JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE & INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION
VOLUME 13, ISSUE 4 2021
THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE CIES HIGHER EDUCATION SIG

INTRODUCTION

EMPIRICAL ARTICLE

JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE & INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION
VOLUME 13, ISSUE 4 2021
THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE CIES HIGHER EDUCATION SIG

JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE & INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION
VOLUME 13, ISSUE4 2021
THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE CIES HIGHER EDUCATION SIG

Philosophy for JCIHE

This is the official journal of the Comparative and International Education Society's (CIES) Higher Education Special Interest Group (HESIG), which was created in 2008. HESIG serves as a networking hub for promoting scholarship opportunities, critical dialogue, and linking professionals and academics to the international aspects of higher education. Accordingly, HESIG will serve as a professional forum supporting development, analysis, and dissemination of theory-, policy-, and practice-related issues that influence higher education.

Submission and Review

1) EMPIRICAL ARTICLES

Authors are encouraged to contextualize their argument, when possible, by citing from existing debates and discussions previously published in JCIHE and by sharing how the results of your manuscript contribute to previous published articles on related issues. These links build a sense of continuity and foster scholarly dialogue within the journal.

Empirical Articles: empirical research should demonstrate high rigor and quality. Original research collects and analyzes data in systematic ways to present important new research that adds to and advances the debates within the field of comparative and international higher education. Articles clearly and substantively contribute to current thought by expanding, correcting, broadening, posing questions in a new light, or strengthening current conceptual and/or methodological discussions in the field of comparative and international higher education. We especially welcome new topics and issues that have been under-emphasized in the field. Empirical Articles are 5,500 - 7,500 words excluding references and tables.

2) REVIEW/ESSAYS

Authors are encouraged to contextualize their argument, when possible, by citing from existing debates and discussions previously published in JCIHE and by sharing how the results of your manuscript contribute to previous published articles on related issues. These links build a sense of continuity and foster scholarly dialogue within the journal.

Review/Essays: scholarly research-based review/essays demonstrate rigor and quality. Original research that a) describes new developments in the state of knowledge, b) examines area studies and regional developments of social, cultural, political and economic contexts in specific regions worldwide, c) analyzes existing data sets applying new theoretical or methodological foci, d) synthesizes divergent bodies of literature, e) places the topic at hand into a platform for future dialogue or within broader

debates in the field, f) explores research-to-practice, g) examines practical application in education systems worldwide, or h) provides future directions that are of broad significance to the field. Submissions must be situated within relevant literature and can be theoretical or methodological in focus. Review/Essays are 3,500 to 4,500 words excluding references and tables.

3) SPECIAL ISSUES. JCIHE offers two special issues annually that address current issues of comparative and international higher education. Calls for submissions are included in the home-page.

4) EMERGING SCHOLARS RESEARCH SUMMARIES

Authors are encouraged to contextualize their argument, when possible, by citing from existing debates and discussions previously published in JCIHE and by sharing how the results of your manuscript contribute to previous published articles on related issues. These links build a sense of continuity and foster scholarly dialogue within the journal.

Emerging Scholars Research Summaries share thesis or dissertation work-in-progress or original empirical research. The intent of this special issue is to share cutting edge research that is of broad significance to the field of comparative and international higher education. Articles must include a literature review, theory focus, and strong methods sections. Articles are 1,000 - 1,500 words excluding references and tables.

NOTE: Submissions must include a Letter of Support from the student's Supervisor/chair indicating their approval for the publication.

The style and format of the *Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education* follows the APA style (7th Edition). Footnotes/Endnotes are not allowed. USA spelling (e.g., center, color, organize) and punctuation are preferred (single quotations within double if needed), and requires a short paragraph of bibliographical details for all contributors. Please see Instructions to Authors for additional formatting information.

JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE & INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

VOLUME 13, ISSUE4 2021

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE CIES HIGHER EDUCATION SIG

Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education *Volume 13*, No. 3 (2021)

Editorial Team

https://www.ojed.org/index.php/jcihe/about/editorialTeam

Contact Information

Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education

Higher Education SIG

Website: ojed.org/jcihe

Email: jcihe.hesig@gmail.com

ISSN 2151-0393 (Print)

ISSN 2151-0407 (Online)

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION
Volume 13, Issue 4 (2021), pp. 1-3
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v13i4.4200 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

JCIHE: Vol. 13 Issue 4, 2021 Introduction

Rosalind Latiner Raby

California State University, Northridge, USA

Editor-In-Chief

Dear Readers -

I am pleased to share the Vol. 13, Issue 4, 2021 of the *Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education* (JCIHE). Issue 4 includes ten Empirical Articles that elaborate on three main themes. Two articles (Veerasamy; Aboyea & Metcalfe) explore issues of internationalization in a historical context. Seven articles explore the experiences of international students. Timsina examines Nepalese students studying in Denmark; Chon & Moea examine Burmese female students studying in China; Alsulami examines Saudi Arabian returnee students who had studied in the U.S., U.K. or Australia; López examines Mexican postgraduate students studying in the U.K; Callaghan, Collins & Estra examine international students studying in Norway; Agostinelli examines learning experiences of international students from non-English speaking countries, and Katz, Gravelin, & McCabe examine race and stereotypical attitudes of White U.S. undergraduates towards international students of color. In the final theme, Marconi, Chiarelli, Rocha, Freddi, & Knopoff examine psychoactive substance abuse in medical students in Argentina.

Empirical Articles

Yovana S. Veerasamy (World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence). *Emerging Direction of U.S. National Higher Education Internationalization Policy Efforts between 2000 and 2019*

This article presents a historical analysis of US national higher education internationalization policy from 2000-2019. The article emphasizes how national higher education internationalization policy was shaped and emerging changes over time. In the absence of a national policy, several actors who helped shape national higher education internationalization policy were included in the framework.

Ashenafi A. Aboyea (University of British Columbia, Canada) and Amy Scott Metcalfe (University of British Columbia, Canada). *Political Ideology and Academic Autonomy in Ethiopia*

This article explores the historical development of higher education in Ethiopia (1916-2018) with an emphasis on the political ideology and its relationship with university autonomy. Findings show

that the State negatively influenced academic autonomy, including by imposing a particular political ideology that was favored by the government in power at the time.

Agustina M. Marconi (UW-Madison, USA); Julieta Chiarelli (Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina); Silvia Baez Rocha (Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina); azmin Freddi (Latinas in Global Health, USA); and Edgardo Knopoff (Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina). *Psychoactive substance use in medical school students at a Public University in Argentina. Lifetime prevalence and differences.*

The article assesses the lifetime use of psychoactive substances in medical students in Argentina. The study shows that among the substances studied, consumption was high. Marijuana use was the substance with the highest consumption with more than half surveyed having tried it.

Nitya Nanda Timsina (Roskilde University). *Nepalese in Denmark: How their international education aspirations transformed into a quest for 'greener pasture'*

This article reflects on experiences of Nepalese who choose to study in Denmark and who eventually become part of the Nepalese diaspora. The lure of mobility for a better life and the realities of experiences gained or lost are balanced by how the Nepalese students develop and use networks and how they engage deeply in social, cultural, and sporting rituals.

Elizabeth Margarita Hernández López (University of Guadalajara, México). *Traditional theories for cross-cultural adaptation: Revisiting their current applicability on the transition of Mexican postgraduate students to life in the UK.*

The article explores early adaptation of Mexican international students who were pursuing a postgraduate degree at a British university. These students did not associate with "the honeymoon" stage of adaptability to their new institution/culture and instead were more aligned with a "crisis" stage.

Caroline Dailey-Stranda, Hult Business School (USA), Helen Collins (Liverpool John Moores University (UK) and David Callaghan (Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (UK). *Those first few months were horrible': Cross-Cultural Adaptation and the J-Curve in international student experience in the UK and Norway*

This article explores how international students studying in Norway and the UK adjust to their new academic surroundings and how universities can support them. Student experiences did not fit the dominant 'U-Curve' of adaptation that suggests that while there is a honeymoon period on arrival, the anxiety and culture shock periods are the norm. This in turn, creates a revised 'J-Curve' model comprising cultural challenge, adjustment, and mastery.

Aye Chon Chon Moea, (Sagaing University of Education, Myanmar). *Finding a New 'Normal': Factors Affecting Resilience of Female Burmese International Students at a Chinese University*

This article explores problems encountered by international Burmese female students while studying abroad in China. The article finds that these students experience factors that contribute to their resilience to continue pursuing their graduate degrees. Language and academic problems and psychological distress existed at the beginning of their studies, but the students were able to overcome these problems based on internal (e.g., optimism and self-confidence) and external factors (e.g., social support and religious practices).

Naif Daifullah Alsulami (Umm Al-Qura University, Saudi Arabia). *Challenges of the Re-Entry Experiences of Returning Saudi International Students After Studying Abroad*

This article describes the challenges of student re-entry experiences when they returned to Saudi Arabia after studying abroad in the U.S., U.K., and Australia. The returnees experienced some

socio-cultural challenges that eventually dissipated over time and few educational challenges related to their work field.

Adam V. Agostinelli (University of British Columbia, Canada). *Teaching International Students in Western Universities: A Literature Review*

This article explores experiences of English language international learners who graduated from K-12 educational systems in countries where English is not the primary language spoken and who are enrolled in Western higher education institutions in countries where English is the primary language spoken.

