectives brought by spouses of students. In other words, the concept of internationalization at home, or the idea that students need not travel internationally to reap the benefits of international exchange (Soria & Troisi, 2013), should be adapted to include individuals beyond students themselves, especially at a time when international spouses on dependent visas are growing in number.

Stemming from this study, future research might more directly investigate the concepts developed in the discussion section. For example, subsequent conceptual work could continue to explore the optimization of an LSLLC, while empirical work could explore how such communities are formed and how they develop both for international spouses and other populations. Although we have intended to learn more, international student spouses continue to be an underserved and understudied population. Future research might consider this population in other institutional or country contexts and within the broader conversation of student mobility and migration. Researchers are also encouraged to investigate stories of "agency and resilience" (Cui, Arthur, & Domene, 2017, p.177) instead of narrowly focusing on deficit-based stories that currently dominate the research on international spouse adjustment (Cui et al., 2017). Potential areas of inquiry could include investigation of the professional and friendship networks of international spouses, pathways to furthering higher education for international spouses, and more broadly the learning aspirations, goals, and activities of international spouses. Quantitative studies, for example, might consider whether bringing a spouse (or having children while abroad) enhances or diminishes probability of remaining in the host country after degree completion.

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Book Review

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Tannock, S. (2018). *Educational Equality and International Students*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

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As an international student, until recently I had never thought about educational equality for international students because it seemed impossible for an international student to have the same opportunities or resources as domestic students. *Educational Equality and International Students*, recently published by Tannock (2018), explores and highlights how to conceptualize and promote principles of educational equality for both international and domestic students in the United Kingdom. Tannock's book includes empirical research consisting of 60 interviews with higher education staff and students, as well as the use of higher education institutional documents and secondary statistics collected from universities and national higher education organizations around the UK. Tannock addresses the contradictions between the missions of higher education institutions (universalistic principles of human rights in equal education) and their practices regarding international students as "cash cows" that keep the university afloat (p. 110).

Speaking from personal experiences, educational equality should ensure all individuals have the same opportunities to access educational institutions and educational achievement and success, and the principle of equality should be for the public good in society as a whole and be central to educational practice, policy, and purpose.

Marketization of Higher Education

Chapters 3 and 6 of this publication address the competing forces of marketization, immigration restriction, and international students as "cash cows," as well as their function in extending "soft power." For example, in 2008, international students needed to be sponsored by an education institution having a state-granted Tier 4 sponsor license in order to have a Tier 4 visa to come to the UK. The Tier 4 regime has led to a fundamental change among the state, universities, and

international students in the UK. The Home Office with extensive power over policy and practice has become "a major regulator of higher education in the UK" (Tannock, 2008, p. 48).

Notable among the points made in this section is the analysis of immigration policy in the UK. The National Union of Students has taken some measures across the country, seeking "to provide protection for international students at educational institutions that lose their Tier 4 license...to reduce the required bank balance levels" in order to build a welcoming country to attract international students (Tannock, 2008, p. 56). It is essential for universities and international student organizations to take efforts to protect international students from the government-led immigration crackdown.

This also provides an instructive example for the United States. During the current presidential administration, an unwelcoming environment has been built for international students, including the tightening of visa regulations, increasing visa fees, and three versions of the Trump travel ban (Executive Order 13769). President Trump initiated an Executive Order that prohibited the entry of citizens from certain Muslim countries in January of 2017 as the original travel ban. The second travel ban was reinstated by the Supreme Court, in which international students, employees, and scholarly visitors to universities were exempt from the ban in June of 2017 (Stein, 2018). The third ban restricted the entry of tourists or business or student visas from the Muslim-majority countries of Iran (except student and exchange visitor visas), Libya (on tourist or business visas), Somalia (on immigrant visas for nationals), Syria (on immigrant visas for nationals), and Yemen (on tourist or business visas). The ban also includes North Korea (on all travel for nationals) and Venezuela (on some government officials). This unwelcoming environment, along with policies of the Trump administration, have affected "racialized students, faculty, staff, and campus visitors" (Stein, 2018, p. 894).