Katz, Jennifer (*State University of New York Geneseo, USA*), Gravelin, Claire R. (*State University of New York Geneseo, USA*), & McCabe, Elizabeth (*State University of New York Geneseo, USA*). *White U.S. college students' perceptions of prospective international students differ by race and stereotypical attitudes*

This article explores race and stereotypical attitudes of White, non-Latinx undergraduates towards international students of color. Regardless of race, international students were perceived as less socially competent than those with counter-stereotypical attributes leading to a reduced host peers' receptivity towards international students of color.

JCIHE is an open access, independent, peer-reviewed international journal publishing original contributions to the field of comparative and international higher education. The JCIHE is the official journal of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) Higher Education Special Interest Group (HESIG). JCIHE has as its core principles: a) comparative research; b) engagement with theory; and c) diverse voices in terms of authorship. JCIHE supports a professional forum for the development, analysis, and dissemination of theory-, policy-, and practice-related issues that influence higher education. JCIHE publishes a) Empirical Articles; b) Scholarly Research-Based Review/Essays; c) Emerging Scholars Research Summaries; and d) Book Reviews. Please visit the JCIHE homepage for guidelines: https://www.ojed.org/index.php/jcihe/about

I want to give special thanks to the JCIHE Copy-Editors for this issue: Joanna Abdallah (University of Ohio at Dayton), Javaria (Jia) Akaff (University of Northern Iowa), Bob Cermak (Michigan State University), Solomon Arulraj David (Saudi Arabia), William G. Federer (consultant), Vutha Ros (The University of Hong Kong), and Yovanna Soobrayen-Veerasamy (University of Toledo).

Finally, I want to thank several individuals who were instrumental in the publication of this issue, Associate Editor, Hayes Tang, Managing and Copy-Editor Director, Nian Ruan, and Production Editor, Jie Liu. It is their dedication that helps keep the standards and integrity for the journal. I would especially like to celebrate Nian Ruan and Jie Liu who will be transitioning off their positions serving the journal. Their creativity, focus, and dedication have increased the visibility of the journal and have created a platform of professionalism for the future. The JCIHE Board and I wish you both well in your new positions. I would also like to introduce Prashanti Chennamsetti, the new JCIHE Managing Editor and Emily Marchese, the new JCIHE Production Editor. Welcome to you both!

Editor-in-Chief,
Rosalind Latiner Raby
13(4), 2021

Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 13, Issue 4 (2021), pp. 4-15
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v13i4.2426 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

Emerging Direction of U.S. National Higher Education Internationalization Policy Efforts between 2000 and 2019

Yovana S.Veerasamy*

*Corresponding author: Email: yovanas@mail.com

ABSTRACT

Novel trends in U.S. national higher education internationalization policy efforts emerged in the 2000s. Within the context of globalization, the purpose of this historical policy analysis study was to capture the emerging direction of national higher education internationalization policy in three policy-making sectors (voluntary, private, and public) between 2000 and 2019. Novel policy efforts in the three sectors were evident in four major areas: (a) international education at home (language and personnel training), (b) international student recruitment, (c) education abroad, and (d) international institutional partnerships. Within all three sectors, interest in policy strands wavered and policy efforts veered towards international institutional partnerships. Policy efforts tended to disregard the impact of globalization on the domestic front, focusing instead on international ties.

Keywords: globalization, higher education policy, history, internationalization policy

INTRODUCTION

Public policy is typically created and developed by governing institutions to address problems or issues that affect society (Anderson, 2003). Between 2000 and 2019, globalization impacted a variety of sectors within the U.S. economy (Axford, 2014; Friedman, 2009; Giddens, 2002). Higher education responded to the globalization process by developing internationalization policy (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Unlike other nations (e.g., the Australian federal government adopted the National Strategy for International Education 2025, to provide a framework for Australian higher education internationalization policy), the U.S. has not maintained a centrally articulated national higher education internationalization policy. Within the U.S. system of government, education policy is an issue which is left to the states (Tenth Amendment, U.S. Constitution) and the U.S. Department of Education does not direct national

Received May 10, 2020; revised August 15, 2020; accepted August 29, 2020; electronically published September 15, 2021

standards and curricula in education. The role of the U.S. Department of Education instead is to oversee issues of access, equity, and quality of education. The federal government has maintained involvement in federal higher education policy since 1787, and since that time, higher education has been used as an *instrument* to develop various aspects of society, such as manufacturing, agriculture, and the economy in general (Parsons, 1997). At the national level, the U.S. policy-making process involves multiple policy-making sectors that influence higher education through a variety of frameworks. For example, Knight (2004) noted that "the national sector level has an important influence on the international dimension [in higher education] through policy, funding, programs, and regulatory frameworks" (p. 6). Between 2000 and 2019, the inclusion of internationalization policy in U.S. national policy was varied and inconsistent. This article traces the types of U.S. national international education policy efforts that grounded internationalization practices in higher education during the period under study.

Historically, internationalization policy efforts emerged in public higher education as a result of internationalization activities following WWII (President Truman's Report, 1947). These internationalization activities have been referred to by different names, including "international dimension, international education, [and] internationalization of education" (De Wit, 2002, p. xvii). In the 20-year span between 2000 and 2019, internationalization activities on campuses increased in response to the emerging globalization process. These activities included efforts to (a) recruit international students, (b) incorporate international components within course offerings and personnel training programs , (c) promote education abroad, (d) encourage cross-border transfer of education credentials, (e) engage in international scholar exchanges (Altbach & Knight, 2007), (f) build international institutional partnerships, (g) open campuses abroad (Thelin, 2011), and (h) offer courses online to students worldwide (Henry et al., 2014). Although these activities resulted from a variety of global forces, within the diverse and autonomous U.S. higher education landscape decisions to implement higher education internationalization policy on campuses have been left mostly to individual institutions.

Scholars have stated that research on higher education policy has been "acute[ly] underdeveloped" (McLendon, 2003, p. 165). Likewise, within the context of internationalization policy, the American Council on Education has outlined national higher education internationalization policy measures, yet research tracing policy evolution within the context of globalization has been absent from the literature (Helms, 2015). Researchers have examined the 30-year history of internationalization policy up to 1998 (Ruther, 2002); however, minimal research has been conducted on this topic between 2000 and 2019.

The purpose of this historical policy analysis study was to capture the emerging direction of national higher education internationalization policy between 2000 and 2019. In the absence of a national policy, several actors contribute to shape national higher education internationalization policy tracing policy efforts from multiple policy-making actors over a period of time provides a framework for policy analysis at the national level in a given context. This paper focuses on policy emergence between 2000 and 2019.

METHODOLOGY

According to Borg and Gall (1989) "by studying the past, the historian hopes to achieve a better understanding of present institutions, practices, and issues in education" (p. 806). This study employed

historical research design—a research method that requires locating, analyzing, and correlating information from the past to understand historical events and the ideas that influenced these events (Torou, Katifori, Vassilakis, Lepouras, & Halatsis, 2010). Scholars have categorized historical research methods within the framework of qualitative research design (Borg & Gall, 1989; Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Data for the study were organized and interpreted using an approach based on horizontal and vertical historical analysis. First, in simple terms, horizontal policy analysis examines policy-making as it develops among individuals, departments, organizations, or sectors of similar standing and may be considered multilateral. Thelin (2010) has used the term "horizontal history" in higher education to analyze "the complex array of organizations that cut across the educational landscape both to provide services and impose constraints on colleges and universities" (as cited in Gasman, p. 71). Harcleroad and Eaton (2005) have regrouped this complex array of political and non-political organizations into three sectors: (a) the public sector, (b) the voluntary sector, and (c) the private sector.

According to Sreedharan (2007), historical events can be explored by examining a smaller group within a larger group in order to provide "an analysis of why [events took] a particular form" (p. 217). Therefore, using Thelin's (2010) horizontal alignment of higher education policy-making sectors, data were collected from a microcosm of organizations within the public sector, the voluntary sector, and the private sector. Secondly, in contrast to horizontal policy analysis, vertical policy analysis seeks to understand policy-making as it develops in a more hierarchical fashion. In general, vertical history refers to the "understanding [of] why events occur" and "what caused the events" (Silberzahn, 2011). In this study, (a) the public, voluntary, and private sectors were aligned horizontally, (b) policy efforts from each sector were organized vertically in chronological groupings between 2000 and 2019.

Data Collection

Data were collected through document analysis by browsing through websites and digital archives within all three sectors (voluntary, private, and public) in order to locate resources readily available in the public domain. The following keywords were used to conduct searches: "internationalization policy," "international education," and "globalization." First, materials focusing on internationalization policy efforts were collected from two public sector departments: (a) the Department of Education and (b) the Department of State. Scholars have stated that of the fifteen cabinet level government departments at the national level, the Department of Education and the Department of State are major providers of federal international education programs (Wiley, 2010; de Wit, 2002). Data from the public sector were collected from (a) general information on websites, (b) international education reports, (c) annual reports, (d) fact sheets, (e) policy briefs, (f) executive directives, (g) executive orders, memoranda, and (h) legislation.

Second, from within the voluntary sector, data were collected from Cook's (1998) "Big Six" presidentially based voluntary associations because through their lobbying efforts, the "Big Six" represent the voice of the higher education community at the federal level (p. 71). Cook's "Big Six" associations include (a) the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), (b) the American Council on Education (ACE), (c) the Association of Public Land-Grant Universities (APLU, formerly NASULGC-National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges), (d) the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), (e) the American Association of Universities (AAU), and (f) the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU). Data from the voluntary

sector were collected from (a) general information on websites, (b) international education reports, (c) annual reports, (d) fact sheets, and (e) policy briefs.

Third, from within the private sector, data were collected from the Ford Foundation and the Lumina Foundation. Through philanthropy, foundations such as the Ford Foundation and the Lumina Foundation have grown to influence higher education policy in the U.S. (Thelin, 2011). The Ford foundation became involved in international education following the Second World War, and scholars have described the Ford Foundation as a "stakeholder in international education" (de Wit, 2002, p. 32; Merkx, 2010). The Lumina Foundation came into existence at the start of this study in 2000 and has been cited as one of a number of "national… large [and] well-known foundations" that is able to influence higher education through its "choice of area of support" (Harcelroad & Eaton, 2005, p. 256). Document analysis revealed that both foundations collaborated regularly with the voluntary sector for example the American Council on Education on international education during the period under study. Data from the private sector were collected from (a) general information on websites, (b) international education reports, (c) annual reports, (d) fact sheets, and (e) policy briefs. All documents selected for analysis reflected policy efforts between 2000 and 2019.

Data Analysis

A sample of archival materials from digital archival repositories, public databases, scholarly articles, and books were retrieved, sifted, cataloged, coded, and analyzed. Basic descriptive categories of the documents were established early during the data retrieval process to facilitate content analysis of the collected data. Krippendorff (2013) has defined content analysis as "an unobtrusive technique that allows researchers to analyze relatively unstructured data in view of the meanings, symbolic qualities, and expressive contents they have and of the communicative roles they play in the lives of the data's sources" (p. 49). Validation was established through triangulation by using multiple sources of data collection to verify the facts within different sources. For example, facts in policy statements were verified against reports and fact sheets in relation to specific policies.

The data set was interpreted in a manner that allowed for a level of subjectivity because "the interpretive bricoleur understands that research is an interactive process shaped by [the researcher's] own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 6). Data from documents were reviewed, and categories of information were organized using lean codes supported by "text segments" from the data (Creswell 2013, p. 189). The codes were regrouped under four themes which reflected four policy strands: (a) internationalization at home, (b) international student recruitment, (c) education abroad, and (d) international institutional partnerships.

FINDINGS

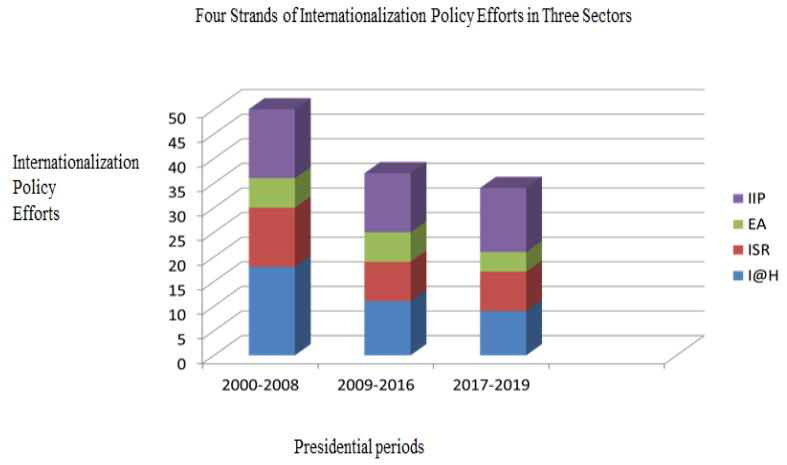
One hundred and twelve internationalization policy efforts within the three sectors were aligned vertically in a chronological order under three presidential periods (see Table 1).

Table 1: Total Number of Identified Novel Internationalization Policy Efforts between 2000 and 2019

Presidential Periods	Number of Policies	Public Sector	Voluntary Sector	Private Sector
Clinton/Bush 2000-2008	48	20	17	11
Obama 2009 - 2016	31	19	9	3
Trump 2017-20019	33	16	12	5
Total	112	55	38	19

This vertical alignment revealed that policy efforts emerged in reaction to a variety of events (e.g., globalization, geopolitics) rather than in anticipation of these events, and interests in policy strands in the three sectors wavered over the years (see Figure 1). Specifically, novel policy efforts emerged within four predominant strands: (a) international education at home (language and personnel training), (b) international student recruitment, (c) education abroad, and (d) international institutional partnerships.

Figure 1: Number of Internationalization Policy Efforts that Emerged in Four Policy Strands During Three Presidential Periods



Note. The policy strands include (a) internationalization at home (I@H), (b) international student recruitment (ISR), (c) education abroad (EA), and (d) international institutional partnership (IIP).

Internationalization at Home (I@H)

Policy efforts focusing on internationalization at home seek to infuse an international education component into the curriculum on higher education campuses without travel abroad. These efforts include language training and personnel development (ACE, 2019; Knight, 2003). In early 2000, the majority of

internationalization policy efforts within the three sectors focused on internationalization at home. Novel internationalization policy efforts within the public sector focused on language training, which manifested in policies directed at less-commonly-taught languages under Title VI programs (Department of Education, 2019). On college campuses, these efforts focused primarily on two languages—Arabic and Chinese. Interest in the Arabic language increased during the post 9/11 era as wars in the Middle East escalated. Languages spoken in the Muslim world, such as Farsi, Tadjik, Urdu, and Uzbek, also gained attention for national security reasons. The military (namely, the Department of Defense) engaged increasingly to provide language training. As China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001, Chinese language instruction increased simultaneously with the increased trading potential resulting from a highly populated China. Similarly, training in Japanese and Korean language skills gained attention for economic reasons.

The voluntary sector played an active role in designing professional development for campus personnel. In 2003, the American Council on Education developed a model for comprehensive campus internationalization (ACE, 2019). Several members from the voluntary sector (e.g., ACE, AACC, and ASCU) focused on developing curriculum, establishing rubrics for global educational outcomes, and developing language training for personnel involved with international institutional partnerships. The Association of State Colleges and Universities developed a toolkit focused on educating internationally competent students (ASCU, 2019), and most efforts emanating from the voluntary sector referenced the globalization process and soft diplomacy.

In the private sector collaborative research was funded with the voluntary sector to address the global world order. At the dawn of 2000, collaborative research by the voluntary and the private sectors concluded that funding for international education was on the decline (Hayward, 2000). In 2010, funding for Title VI programs was estimated at approximately $126 million; however, by 2015, the figures dropped to $65 million and have stagnated since (Association of American Universities, 2018).

International Student Recruitment (ISR)

International students are foreign nationals who enter the U.S. on restricted non-immigrant visas for the purposes of studying at an accredited U.S. institution. Many government agencies influence this body of students. Between 2000 and 2019, judicial bodies within the public sector redesigned laws relating to international students. During this period, SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor program, 2019) was adopted to help the Department of Homeland Security monitor international students and hold higher education institutions accountable for international student mobility. In the post-9/11 era, the focus of the public sector was on (a) redesigning the student visa processes, (b) restricting student visas for select nationals, and (c) extending visas for students enrolled in STEM fields (i.e., science, technology, engineering, and mathematics).

Members of the voluntary sector reiterated the diplomatic value of international students on American campuses in the aftermath of 9/11. The voluntary sector also addressed international student services and advocated for reforms to immigration laws to allow international students enrolled in STEM courses to remain in the U.S. following graduation. Novel collaborative research between the voluntary and the private sector has been conducted to address the various facets of international student mobility on campuses. The private sector developed strategies to incorporate social responsibility into international

student scholarships, provided humanitarian assistance to international students impacted by climate-related disasters, and funded scholarships for refugee students in the face of wars.

The years between 2000 and 2019 experienced unprecedented growth in the number of international students on higher education campuses, resulting in $45 billion in revenue (IIE, 2019). This increase in the number of international students was attributable to several factors, including demographic explosions in BRIC nations (i.e., Brazil, Russia, India, and China), a lack of educational infrastructural capacity in China, and a decrease in domestic student numbers due to an aging American population. By 2008, international student numbers increased and supplemented funding attritions in higher education that resulted from the U.S. economic downturn. By 2017, the Trump administration showed hostility to international students by both engaging in nationalist political rhetoric, as well as modifying immigration rules. Nationalist rhetoric contributed to a slowed growth in international student numbers. In addition, the Trump administration banned travel to and from certain Muslim countries, restricted visas for Chinese students, limited visas for skilled workers, and linked immigration to terrorism.

Education Abroad (EA)

Between 2000 and 2019, new ways surfaced to ensure that American students spent educational time abroad. The public sector provided minimal attention to out-bound education-abroad experiences focusing instead on in-bound study-abroad experiences. The voluntary sector continued to support outbound education abroad experiences and the private sector paid little attention to this policy strand.

A federal bill to promote out-bound education abroad experiences for American students enrolled in higher education did not receive Congressional approval, leaving public sector support for American students to study abroad at a low point (Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act (S. 1198/H.R. 4555). In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, a proliferation of exchange programs (e.g., Kennedy/Lugar/ FLEX, DOS, 2019) emerged from the Department of State to bring students from predominantly Muslim nations to the U.S. to (a) strengthen bicultural understanding, (b) showcase American culture and political values, and (c) share Muslim culture with American host families and their communities (Aguirre, 2002). Under the Obama administration, the programs extended to Muslim African nations (e.g., the YALI program, DOS, 2019). Under the Trump administration, the program has received minimal attention.