The question of whether international students ought to be charged higher university tuition fees than their native counterparts to ensure educational equality is also discussed in this section. According to the University of Sunderland (as cited in Tannock, 2018), international students are charged higher tuition fees than home students because the UK government provides subsidies for home students through domestic taxes. However, Tannock claims that UK law does not require international students to pay higher tuition fees than home students, but only requires "international students not receive a public subsidy for their education" (p. 132). Higher education has been putting too much emphasis on "opening up markets for foreign study, increasing flows, and maximizing the market potential of foreign study" (Altbach, 2015, p. 2) without considering how international education serves for the public good in both home countries and international countries.

Fragmentation and Issues in Internationalization

Chapters 4, 5, 7, and 8 demonstrate the fragmentation and issues of educational equality in internationalized universities. Chapter 4 categorizes fragmentation of equality into institutional fragmentation, spatial fragmentation, and temporal fragmentation. *Institutional fragmentation* refers to the tendency for "equality" and

"international" staff to work in different departments. University equality offices tend to focus on equality issues for university staff. The widening access offices handle the main equality issues in higher education academic policy and practice literature for students. International offices focus on the issues that concern international students. *Spatial fragmentation* refers to home and international students being charged differently based on "a combination of their nationality and residency" (Tannock, 2018, p. 74). In the context of *temporal fragmentation*, international students are treated differently than home students in the context of the academic environment even though they are considered to have equal rights as home students. For instance, international students are subject to mandatory attendance monitoring. In sum, international students are singled out and excluded from educational equality due to institutional, spatial, and temporal fragmentation.

Chapter 5 provides the rationale for the fragmentation and how absent global equality structures impact international students. Chapter 7 explores the extreme inequalities in international education, particularly the inequality of curriculum. Chapter 8 examines international students' exclusion from UK students in academic attainment. University College London is only concerned with the gap between the academic attainment of white and black or minority ethnic British students. One rationale is that researchers have demonstrated variation in academic achievement between home students and non-EU international students. Comrie found that home and EU students were likely to achieve a higher level than non-international students overall, while non-EU international students tended to achieve a higher level than home students in the field of accounting and finance.

In light of market-centric competition, nation-state equality legislation has provided equality and justice protection for international students in the UK to attract more international students. For instance, an All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Students has formed to emphasize the importance of international students to employment and educational market. Some alternative agendas have been made to promote equality and justice. Chevening Scholarships and Fellowships are funded by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office in order to provide financial and institutional support for individuals from other countries and equality legislation protecting international students from discrimination and unequal treatment ("About Chevening," 2015). These policies could act as forces to ensure educational equality.

In addition, Tannock touches on the terminology of Stier (2004)—instrumentalism, idealism, and educationalism—to help international students adapt, adjust, accommodate, and succeed in the UK higher education system. *Idealism* refers to how higher education contributes to "the creation of a more democratic, fair and equal world" (Steir, 2004, p. 88). *Instrumentalism* refers to higher education as a means "to maximize profit, ensure economic growth and sustainable development, or to transit desirable of ideologies of governments, transnational corporations, interest groups or supranational regimes" (p. 90). The ideology of educationalism implies that internationalization is a response to competence demands and to be used to "an unfamiliar academic setting" (p. 90) and to enrich the academic experiences of students and staff alike. In particular, Tannock emphasizes how the various internationalized curricula should be used in UK universities in the name of educational equality and justice, and how they ought to provide British students with

international education. In the process of the internationalization of the curriculum, international students have become a part of the curriculum (as cited in Tannock, 2018). Furthermore, through this type of activity, UK universities promote the concept of "global citizenship" for both international and home students.

Finally, this section examines inequalities and exclusions in UK universities due to economic, political, social, and cultural obstacles, underscoring how international students have been excluded from research and policy discussions. To do so, Tannock draws on examples from national legislation and institutional internationalization to suggest transformations of higher education pedagogy, curriculum, and pedagogy practice for the benefits of both international and home students in the UK.