The voluntary sector rebranded the term “study abroad” to “education abroad”; the change in terminology encompasses the variety of opportunities which have become available to students and includes study-abroad programs, internships abroad, service opportunities abroad (i.e., service learning), and research abroad (ACE Report, 2017, p. 30). The voluntary sector continues to support out-bound education abroad opportunities for American students.

International Institutional Partnership (IIP)

The two decades between 2000 and 2019 saw a proliferation of international institutional partnership initiatives (IIPs) in the higher education sector. In general, support for international institutional partnerships was a growing trend in all three sectors during these two decades. Both the public sector and the voluntary sector actively sought to develop strategic and long-lasting international institutional partnerships. The public sector continued to fund IIP efforts and members of the voluntary sector extended IIP efforts and provided personnel training for its membership relating to IIP. The private sector funded research on African higher education institutions and has funded research on global institutional collaborations.

International institutional partnerships grew to include a range of novel internationalization policy efforts. Novel themes allowed U.S. institutions to enter into agreements with foreign institutions to collaborate on research, deliver courses, develop exchange programs, establish branch campuses overseas, offer dual degrees with institutions abroad, and enhance international accreditation efforts. In addition, American higher education institutions embraced advances in technology that enabled them to deliver education overseas from their home base in the U.S. Existing institutional partnerships with different countries continued to grow based on efforts established in the 1990s, and novel partnerships with new nations such as China emerged.

DISCUSSIONS

This study examined the emerging direction of U.S. national higher education internationalization policy efforts during three presidential periods between 2000 and 2019. From the plethora of policy efforts that emerged during this timeframe, four dominant policy efforts defined policy direction: (a) internationalization at home, (b) international student recruitment, (c) education abroad, and (d) international institutional partnerships. In 2019, all three sectors demonstrated a penchant for international institutional partnerships, a likely result of globalization.

Close analysis of two strands of internationalization at home policy showed that in the public sector an academic rationale for language instruction was absent from policy efforts. Language offerings were not global and lacked diversity; they were linked to geopolitics (ensuing wars following 9/11) and economics (Chinese accession to the WTO) and were offered by the military. Such an approach undermines the broad educational values that are foundational in language instruction. Personnel training was offered by the voluntary sector to its members. The *Big Six* maintained internationalization at home efforts on campuses through various efforts thus enhancing education quality in the "*flat world*" order. As international student numbers increased on U.S. campuses, the economic might of this student body has led to the assumption that internationalization of higher education is synonymous with international student recruitment, yet few efforts were made to tap into the cultural minefield that international students bring to American campuses, leaving an aspect of internationalization at home unexplored.

The proliferation of in-bound student exchanges at the expense of out-bound student exchange efforts reflected two nefarious effects: (a) cultural insularity and (b) American hegemony. A lack of support for Americans to study abroad has threatened to promote an insular mindset among U.S. students. At the same time, engaging in exclusively in-bound exchange programs with Muslim countries has displayed a sense of American cultural superiority. By inviting students to come learn about and (advertently or inadvertently) emulate the U.S. style of democracy and political structure, the exchange programs rested on implicit assumptions embedded in cultural superiority. This approach has also sidelined other geographical locations. Logically, it would be preferable to educate Americans about a multitude of cultures to diversify student perspectives on world cultures and politics. Such an approach would expose students to an interconnected world order, help improve American understanding of world cultures, help counteract American supremacy sentiments toward other cultures, and help improve American perspective on foreign policy and geopolitics.

Although anchored in specific geographical locations, higher education institutions have not been immune to the influence of the globalization process. Globalization forces and processes facilitated

international institutional partnerships in higher education between 2000 and 2019. After corporate dominance in trade, conglomerates of international institutions (which most frequently originate in western nations) settled to profit from the education sector, large numbers of youths, and growing middle segments in emerging nations. Although international institutional partnerships benefit academic research and collaboration, it also raises the question of who will determine and influence the academic styles and standards in the growing international institutional partnerships space. More relevantly, innovative cross-border approaches must be developed and adopted to address challenges posed by an interconnected world order. Such an approach will better address local problems with global impact and global problems with local impact.

Because higher education institutions are developers of human capital and providers of skills and knowledge, their role in an interconnected global world is best assessed in terms of education policies that aim to prepare students for an increasingly "*flat world*". A lack of data-driven advanced policy planning for internationalization policy in the context of globalization disregards the pervasive nature of the new world order, and sidelining this reality is potentially perilous for nation states. In 2000 President Clinton placed international education in the context of globalization (Clinton, 2000) and the Spellings Report (2006) acknowledged the importance of international education for American competitiveness, yet deliberate measures from political institutions at the national level failed to surface in the 2000s. A framework to guide public higher education institutions in the context of globalization did not emerge. In contrast, in the 2000s Australia and China adopted national strategies for internationalization in response to globalization. Although Australia is a federal state and China is a unitary state, both Australia and China have a Minister for Education and a Department in the Ministry which promotes Internationalization Policy. Australian and Chinese national higher education internationalization policy is funded at the federal and at the central government level. Policy strategy and rationale is articulated at the national level to provide a framework for public higher education institutions in each nation. Historically, the two nations have maintained national internationalization policy for different reasons (Harman 2005; Huang 2003; Chen 2011), yet as globalization accelerated in the 1990s the two nations shaped their national internationalization policy in response to the globalization process. Following the Bradley Review of higher education in 2008, Australia revisited the contours of its internationalization policy and eventually adopted the National Strategy for International Education 2025 (Australian Government, 2016). As one example, Australia moved away from commercialization of internationalization to focus on improving international student experiences, a deliberate effort intended to make Australia more welcoming of international students (Australian Government, 2016). In China, the 1998 Plan for Revitalizing Education allowed China to open up to the world while keeping in mind China`s global role in the world (Yang, 2000; Yang, 2014; Neubauer & Zhang, 2015). As one example, China focused on English language acquisition to draw students into the global market. As a result of this deliberate effort Chinese students are better equipped to conduct research and publish internationally (Hu, 2005). In the 2000s, the U.S. did not adopt a well-outlined strategy for national internationalization policy Instead, U.S. national higher education internationalization policy efforts emerged in an *ad hoc* manner within multiple policy-making sectors, whereby each sector adopted policy efforts restricted to its own policy-making realm. Additionally, interest in policy strands wavered amongst the three sectors under study and lacked continued attention. For example, data from this study revealed that internationalization at home was more prevalent among the three sectors in the early part of the period between 2000 and

2019. By 2016 international institutional partnerships had become more prevalent in all three sectors and have declined within the public sector since 2017.

CONCLUSIONS

In the 2000s, novel U.S. national higher education internationalization policy efforts emerged from the three sectors to serve different policy strands and to serve select aspects of policy strands. At the national level, interest in policy strands among the three sectors under investigation wavered and varied. Interest in policy efforts in internationalization at home gave way to international institutional partnerships and all three sectors under study showed a growing interest in international institutional partnerships. Education abroad did not receive attention from all three sectors. Encased in economic might, the growing number of international students on U.S. campuses helped equate internationalization policy with international student recruitment. A well-defined vision and mission for national higher education internationalization policy in a globalized context failed to emerge at the national level. The different aspects of the globalization process received inconsistent attention in policy, and the effects of the process on the local space were sidelined in favor of international ties.

REFERENCES

Aguirre International. (2002). Assessment of the future leaders exchange program. Retrieved May 23, 2019 https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/flex-final-report_july-2003.pdf

Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. (2007). The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 11*, 290-305. DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.1177/1028315307303542

American Association of State Colleges and Universities. (2019). Retrieved May 6, 2019 https://www.aascu.org/Programs/InternationalPrograms/

American Council on Education. (2019). Model on comprehensive internationalization. Retrieved January 15, 2019 https://www.acenet.edu/Research-Insights/Pages/Internationalization/CIGE-Model-for-Comprehensive-Internationalization.aspx

Association of American Universities. (2018). Department of Education: International education. Retrieved December 3, 2018 https://www.aau.edu/key-issues/department-education-international-education-aau-fy19-funding-brief

Australian Government. (2016). National strategy for international education 2025. Retrieved on July 19, 2017 https://nsie.education.gov.au/node/4

Axford, B. (2014). *Theories of globalization.* Polity.

Borg,W. R, & Gall, M. D. (1989). *Educational research: An introduction* (5th ed.). Longman.

Bradley, D. (2008). Review of Australian higher education. Retrieved July 17, 2017 https://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A32134

Chen, D. (2011). Internationalization of higher education in China and its development direction. *Higher Education Studies*, *1*(1). DOI: 10.5539/hes.v1n1p79.

Clinton, W. J. (2000). Memorandum on international education policy. Retrieved May 17, 2017, https://clintonwhitehouse6.archives.gov/2000/04/2000-04-19-memorandum-on-international-education-policy.html

Cook, E.C. (1998). Lobbying for higher education. Vanderbuilt University Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). Qualitative enquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (3rd. ed.) Sage.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). The sage handbook on qualitative research (3rd ed.). Sage.

Department of State. (2019). About the FLEX program. Retrieved May 23, 2019 https://www.academicyear.org/flex.asp

Department of State. (2019). YALI program. Retrieved May 24, 2019 https://yali.state.gov/

de Wit, H. (2002). *Internationalization of higher education in the United States of America and Europe: A historical, comparative and conceptual analysis*. Center for Internationalization of Higher Education.

Friedman, T. L. (2009). *Hot, flat, and crowded: Why we need a green revolution and how it can renew America.* Picador.

Giddens, A. (2002). *Runaway world: How globalization is reshaping our worlds*. Profile Books.

Gunn, S., & Faire, L. (Eds.) (2016). *Research methods for history* (2nd ed). Edinburgh University Press.

Harcleroad, F. F., & Eaton, J. S. (2005). The hidden hand: External constituencies and their impact. In M. N. Bastedo, P. G. Altbach, & P. J. Gumport (Eds.) *American higher education in the twenty first century* (2nd ed., pp. 253-285). John Hopkins University Press.

Harman, G. (2005). Internationalization of Australian higher education: A critical review of literature and Research. *Internationalizing Higher Education*, 119-140.

Hayward, F. M. (2000). Internationalization of U.S. higher education. Retrieved January 8, 2019 http://www.nyu.edu/classes/jepsen/internationalreport2000.pdf

Helms, R. (2015). Internationalizing U.S. higher education: Current policies, future directions. Retrieved June 19, 2016 https://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Current-Policies-Future-Directions-Part-2-US.pdf

Helms, R. (2015). Internationalizing U.S. higher education: National policies and programs. Retrieved June 19, 2016 https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/National-Policies-and-Programs-Part-1-Global.pdf

Helms, R. (2017). *Mapping internationalization*. American Council on Education. Retrieved January 20, 2018 http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Mapping-Internationalization-on-U-S-Campuses.aspx

Henry, T., Pagano, E., Puckett, J., & Wilson, J. (2014). *Five Trends to watch in higher education*. The Boston Consulting Group.

Hu, G. W. (2005). English language education in China: Policies, progress and problems. *Language Policy*, *4*(1), 5-24. DOI: 10.1007/s10993-004-6561-7

Huang, F. (2003). Policy and practice of the internationalization of China. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *7*(3), 225-240. DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.1177/1028315303254430

Institute of International Education. (2019). *Open doors report portal*. Institute of International Education. Retrieved September 19, 2019 https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Data/International Students/Enrollment/Enrollment-by-Institutional-Type/2015---2016

Knight, J. (2003). Updated internationalization definition. *International Journal of Higher Education, 33,* 2-3.

Krippendorff, K. H. (2013). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage.

McLendon, M. K. (2003). The politics of higher education: Toward an expanded research agenda. *Educational Policy*, *17*(1), 165-191. DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.1177/0895904802239291

Merkx, G., W. (2010). Gulliver's travels: The history and consequences of title VI. In D. S. Wiley, D. Wiley, & R. S. Glew (Eds.), International *and language education for a global future: fifty years of U.S. Title VI and Fulbright- Hays programs*. (1st ed., pp. 17-31). Michigan State University Press.

Neubauer, D., & Zhang, J. (2015). *The internationalization of Chinese higher education*. CHEA International Quality Group. Retrieved August 24, 2020 https://www.chea.org/ sites/default/files/pdf/Internationalization%20of%20Chinese%20HE-ver2.pdf

Parsons, M. D. (1997). *Politics and power, federal higher education policy-making in the 1990s.* SUNY.

Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act (S. 1198/H.R. 4555). Retrieved from https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1198/all-info

President's Commission on Higher Education, Higher education for American democracy, a report (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1947), Vol. 1, p. 15.

Ruther, N. L. (2002). *Barely there, powerfully present: Thirty years of U.S. policy on international higher education*. Rutledge Falmer.

Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) (2019). Retrieved February 4, 2019 https://www.ice.gov/sevis

Shutina, R. (2008). An investigation of the role that the nation's six major higher-education associations have played in the internationalization of American higher education during the last decade (1996-2006). Retrieved October 5, 2018 http://utdr.utoledo.edu/theses-dissertations/1228/

Silberzahn, P. (2011). Five ways to use history well. Retrieved April 12, 2017 https://silberzahnjones.com/2011/06/08/francis-gavin-five-ways-to-use-history-well/

Sreedharan, E. (2007). *A manual of historical research methodology*. Center for South Indian Studies

Spellings, M. (2006). A test of leadership: Charting the future of U.S. Higher Education. Retrieved February 05, 2016 https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/SpellingsReport.pdf

Thelin, J. R. (2010). Horizontal history and higher education. In M. Gassman (Ed.), *The history of U.S. higher education: Methods for understanding the past* (1st ed., pp.71-83). Routledge.

Thelin, J. R. (2011). *A history of American higher education (*2nd ed*.).* The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Torou, E., Katifori, A., Vassilakis, C., Lepouras, G., & Halatsis, C. (2010). Historical research in archives: user methodology and supporting tools. *International Journal of Digital Library Services*, *11*, 25-36. DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.1007/s00799-010-0062-4

Wiley, S., Wiley D., & Glew, R. S. (Eds.) (2010). *International and language education for a global future: Fifty years of U.S. Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs*. Michigan State University Press.

Yang, R. (2000). Tensions between the global and the local: A comparative illustration of the reorganisation of China`s higher education in the 1950s and 1990s. *Higher Education*, *39*, 319-337.

Yang, R. (2014). China's Strategy for the internationalization of higher education: An overview. *Frontiers of Education in China*, *9*(2), 151-162.

Yovana S. Veerasamy, Ph.D., is a higher education consultant and researcher, and her work focuses on internationalization policy, international student services, and intercultural education. Dr. Veerasamy is an English Barrister and has over a decade and a half of experience in the U.S. community college sector as an instructor and international student adviser. She has served in positions with government agencies abroad and currently volunteers with the World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence.

Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 13, Issue 4 (2021), pp. 16-27
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v13i4.2871 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

Political Ideology and Academic Autonomy in Ethiopia

Ashenafi A. Aboye[a*] and Amy Scott Metcalfe[a]

[a]*University of British Columbia, Canada*

[*]Corresponding author: Email: ashenafi.alemu@ubc.ca.

ABSTRACT

This study explores whether State political ideology in Ethiopia influenced the academic autonomy of that country's universities. It asks what the historical trends in the development of higher education show about political ideology and its relationship with university autonomy in the Ethiopian context. After reviewing different university autonomy models (Berdahl, 1990; Choi, 2018; Ordorika, 2003; Reilly, Turcan & Bugaian, 2016), the study delineates the primary stakeholders of academic autonomy, namely, academic staff, students, and the government. It discusses academic autonomy in a comparative light across three regimes in Ethiopia, namely, the Imperial (1916-1974), the Socialist (1974-1991), and the Revolutionary Democratic regimes (1991-2018). Data from various sources show that in all these three regimes, the State negatively influenced academic autonomy, including by imposing a particular political ideology that was favored by the government in power at the time. However, the form and level of State influence have varied across these regimes.

Keywords: academic, autonomy, Ethiopia, ideology, universities

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Several higher education researchers have studied academic freedom, quality of higher education, governance and administration, and reform in the Ethiopian higher education system (Asgedom, 2007; Assefa, 2008; Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016). Some of these studies have discussed institutional autonomy, as well as aspects of reform such as enrollment, expansion, funding, and government interference in the university's governance. Gebru (2013) contends that these studies (see Asgedom, 2007; Assefa, 2008)

Received August 25, 2020; revised October 10, 2020; accepted October 29, 2020; electronically published September 15, 2021

consider institutional autonomy to be part of academic freedom. He also contends that "university autonomy has been operationalized as institutional freedom" (p. 279).

University autonomy is a generic term, and its exact definition is often contested and in flux (Piironen, 2013; Salter & Tapper, 1995, as cited in Yokoyama, 2007). University autonomy has in its meaning, from referring to the "the capacity to decide upon one's own laws or conditions of living," to "moral freedom," and more recently, has served as an "umbrella term" alongside academic freedom and institutional autonomy (Piironen, 2013, pp. 129-130). It is even more problematic to discuss the status of autonomy and equate it with academic freedom because as Bladh (2007) notes, "it is always possible to have institutional autonomy but not academic freedom, since the institution might itself suppress speech even without pressure from the outside" (as cited in Piironen, 2013, p. 131).

Researchers acknowledge similarities between university autonomy and academic freedom, while also recognizing distinctions between the two (Berdahl, 1990; Guruz, 2011; Piironen, 2013; Yokoyama, 2007). One basic difference lies in the fact that academic freedom concerns itself with the rights, duties, and responsibilities of individual academics, while autonomy concerns itself with the rights, responsibilities, and power of the institution to make decisions about its internal affairs, goals, and programs (Berdahl, 1990; Billinton & Li, 2000; Gebru, 2013; Reilly, Turcan, & Bugian, 2016; UNESCO, 1997). In an attempt to explore university autonomy in the Ethiopian context, Gebru (2013) reviewed legislative and research documents, concluding that "Legislatively speaking, universities in Ethiopia are autonomous, as they initially were" (p. 286). Gebru's (2013) conclusion can be interpreted as the legal recognition given to academic autonomy in institutional as well as national legislations.