Ongoing Issues and Conclusions

Tannock concludes his analysis by situating this publication as a "starting point for a broader and more far-ranging conversation, not an end point and not with any claim of comprehensiveness or conclusively" (p. 217). Indeed, he explores two other broad issues: How typical are internationalized universities in the UK when compared with other countries? How can the situation of educational equality in the UK contribute to global equality and justice in education around the world? Tannock not only poses the importance of educational equality but also provides analysis, answers, and examples.

Tannock makes a pivotal contribution to international educational equality with this contribution to the literature. However, Tannock does not address the difference between educational equality and equity. Corson noted that "equity" is related to fairness or justice in education and it takes various circumstances into consideration, while "equality" usually refers to the same treatment by "asserting the fundamental or natural equality of all persons" (as cited in Espinoza, 2007, p. 345). Equality means that international students and domestic students should have the equal access to universities, which indicates the same requirements for application and the same tuition. Equity means that international students need to have an individualized curriculum to help them better adapt to a foreign environment to be successful. Future research about international educational equality and equity will be needed.

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Is it a Trump Bump, Spike, or Plateau? India's Changing Interest in Canadian Versus U.S. Universities

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ABSTRACT

This article assesses changing interest from India in Canadian versus U.S. universities since the 2016 U.S. presidential election, as measured by search activity reports from Google Trends. The findings indicate a rise in Indian interest toward Canadian versus U.S. universities was underway before the election. After controlling for this trend effect, there remains widespread evidence of a substantial shift in interest toward Canadian universities with search activity rising 70%–85% for Canadian versus U.S. universities in the postelection period. This shift in interest toward Canadian universities shows no sign of dissipating. Canadian universities are likely to make further enrollment gains of Indian students versus U.S. counterparts in upcoming recruiting classes.

Keywords: enrollment management, foreign students, higher education marketing, student recruitment

In this research brief, we examine weekly Google search activity within India on Canadian universities and compare it to United States universities to assess what impact the Trump administration has had on shifting India's interest away from U.S. institutions and toward Canadian Universities. This work has been motivated by the substantial growth in recent decades in international students studying in both Canada and the US, and the importance of students from India to both nations. Sa and Sabzalieva (2018) documented that from 2000 to 2014, international student enrollment grew 48% in the US, and a much faster 226% in Canada. By 2017–2018, India accounted for 196,271 students in the US, behind only China at 363,341

(Institute of International Education [IIE], 2018b). A Fall 2018 survey found 71.8% of U.S. institutions are somewhat or very concerned about maintaining their enrollment of Indian students (IIE, 2018a), which is consistent with the 9.6% decline in total new U.S. international student enrollment from 2015–2016 to 2017–2018 (IIE, 2018b).

Canada is well positioned to attract Indian students away from U.S. universities. As noted by several authors, Canada's visa-to-work eligibility-to-citizenship process is much more straightforward than in the US (Garcia & Villarreal, 2014; Gopal, 2016; Hegarty, 2014; Sa & Sabzalieva, 2018). While Canada has made several changes to streamline international students' application processes and visa eligibility, the U.S. has tightened its access (Gopal, 2016), and these trends have been underway prior to the Trump presidency. In 2014, the Government of Canada released its new International Educational Strategy in which India was identified as one of six key source markets for Canada's *Global Market Action Plan* aimed at increasing Canada's international students from 239,111 to over 450,000 from 2011 to 2022 (Government of Canada, 2014).

While it is plausible that rising interest by Indian students in Canadian versus U.S. universities has been underway for several years, the Trump administration's rhetoric and policy also has been notably hostile to immigration for work or education. The administration's actions targeting Muslim students have been particularly severe (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2017). As Muslims represent 14% of India's population, this further shifts preferences toward Canadian universities. As explained in the following section, we utilized Google Trends data in our analysis, which provides much more timely assessments of shifts in interest than waiting for lagged releases of annual college enrollment data.