Unlike research that equates university autonomy with academic freedom, there is a paucity of literature that speaks directly to specific aspects of university autonomy in Ethiopia, including its relationship with the political ideologies that were dominant during different historical and sociopolitical contexts. Social scientists discuss political ideology as referring to a set of values and ideas which consist of political action and commitment to achieve a particular social order (Erikson & Tedin, 2003, as cited in Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009; Freeden, 2006). Freeden (2006) argues that ideologies "facilitate (and reflect) political action" (p. 19). They enforce particular political orientations in the civic and political spheres of national and local institutions such as universities. Universities also play a significant role in the production, dissemination, and legitimation of particular values such as political ideologies (Kerr & Castells, 2000, as cited in Cloete & Maassen, 2015). African universities' competing political elites harbor conflicting ideologies (Cloete & Maassen, 2015). These kinds of relationships between ideology and universities, specifically political ideology and the academic autonomy of universities, need rigorous analysis.

Scholars have examined university autonomy from different perspectives such as those of students, staff, government, external stakeholders, donors, and others (Arikewuyo & Ilusanya, 2010; Asgedom, 2007; Gebru, 2013; Guruz, 2011; Ordorika, 2003; Piironen, 2013; Semela, 2007; Smith, 2014; Yokoyama, 2007). Some of these scholars adopt and develop distinct models for understanding university autonomy and its interaction with respective governments (Choi, 2018; Ordorika, 2003; Reilly, Turcan, & Bugian, 2016). Southern (1987) argues that universities should be protected from bureaucratic control and political interference by governments (as cited in Smith, 2014). Likewise, researchers have pointed out the relationship between universities and governments while discussing institutional autonomy (Billinton & Li, 2000; Guruz, 2011; Ordorika, 2003; Reilly, Turcan, & Bugian, 2016; Smith, 2014; Yokoyama, 2007).

There is much research that indicates that university autonomy is impacted by governments in a range of countries. For instance, Billinton and Li (2000) assert that the Dalian University of Technology in China is under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. In contrast, universities in Canada and Britain operate in political conditions that do not have intense political involvement in their operations (Billinton & Li, 2000). Similarly, Ordorika's (2003) analysis of the situation at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) shows that the government has been relentless in trying to control and shape the stature of the university towards a particular political orientation. This has, at times, resulted in frictions in the university-government relationship. Whereas in England, "conditional autonomy" empowers academics and institutions only when they fulfill national or established norms (Yokoyama, 2007). The legislation in Nigeria enables the government to influence the country's universities (Arikewuyo & Ilusanya, 2010).

The current study aims to explore academic autonomy and how it relates to and is influenced by political ideology in Ethiopia. It offers an analysis of the relationship between political ideology and academic autonomy at universities in Ethiopia. The study aims to identify how the State's interference, specifically, the imposition of its political ideology, has impacted the country's higher education system. This aim can be achieved through addressing the following research questions: 1) How does political ideology influence academic autonomy in Ethiopia's universities? 2) What do the historical trends in the development of higher education show about political ideology and its relationship with university autonomy in Ethiopia?

To do so, the study draws on a critical review of earlier scholarly contributions on the topic, along with personal accounts of scholars with a wealth of experience in the country's higher education system. Other sources of verbal data such as a Library of Congress lecture and a radio interview are incorporated into the analysis to arrive at a more complete understanding of academic autonomy and its interaction with political ideology in Ethiopia's higher education system. The study compares the situations in the Imperial (1916-1974), Socialist (1974-1991), and current Revolutionary-Democratic (1991-2018) regimes. It provides a different perspective on understanding academic autonomy in Ethiopia with reference to the political context in which the universities in this country operate. This study will add to the scarce literature on the interaction between State political ideologies and academic autonomy of higher education systems.

ACADEMIC AUTHONOMY: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Berdahl's (1990) university autonomy model has been used by researchers such as Billinton and Li (2000) to understand university-government relations. Earlier research had combined academic with administrative autonomy while discussing university autonomy across contexts (Hanly, Shulman, & Swaan, 1970). Autonomy is frequently discussed with accountability. Whereas autonomy refers to the power to govern without external controls, accountability refers to the requirement to demonstrate responsible actions to some external constituency, and autonomy and accountability have an inverse relationship whenever they exist (Berdahl, 1990). Similarly, researchers also understand university autonomy as an aspect of academic freedom (Gebru, 2013). Berdahl's (1990) contribution is relevant here because it discusses university autonomy as consisting of academic freedom, substantive autonomy, and procedural autonomy. Whereas substantive autonomy refers to the "the power of the university or college in its corporate form to determine its own goals and programs – the 'what' of academe" – procedural autonomy refers to how the institution achieves its goals (Berdahl, 1990, pp. 171-172).

Ordorika (2003) develops an alternative model of institutional autonomy. His work begins as a critical appraisal of Daniel Levy's (1980) book entitled *University and government in Mexico: Autonomy in an authoritarian system* (as cited in Ordorika, 2003, pp. 363-364). Unlike Berdahl (1990), Levy (1980) discusses university autonomy as consisting of appointive, academic, and financial autonomy (as cited in Ordorika, 2003, pp. 363-364). In Levy's (1980) model, as cited in Ordorika (2003), appointive autonomy includes the hiring, promotion, and dismissal of faculty and the selection of university officials. Likewise, academic autonomy includes curriculum and course selection, the establishment of degree requirements, and academic freedom, among other things.

Ordorika (2003) argues that Levy's (1980) understanding of university-government relations is not complete because it takes for granted that the university-government relationship is based completely on stable structural and decision-making systems and legal frameworks. Ordorika (2003) suggests an alternative to this model, re-envisioning academic autonomy as academic and campus autonomy. Significant in Orodorika's (2003) alternative model is a recognition of three dimensions of the governmental influence on university autonomy, namely, "instrumental, agenda control, and ideology" (p. 365). Besides, Ordorika's recognition of academic autonomy as inclusive of academic and campus autonomy is relevant because such an inclusive approach embraces issues of student access and campus policy which may require the intervention of the government officials.

Reilly, Turcan, and Bugaian (2016) developed "a holistic view" of university autonomy, which they referred to as "institutional university autonomy" (p. 239). The "institutional university autonomy" model connects the organizational, finance, human resource, and academic aspects of the university with what they identified as five interfaces: government-university, university management-university staff, academic staff-students, university-business, and university-internationalization. Even though this model of institutional autonomy includes various stakeholders, the focus of the current article is the entry point for political ideology and its imposition on academic affairs. In the light of this focus, only two of the five interfaces, *government-university* and *academic staff-student* are relevant to the present objective of understanding how a government's political ideology impacts the (academic) autonomy of the university.

Likewise, Choi (2018) in developing indicators of university autonomy that can be used to evaluate academic and institutional autonomy. To this end, Choi (2018) categorizes these indicators into academic staff, administrators, and students. For each of these categories, five stakeholders are identified: academic staff, students, government, industry, and society. "Particular purpose" and "indicators" are also assigned to each stakeholder to facilitate the evaluation and measurement of autonomy. Even though Choi's (2018) stakeholder model is interesting as another holistic approach, it may, however, not capture all relevant stakeholders. The number and kind of stakeholders may change in different contexts, disciplines, and even geographies. Global developments such as the internationalization of higher education may also impact what is listed in the stakeholder model and the respective autonomy indicators.

There has been less scholarly attention to addressing academic autonomy and the role of the State's interference in this autonomy. Specifically, there is a lack of research on how academic autonomy is impacted by the State's imposition of political ideology. The current study, which is informed by Berdahl's (1990) distinction between substantive and procedural autonomy, Ordorika's (2003) alternative model, Reilly, Turcan, and Bugaian's (2016) *institutional university autonomy* model, and Choi's (2018) stakeholder approach, delineates academic autonomy from the perspectives of three key stakeholders: academic staff, students, and the university. In this sense, academic autonomy comprises the autonomy of

the professoriate to design courses, decide on the content of their courses, and teach theories and perspectives they deem appropriate to the context of the institution and the needs of their students. The study operationalizes academic autonomy as the autonomy of the students to enroll in the programs of their choice, provided they fulfill the requirements set out by their respective institutions.

In the larger context of the institution, the study makes use of the term academic autonomy as it relates to the autonomy of each of the units within the university to decide on the content of their courses; design, run or withdraw programs; confer degrees, awards, titles, and honors to those who fulfill the institution's requirements; admit students and establish criteria to admit new students; and appoint and hire faculty members, academic leaders, and department heads, along with the participation of students and/or their representatives. In this sense, any form of State involvement or the State's imposition of a particular political ideology that hinders the performance of academic stakeholders – for example, students, faculty members, or individual units in the academic wing of the university – would be considered a form of State interference or its violation of academic autonomy. Unlike most of the studies by Ethiopian educational researchers which treat institutional autonomy as a part and parcel of academic freedom, this study explores whether these aspects of academic autonomy are undermined or negatively affected by the government in Ethiopia. The study investigates whether the State's political ideology has undermined or affirmed the academic autonomy of the country's universities.

ACADEMIC AUTONOMY AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGY IN ETHIOPIAN UNIVERSITIES

The higher education system in Ethiopia is still being developed. Despite the establishment of the first higher education institution during the Imperial regime in 1950, not much has changed in terms of academic autonomy and the State's political interference. This section presents academic autonomy in the three regimes since the establishment of the first university, namely: the Imperial (1930-1974), the Socialist (1974-1991), and the Revolutionary-Democratic (1991-2018) regimes.