METHODS

Each of the 26 Canadian universities ranked in the 2018 World University Rankings by Times Higher Education (https://www.timeshighereducation.com) were analyzed as search terms in India using Google Trends (https://trends.google.com) with search activity reported for 24 universities. For each Canadian university, four similarly ranked U.S. universities were selected. No U.S. university was used more than once so 96 (24 × 4) unique Canadian–U.S. university pairings were created using the following process. Starting with the highest ranked Canadian university, we selected the two closest U.S. universities ranked above and two closest U.S. universities ranked below the Canadian university. We then selected the next ranked Canadian university and repeated the process, but did not reuse any U.S. universities. If needed, we went to the third closest U.S. university, and repeated this process as necessary. Once below the top 200 ranked universities, the data placed is in groups of 50–200 schools so we randomly selected U.S. universities in the same group as the Canadian university. If insufficient numbers of U.S. matches were in a group, we randomly selected U.S. matches from the group above or below.

For each of the pairings, a Google Trends search was run simultaneously on both the Canadian and the U.S. university. This search data is reported as index values with 100 for the university and week that had the highest search activity. All other

values for both universities are shown as their percent of that max value. These search activity values are given for the past 5 years with weekly data at the time of download. Therefore, this study has weekly search activity data for 96 pairings for the weeks between February 24, 2013 and February 11, 2018: 260 observations per pairing. For each pairing, the relative search activity variable is computed as:

Search = Canadian University Search Value / U.S. University Search Value

This variable was analyzed for each pairing. If we simply tested for differences in average value of the search ratio before and after the presidential election, and there were an underlying positive trend across the 5 years, then findings of more interest in Canadian universities relative to U.S. universities within India for the postelection period might be incorrectly attributed to President Trump's election rather than to simply a continuation of trend. To account for potential trend effects, we instead estimated 96 separate regressions using the equation:

$$Search = b_0 + b_1 \times Trend + b_2 \times ElectDum$$

Where Trend is weekly trend term from 1, 2, … 260

ElectDum = 1 for week of 2016 presidential election or later; = 0 if before election

The regression allows for both the existence of a trend for the relative interest in Canadian versus U.S. universities within India, and a possible shift postelection in the trend line as the pre-election intercept is b_0 and the postelection intercept is $b_0 + b_2$. If b_2 is positive and statistically significant, then there is evidence of a shift in interest toward Canadian universities independent of the trend.

RESULTS

The authors are happy to provide full results from the 96 regressions upon request, but here the key findings are summarized. Using a trend variable in tests for shifts in relative search activity is merited. The b_1 coefficient on trend is never negative and is positive and statistically significant ($p < .10$) for 39 of the 96 pairings. Rising interest within India in Canadian universities relative to U.S. universities was underway prior to the 2016 U.S. presidential election. There is widespread evidence of a postelection upward shift in interest favoring Canadian universities compared to U.S. universities. The shift coefficient b_2 is positive and significant ($p < .10$) 60 times, but negative and significant only three times. Rising relative interest in Canadian universities is strongest for the highest ranked universities. As seen in Table 1, for the six Canadian schools ranked in the Top 200, b_2 is positive and significant ($p < .10$) in 21 of the 24 pairings (87.5%) and never negative and significant. For the four schools in the 201–250 ranking group, b_2 is positive and significant 12 of 16 times (75%) and significantly negative just once. For the 14 schools ranked in groups between 251–800, however, b_2 is positive and significant for 27 of 56 pairings (48%) and significantly negative twice.

Table 1: Tests for Shift in Relative Search Activity Canadian versus U.S. Universities

	R_2	b_0	b_1	b_2	$\frac{(b_0+b_2)}{b_0}$
U of Toronto (22) vs					
Northwestern U (20)	0.26	2.05	−0.001	1.61***	1.79
U of Michigan (21)	0.34	0.96	0.000	0.64***	1.67
Carnegie Mellon U (24)	0.33	1.78	0.002	1.13***	1.63
U of Washington (25)	0.15	1.51	0.002*	0.43***	1.29
U of British Columbia (34) vs					
U of California San Diego (31)	0.15	2.48	0.014***	1.58*	1.64
Georgia Inst. Tech (33)	0.19	1.64	0.013***	2.43***	2.48
U of Wisconsin Madison	0.11	3.14	0.005	2.20***	1.70
U of Illinois Urbana (37)	0.07	2.60	0.006*	0.62	1.24
McGill U (42) vs					
U of Texas Austin (49)	0.26	1.18	0.004**	1.43***	2.21
Brown U (50)	0.12	0.93	0.002**	0.23	1.24
Washington U (51)	0.11	4.21	0.014	3.39**	1.80
U California Santa Barbara (53)	0.13	3.29	0.022**	2.75*	1.84
McMaster U (78) vs					
Ohio State U (70)	0.29	0.34	0.000	0.43***	2.26
Pennsylvania State U (77)	0.12	0.99	−0.001	1.09***	2.11
Michigan State U (83)	0.18	0.40	0.000	0.41***	2.02
Rice U (86)	0.07	0.64	−0.001	0.48***	1.75
U of Montreal (108) vs					
U of Pittsburgh (100)	0.07	0.26	0.009***	−0.57	-1.18
Vanderbilt U (105)	0.11	0.72	0.001	0.82***	2.15
U of Virginia (113)	0.29	0.16	0.001***	0.24***	2.54
Indiana U (117)	0.28	0.10	0.000***	0.11***	2.14
U of Alberta (119) vs					
Georgetown U (123)	0.08	4.05	−0.003	2.76***	1.68
Arizona State U (126)	0.25	0.59	0.001	0.40***	1.68

	R_2	b_0	b_1	b_2	$\frac{(b_0+b_2)}{b_0}$
U of Florida (143)	0.41	0.38	0.001**	0.32***	1.84
U of Notre Dame (150)	0.13	4.65	0.006	3.52***	1.76

Note. University ranking in parentheses; ***$p < .01$, **$p < .05$. *$p < .10$, asterisks not shown for b_0 as $p < .10$ 86 of 96 times. Other Canadian universities by ranking analyzed were: (201–250) Calgary, Ottawa, Waterloo, Western; (251–300) Dalhousie, Laval, Queen's, Simon Fraser; (301–350) Victoria; (351–400) York; (401–500) Manitoba, Saskatchewan; (501–600) Carleton, Concordia, Memorial; (601–800) Northern BC, Regina, Windsor.

To assess how large the typical shift in interest was toward Canadian universities, we examined values for $(b_0 + b_2)/b_0$, which gives the shift in intercept value scaled by initial intercept. Across all 96 regressions $(b_0 + b_2)/b_0$ has an average value of 2.0 and median of 1.71. Across just the 63 regressions with significant b_2 values, there is an average value of 2.34 and a median of 1.84. Using the median values, there has been an approximate rise in search activity of 70%–85% for Canadian universities relative to U.S. universities (given 1.71 and 1.84) even after controlling for a rising trend effect.

To investigate if these large shifts in search activity toward Canadian universities are persisting or dissipating, we matched the first 16 postelection weeks to the last 16 weekly observations in the data set which were 1 year later. We then tested for differences in average value of the Canada/U.S. search activity ratio between the two periods. If the "Trump bump" is dissipating, then we should reject the null of equal average values in favor of lower values in the later period. The null, however, was rejected only once in the 96 pairings in favor of a lower value in the later period. For 66 of the 96 pairings, the null cannot be rejected, which is consistent with the notion of a Trump plateau, an initial shift in interest toward Canadian universities that is persisting. Also note that for 29 of the 96 pairings, the null was rejected in favor of a higher value in later periods, results indicative of both a Trump bump and ongoing increases in Indian search activity favoring Canadian over U.S. universities. Again, complete results are available from the authors upon request.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

We found evidence of a widespread shift in India's interest in Canadian universities relative to U.S. universities following the 2016 U.S. presidential election, even after controlling for ongoing trends in that direction. The typical rise in searches for Canadian versus similarly ranked U.S. universities was 70%–85%. Given the emphasis on research universities in the study's sample, these findings are consistent with Cantwell (2015), who argued that U.S. research and doctoral universities are more exposed to shifts in international student enrollment. We found the shift toward Canadian universities was most pronounced for higher ranking schools, consistent with prior reviews of the research literature (Cantwell, 2015; Garcia & Villarreal, 2014) that concluded reputational rankings significantly influence international

students' choices. Ergo, it is reasonable to find the greatest evidence of interest switching among these schools.