The Imperial Regime

Modern higher education started in Ethiopia in 1950 during the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie, with substantial support from the governments of the United States and Canada. On March 20, 1950, the Emperor decreed the establishment of Trinity College, which later changed its name to the University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA) (Burke, 1960, as cited in Asgedom, 2007, p. 102). At this time, the emperor appointed a Canadian Jesuit, Dr. Lucien Matte, as the founding president of the university college (Abebe, 1991, as cited in Asgedom, 2007, p. 103). The governance of UCAA included the Emperor as a Chancellor and appointed members of the university board who were also government officials and ministers, including the Minister of Defense and Minister of Justice. This shows that academic staff was marginalized from decision-making. As a result, the university college could not avoid state influence and control (Asgedom, 2007; Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016).

The university was modeled after Ethiopian Orthodox Christian traditions, partly due to the Emperor's outlook and the firm stand he and some of the individuals who were recruited as board members held. Religious affiliation had inhibited the university from becoming a secular institution. The imprint of this focus on religious ideology is still visible on the university's premises. For instance, the entrance to the Institute of Ethiopian Studies in the College of Social Science and the Humanities has a motto on the main entrance, written in the Geez language which is a language used only by the clergy. Asgedom (2007) states that the university college was characterized by a multitude of student voices and student engagement in

several societies that have their publications. Reflecting on his visit to the university in 1973, Mazrui (1978) stated that the students had "profound and understandable dissatisfaction with the Ethiopian imperial system as they knew it" (p. 262). However, the students were free and able to express their dissatisfaction, which signaled some degree of academic freedom and academic autonomy.

Imperial Ethiopia was "a unitary state" and the prevailing political situation encouraged knowledge dissemination that favored respect for the King and the unity of the country (Asgedom, 2007; Yimam, 2008). However, there was no organized State political ideology that was imposed on the academic autonomy of the university in terms of course content and academic decisions. The Imperial regime has been credited for the degree of autonomy it gave the country's professoriate. For example, in an interview on Sheger FM radio, Professor Mesfin Wolde-Mariam mentioned that the Emperor even visited the Teferi Mekonen School to listen to the grievances of students (Birru, 2014). Such relative degrees of freedom enjoyed by the then students appear to be in stark contrast to the experiences of present-day students, some of whom have witnessed radically perverse physical violence on many of the university premises across the country (Gezahegn, 2019). Yimam (2008) affirms that the Imperial regime was open to criticism and created an academic environment that was relatively conducive to exercise academic autonomy. Higher education in Ethiopia in the beginning of the Imperial regime was inclusive in terms of students' gender and ethnicity. Scholars like Smith (2013) state that the emperor embarked on the national integration project which engaged missionaries who contributed to primarily religious knowledge prodction and dissemination in multiple languages. However, this tendency of inclusion of multiple ethnic languages was later considered a threat to the hegemonic project of the dominating ethnic group at the time, resulting in the minimized use of other ethnic langauges and dwindling production of knowledge using these languages (Smith, 2013). This provides evidence to tracing the contours of the ideological interference in academic autonomy and the State's imposition on knowledge production. Regarding college admission, connections to the Royal family and the educated, urbanite, political class were an asset. However, this trend was quickly changed by the regime because of the need to have increased enrollment as well as representation of the major ethnic groups in the academy.

The Socialist Regime

Higher education in Socialist Ethiopia was significantly impacted by the Marxist-Leninist political ideology once the *Socialist regime* came to power in 1974 (Semela, 2014). Intellectuals' resistance to the military regime and the changes in the curriculum that were imposed on faculty members had a degrading effect on the condition of higher education and academic autonomy (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016; Kenaw, 2003). The literature indicates that this time was probably the worst in the country in terms of academic autonomy and individuals' academic freedom. There was virtually no form of academic freedom and institutional autonomy at all. The nation witnessed the deteriorating condition of intellectual life, intense brain drain, and isolated educational system (Asgedom, 2007; Girma, 2013; Saint, 2004).

Asgedom (2007) argues that during this period, enrolment of students had "drastically gone down by nearly 50 percent as a result of dropout, killing, imprisonment, and joining the freedom fighters" (p. 159). The factor underpinning these reasons was civil war and unrest. Higher education institutions during the Socialist regime were characterized by being under intense control by the State and university administrators. Academic leaders were appointed based on political loyalty rather than merit (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016; Gemeda, 2008). Some of the regime's moves proved to be highly immobilizing, as they involved "security surveillance, repression of dissent, [and] mandated courses on Marxism" (Saint, 2004,

p. 84). Scholars like Kenaw (2003) argue that academics were required to design courses that espoused Marxist-Leninist ideology and to publicize the regime's ideology. This is an important indicator of the State's interference in the academy, imposition of political ideology, and violation of academic autonomy.

Unlike in the Imperial regime, academics in the Socialist regime were required to design courses that reflected State political ideology and affirm the relevance of the ideology to the country's development (Kenaw, 2003). The burden of such requirements was heavier in courses in the colleges of Social Sciences and the Humanities than in any other field of study. As to the science fields, such impositions were common in the first-year introductory courses that are more or less related to Social Sciences and the Humanities and other vital skills courses such as Critical Thinking and Writing, among others.

All these indicate that the regime was coercive (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016; Geda & Berhanu, 2000; Semela, 2014). The violation of academic autonomy is attributed not only to the direct censorship and pressures from Marxist-Leninist ideology but also to the hostile and threatening political atmosphere and civil war, which inhibited teaching, research, and service (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016; Kissi, 2006; Semela, 2014). The State also introduced "Politics" as a subject in high schools, and the publication and distribution of "Politics'' textbooks all over the country signaled that the imposition of the State reached even down into the high school level to incorporate Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Individuals were appointed as college deans and university administrators, and to other positions only if they were believed to be loyal to the regime. The Socialist regime collapsed in 1991, an event that coincided with the global shift in power, specifically the emergence of the West as dominant and the fall of the Soviet empire. The lack of military and financial support from the Eastern Bloc and the global financial crises which hit Sub-Saharan Africa catalyzed the end of the regime. As a result, the imposition of Socialist ideology on academia in Ethiopia came to an end.

The Revolutionary Democratic Regime

The Revolutionary Democratic regime lasted over a quarter of a century until it came to its end in 2018. Public protest and the Oromo students' movement in Ethiopia have brought about a change in the political sphere since 2018. Currently, this regime is replaced by the *Prosperity Party* under the new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali (Ph.D.). Since Prime Minister Abiy has been in office for less than two years, there is not sufficient data or related literature about the situation of higher education since 2018. However, many scholars examined higher education in Ethiopia during the *Revolutionary Democratic* regime. In this regime, higher education witnessed major trends such as a dramatic expansion both in terms of enrolment and physical infrastructure. Parallel to this, it also experienced repression of academic freedom, the State's interference in the governance of higher education, and visible influences from global actors such as the World Bank and others (Assefa, 2008; Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016; Molla, 2014; Teferra, 2014). Even though it is important to understand the mainstream ideology to discuss whether the State imposed a particular political-ideological orientation on the academic autonomy of the universities, the case in this regime is rather difficult. The difficulty emanates from rather frequent changes in the regime's political ideology and to the obscurity of the ideology that it has claimed to follow for over a quarter of a century. Bach (2011) argues that the Revolutionary-Democratic regime has undergone several changes in its ideology. For instance, the regime abandoned the Albanian model that it followed during the civil war, and then adopted "Revolutionary Democracy," which hints at the tendency to adopt, in the words of Bach (2011), "the Democratic project through revolutionary means" (p. 641). After that, the regime changed its ideology to the Developmental State ideology.

These changes in ideology imply variation in the intensity and level of the State's interference in the university's autonomy, including academic autonomy. Moreover, the dramatic expansion of higher education institutions adversely affected the working conditions of the country's academics (Alemu, 2008). In line with this, Akalu (2014) describes the current expansion as being "ideologically driven" (pp. 394-395). The regime advocates the "instrumental development" model of the university, which regards the university as "a producer of appropriately skilled professionals and applied knowledge" (Maassen & Cloete, 2009, p. 13). Similarly, the government developed a new education and training policy that redesigned degree programs to be completed in three rather than four academic years to fill the skilled labor gap more quickly. To adjust to the three-year requirement, courses, especially those related to basic language and communication skills, critical thinking, and other fundamental skill areas, were eliminated outright. Moreover, the government had designed civic and ethical education courses for first-year college students across the country, but many students complained that the content of the course was mere indoctrination. This proved to be another aspect of the State's interference in imposing its political ideology through course content and syllabus design.

The government also adopted a 70/30 enrolment model which requires universities to admit 70 percent of their newly joining students into the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines and the remaining 30 percent in the fields of Social Science and the Humanities (Teshome, 2007, as cited in Rainer & Ashcroft, 2011). The move deprived universities of their right to select and admit students in their existing programs. Rather, universities were pressured to adjust to these changes, in some cases admitting students without any basic inputs and resources such as laboratory equipment.

The number of higher education students in Ethiopia exploded at the turn of the millennium. The total number rose from 180,286 in 2006 to 600,000 in 2013 (Teferra, 2014). Enrolment had reached a total of 778,766 students in 2015, who were enrolled in 46 public and 130 private higher education institutions (Ministry of Education, 2017). With the move towards "liberal" ideology, the regime slowly adopted neoliberal ideological positioning, which encouraged the emergence of private higher education institutions. Privately owned higher education institutions have grown from 37 in 2003 (World Bank, 2003) to 130 in 2017 (Ministry of Education, 2017). Taking the rise in private higher educational institutions and the inclination of the government towards liberal ideology into account, researchers argue that the expansion in the country's higher education system is ideologically driven (Akalu, 2014).