Overall, there is no evidence that the favorable shift in interest toward Canadian universities has abated as we move further past the 2016 election. For 96 pairings, only one had significantly lower search values for Canadian versus U.S. universities 1 year out from the immediate postelection period. This indicates Canadian universities are likely to make further gains compared with U.S. universities in the enrollment of students from India in the 2018–2019 academic year and beyond. The methods used in this research brief can be applied to many other types of comparisons between identified pairs of schools based on other factors. We encourage others to explore using search data changes over time to assess the impact of various policy changes or economic shocks upon their selected institutions of interest.

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Life outside your comfort zone: The power of reflection for cultural adjustment

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ABSTRACT

This reflective article explores the different experiences of two higher education professionals who utilized intentional reflection to help with the transition to new countries and cultural environments. Both stories focus on how these higher education professionals grappled with challenges of being members of majority and minority groups within the racial and religious contexts of their new environments. The article concludes by sharing recommendations for how other higher education professionals can utilize reflection to help with transition and cultural adjustment.

Keywords: academic mobility, cultural adjustment, faculty transition, international faculty, minority faculty, reflection, transnational scholar

Cultural adjustment in higher education is a phenomenon that is often researched through the lens of international students in a new country (Mahmood & Burke, 2018; Wang, Li, Noltemeyer, Wang, & Shaw, 2018), but many stakeholders experience cross-cultural challenges in higher education. For example, international faculty worldwide experience some of the same cultural adjustment challenges as their students. The purpose of this reflective article is twofold: (a) it aims to share the stories of the authors—two international faculty/staff from different backgrounds who grappled with cultural adjustment and transition in new environments; and (b) it demonstrates the power of reflection as an effective cultural adjustment strategy. Through the process of intentional reflection, both professionals were able to

effectively adjust and transition into a new country and workplace. Recommendations are provided for readers to incorporate reflection into their lives.

REFLECTION

Reflection can serve as a learning tool to help people constructively develop and grow from their experiences (Bay & MacFarlane, 2010; Ellis, Carette, Anseel, & Lievens, 2014; Jordi, 2011; Moon, 2004; Toole & Toole, 1995). When reflection is followed by intentional and thoughtful actions, it can lead to further questions and ideas that make reflection effective and cyclical. The reflection process is a broad concept that includes a plethora of cognitive and experiential learning approaches (Ellis et al., 2014). An effective approach developed by Carol Rodgers (2002) expounds upon the work of John Dewey (1933), clarifies the ways that reflection is defined and applied in educational settings, and refines the criteria for purposeful reflection. Following Rodgers (2002) and Dewey (1933/1910), we view reflection to encompass the following characteristics:

- Meaningful: Some experiences are out of our control, but we control the meaning we attach to the experiences that inform our actions.
- Systematic: Reflection is our ability to comprehensively draw on past experiences and is not just a stream of random thoughts.
- Interactive: It should not be an independent and lonely process to ponder thoughts, but an opportunity to express and share our ideas and broaden our perspective.
- Disciplined: Individuals must have the right attitude, emotions, open-mindedness, and readiness to reflect effectively. Otherwise, it is our nature to see what we want as truth rather than the evidence.

Our experiences embarking on careers outside of our home country highlight the importance and significance of reflection as a tool for learning and professional development. The following personal narratives highlight the aforementioned criteria for engagement in effective reflection.

Reflection #1: From Minority to Majority

In 2012, I moved to the Caribbean island of Antigua. Prior to this transition, I had spent most of my life studying and working in the United States. I grew up in the US as a first-generation American, a child of West African parents. My family instilled in me a sense of pride and I strongly embraced my deep cultural roots of Sierra Leonean and Liberian values, but I also struggled with the experiences and racial injustices of being a minority in my neighborhood and in the workplace. On the other hand, moving to Antigua was full of excitement and anxiety. I was faced with new cultural norms, food, customs, dialects, and etiquettes. From a professional point of view, I was navigating the idiosyncrasies of a cross-border institutional model. From day one, I was surrounded by diverse faculty including their various perspectives and approaches to learning and student support. I was readjusting my

views of autonomy and goals for student development. In addition to cultural adjustment, I was also trying to prove myself as a new and valuable employee all while being away from my family and the familiarity of support systems back home.

One of the more meaningful experiences of this transition was my newfound change in racial status. I was no longer a racial minority in Antigua. I was now part of the majority in a predominantly Black society. The weight of daily survival tactics associated with my experiences in the US were lifted from my shoulders. I was not even aware of how profoundly relieving and empowering this experience would be. On a daily basis I could blend in with the crowd, find products that were meant for my skin tone and hair texture, and see that all positions of power and influence in government were held by individuals who looked like me. At that moment, I acutely realized how draining it was to engage in the daily survival tactics associated with my minority status in the US.

I had a similar epiphany of newly found majority status when I later moved to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). I became immersed in an Islamic society that matched my faith and I experienced a new aspect of privilege: practicing my faith openly, unapologetically, and without fear. It was no longer a challenge to find halal foods, prayer rooms in public, or opportunities to experience a larger of sense of community. I felt as though I could be my authentic self without the tangential thoughts of being judged, harmed, ridiculed, or questioned.

Although both of my international moves resulted in newly acquired privileges, there were still other areas of cultural adjustment. My status as a minority in my home country prepared me for adjusting to my host countries. My experiences aligned with findings from a research study conducted by Volpone, Casper, Marquardt, and Avery (2018): "People who were members of more minority groups in their home country acculturated to a host country more rapidly" (p. 260). In other words, I was able to draw from my previous experiences as a minority to cope and adjust in new environments.

With each new experience I accomplished personal and professional growth. Reflection and mentoring provided insight and support for ways to adjust. I found myself grappling with similar issues as some of my students and thought, "How can I help them work through this?" and "How can I encourage them to think critically, problem solve, and process their experiences?" One day, one of my colleagues expressed his frustration with his newfound status as a minority. He gained a new realization of feeling like the "outsider" or "other" and no longer had the privilege of blending in or having easy access to services and products that he desired. This moment allowed us to share diverse perspectives, learn from one another, and increase compassion and empathy for each other's experiences. We were both struggling to redefine our roles and levels of privilege in our host country. We discussed cultural factors that were at play, White privilege, and the developmental process of cultural adjustment. Reflecting on this critical moment of sharing and learning allowed me to explore ways to better support myself, colleagues, and students with cultural adjustment. It encouraged me to engage in these bold conversations as a lifelong learning endeavor.

Reflection #2: From Majority to Minority

There are only a few occasions in my childhood or adolescence that I can remember feeling like a minority. Growing up as a White middle-class woman in a small town in the southeastern US put me squarely in a comfort zone that I didn't know existed until later in life. It wasn't until moving to the UAE that I finally understood what it felt like to be a minority.

The UAE is a multicultural and open-minded society, but one can quickly feel the Islamic backbone of the country. I grew up in a Christian household, so hearing the call to prayer and seeing a mosque on every corner was a stark contrast from the world where I grew up. Particularly in the US and in higher education, Christians are known to have certain privileges that correlate with a higher satisfaction in their higher education experience (Bowman & Smedley, 2013). This was a privilege I had in my college experiences and in my career without even realizing it until living in the UAE. Additionally, in my professional work in the UAE I interacted primarily with local students and colleagues from around the world. I had experience engaging with a variety of cultures through my previous work with international students, but it was always on my home turf in the US. I had also studied abroad in Europe, but it was in a similar racial, cultural, and linguistic society and I now realize I was not pushed outside of my comfort zone. In the UAE, I was in the minority for the first time and I had to learn how to navigate and adjust myself daily. Many of the cultural and religious references, or professional student development models that I had used before didn't work for my students.

Racial and national statuses are seen differently in the UAE than in the US. There were some elements of privilege I still maintained as a White American woman, but I was never viewed or treated as the priority. That was a big shift and helped me to understand how many people feel in the US. Some memories that remain strong in my mind were the initial uneasiness that I had navigating new and unfamiliar situations in a different cultural context where I was supposed to be the teacher and the authority figure. I had to ask myself "What is expected of me in this situation?" and "How can I be true to myself but be mindful of where I am?" As I started to work more closely with my students, I engaged in different aspects of reflection to adjust to my new circumstances. During a typical week, particularly in the first few months I would reflect weekly on my interactions with students inside and outside of class, discuss any challenges and insights with my colleagues and friends, and think about how to best approach challenging situations moving forward. This process of reflection helped me to engage, process, understand, and make the best decisions in my personal and professional life and internalize my new understanding of the world. I find as well with passing time that my experiences in the UAE continue to teach me new lessons through the lens of my current experience.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is essential to find ways to make reflection a part of our regular practice as professionals, and more importantly as educators. Reflection can be powerful and also serve an important role in the way we help students and ourselves adapt to new

environments. Rodgers (2002) offered a clear approach to phases of reflection that aligns with the scientific method approach to reflection first introduced by Dewey (1933/1910).

1. An Experience Occurs: This requires patience and not acting on first assumptions. Sometimes we need to distance ourselves to get a broader and more objective view of the situation.
2. Interpret: Describe the experience and identify the problem or questions.
3. Analysis: Generate possible explanations
4. Intelligent action: Test out your hypothesis: "What might have been a reaction based on simple-minded analysis (phase two) is thus transformed into a possible reflective response based on full knowledge of its ramifications" (Rodgers, 2002, p. 854).

Engaging in this ongoing contemplative practice helps us grow through new, challenging, and unexpected experiences both personally and professionally. At the same time, it helps us find ways to use this as a tool to encourage our students to try new experiences, identify the lessons or challenges they face, and become critical thinkers who engage in "intelligent action."

While there is little data about faculty and staff who work outside their home country, it is more important than ever for educational professionals to understand diverse perspectives. Sandgren, Elig, Hovde, Krejci, and Rice (1999) suggested that even short-term international academic experiences for faculty can enhance the global content of classroom teaching and enrich the student learning experience. We hope that sharing our experiences of utilizing reflection can inspire others to consider working in a different cultural environment and also help others who may be in a similar situation.

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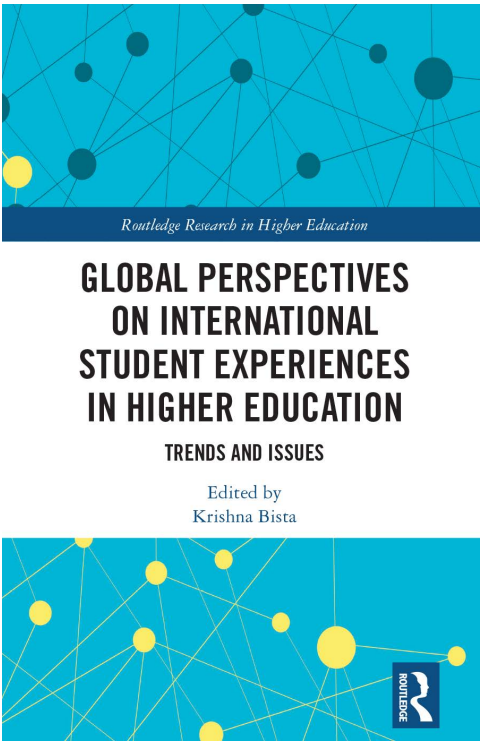

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