The Revolutionary Democratic regime adopts the *Developmental State* ideology. The regime views higher education as a driver of the economy, and supplier of skilled labor. This view resulted in the dramatic enrolment of students. The increased enrolment, in turn, created institutional atmospheres that require academics to devote most of their time to teaching and administrative duties with a minimal focus on research and professional development (Tessema, 2009). On an invited lecture at the Library of Congress in the United States, Dr. Aklilu Habte, ex-president of Addis Ababa University, argued that higher education in Ethiopia under this regime was "too much politicized" (Library of Congress, 2010). Two other areas in which the government influences academic autonomy are the appointment of the university presidents and the promotion of academic staff.

Faculty promotion is approved by each university's Board of Governers. However, these boards are accountable to the government; they are chaired by an external person appointed by the ruling party. A frequent criticism is leveled against this regime for firing 42 professors and lecturers from Addis Ababa

University, most of whom were tenured, without any reasonable grounds (Assefa, 2008). Such criticism would exemplify interference into academic autonomy and the tenure system. Also, the State's political ideology under this regime was imposed on Ethiopia's universities. Even though the ideological orientation of the Revolutionary Democratic regime is constantly changing, it continued to undermine academic autonomy.

As discussed above, this had been visible in the design of curricular content and course syllabi, the introduction of new courses such as Civic Education, and an increased role in decision-making regarding the enrollment and admission of students, leadership appointments, and the promotion of senior faculty, among others. The violations of academic autonomy relate to issues of academic freedom and in most cases, they straddle the academic freedom-(academic) autonomy boundary.

CONCLUSIONS

This study is undertaken to identify whether State political ideology has been imposed on the academic autonomy of Ethiopia's universities. The study discusses the different conceptualizations of university autonomy, while also acknowledging the similarities and differences between university autonomy and academic freedom (Berdahl, 1990; Guruz, 2011; Piironen, 2013; Yokoyama, 2007). Before delving into the analysis, the study delineates the primary stakeholders within the academy in academic autonomy, namely academic staff, students, and the government. For this purpose, various models of academic autonomy such as Berdahl's (1990) substantive and procedural autonomy, Reilly, Turcan, and Bugaian's (2016) institutional university autonomy model, and Choi's (2018) stakeholder model are considered, among others.

The analysis highlights the relationship between political ideology and academic autonomy in Ethiopia's higher education system since the opening of the first higher education institution in the country in 1950. Data from a variety of sources show that in all the three regimes, namely, the Imperial, the Socialist, and the Revolutionary Democratic regimes, the State influences academic autonomy. The State imposes its political ideology in various forms. Interference in academic autonomy was minimal in the Imperial regime, except for the influence of the King, Emperor Haile Selassie, and his commitment to the Church. The Socialist regime was the most direct in its interference in the academic autonomy of the universities, requiring faculty members to incorporate Marxist-Leninist ideology in their course syllabi (Kenaw, 2003). The Revolutionary Democratic regime did not subscribe to a single ideology throughout its tenure, but it nonetheless influenced the academic autonomy of universities in various ways. The influence ranges from forcing institutions to change academic programs, the duration of programs, and degree requirements to designing new courses such as Civic and Ethical Education by the Ministry of Education. The regime is also known for its interference in the appointment of university leadership, as manifested in the direct appointment of the universities' presidents, taking upon itself the right to promotion, along with other examples.

The study is in line with findings from other studies conducted in Ethiopia such as that by Assefa (2008). Although those studies explore autonomy in its generic sense and as an aspect of academic freedom, they are still in line with the current study in the sense that all of them show the influences of political ideology on university autonomy, be it academic or institutional autonomy. Gebru's (2013) analysis of legislative documents shows that universities are supposed to be autonomous, as this is enshrined in higher education proclamations and other legally binding documents, regardless of what is practiced on the ground.

A practical and more detailed investigation into specific aspects of autonomy such as academic autonomy, as is discussed here, shows that in all regimes, the country's universities have experienced imposition from the government through State's political ideology.

The findings of this study are also in line with other studies such as that by Billinton and Li (2000), Guruz (2011), and Ordorika (2003), whose analysis confirms that governments in other countries also interfere with the autonomy of universities. The current study does not take into account the threats to academic autonomy from within the university itself. As a result, topics like the political affiliation of faculty members and political partisanship of individual faculties and their impact on academic autonomy are not dealt with. Thus, a thorough investigation into the different aspects of autonomy would enrich researchers' insights. Particular to the socio-political context of the country, a working document, a reference manual, or a form of guideline developed by the universities, in collaboration with the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, would significantly enhance the capacity of university leaders and administrators to preserve and profess institutional autonomy. This study acknowledges that the nature of the constituent parts of autonomy is too different to be treated in a straightjacket and as constituents of academic freedom.

REFERENCES

Akalu, G. (2014). Higher education in Ethiopia: Expansion, quality assurance, and institutional autonomy. *Higher Education Quarterly*, *68*(4), 394-415. DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12036

Alemu, A. (2008). Massification and teaching personnel's condition of service: The case of Gondar University. In T. Assefa. (Ed.), *Academic freedom in Ethiopia: Perspectives of the teaching personnel* (pp. 65-98). Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies.

Arikewuyo, M. O., & Ilusanya, G. (2010). University autonomy in a third-generation university in Nigeria. *Tertiary Education and Management*, *16*(2), 81-98.

Asgedom, A. (2007). *Academic freedom and the development of higher education in Ethiopia: The case of Addis Ababa University 1950-2005* (Doctoral dissertation). University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK.

Assefa, T. (Ed.). (2008). *Academic freedom in Ethiopia: Perspectives of the teaching personnel.* Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies

Bach, J. N. (2011). Abyotawi democracy: Neither revolutionary nor democratic, a critical review of EPRDF's conception of revolutionary democracy in post-1991 Ethiopia. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *5*(4), 641-663.

Berdahl, R. (1990). Academic freedom, autonomy, and accountability in British universities. *Studies in Higher Education*, *15*(2), 169-180.

Billinton, J., & Li, X. (2000). An analysis of university autonomy and governance in three universities: Canada, Britain, and China. *International Education*, *30*(1), 50.

Birru, M. (Producer). (2014, August 09). *Chat Guest* (Radio Series). Addis Ababa: Sheger Studio. http://www.shegerfm.com/2013-05-09-11-11-20

Cloete, N., & Maassen, P. (2015). Roles of universities and the African context. In N. Cloete, & P. Maassen (Eds.), *Knowledge production and contradictory functions in African higher education* (pp. 1-17). Cape Town: African Minds.

Freeden, M. (2006). Ideology and political theory. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, *11*(1), 3-22, DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.1080/13569310500395834

Gebremeskel, H. H., & Feleke, K. M. (2016). Exploring the context of the Ethiopian higher education system using Clark's triangle of coordination. *Tertiary Education and Management*, *22*(2), 99-120. DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2016.1149739

Gebru, D. A. (2013). University autonomy: The Ethiopian experience. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, *22*(3), 271-288.

Geda, A., & Berhanu, N. (2000). The political economy of growth in Ethiopia. In B. Ndulu, S. O'Connell, J. Azam, R. Bates, A. Fosu, J. Gunning & D. Njinkeu. (Eds.), *The political economy of economic growth in Africa, 1960-2000*, (pp. 116-142). Cambridge University Press.

Gemeda, D. (2008). The case of Addis Ababa University. In T. Assefa. (Ed.), *Academic freedom in Ethiopia: Perspectives of the teaching personnel* (pp. 65-98). Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies.

Gezahegn, H. (2019, November 13). Third student killed as tension in universities disrupt teaching-learning process. *Addis Standard.* https://addisstandard.com/news-third-student-killed-as-tension-in-universities-disrupt-teaching-learning-process/

Girma, M. (2013). Negotiating indigenous metaphysics as educational philosophy in Ethiopia. *Sophia*, *53*(1), 81-97. DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.1007/s11841-013-0380-2

Guruz, K. (2011). University autonomy and academic freedom: A historical perspective. *International Higher Education*, *63*.

Hanly, C., Shulman, N., & Swaan, D. N. (1970). Who pays? University financing in Ontario (vol. 1). James Lorimer & Company.

Jost, J. T., Federico, C. M., & Napier, J. L. (2009). Political ideology: Its structure, functions, and elective affinities. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *60*, 307-337.

Kenaw, S. (2003). The idea of a university and the increasing pressures of utilitarianism: A critical reflection on Addis Ababa University. *Ethiopian Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities*, *1*(1), 35-61.

Kissi, E. (2006). *Revolution and genocide in Ethiopia and Cambodia*. Lexington Books.

Library of Congress. (2010, December 16). *The history of education in Ethiopia with special emphasis on higher education* [Video file]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pw4YY_b3V7c

Maassen, P., & Cloete, N. (2009). Higher education, donor organizations, nation-states, and development: The public donor dimension in Africa [Kindle version]. In R. Basset & A. Maldonado-Maldonado (Eds.), *International organizations and higher education policy: Thinking globally, acting locally?* (Part IV, Unit 14, pp. 1-60). Routledge.

Mazrui, A. A. (1978). *Political values and the educated class in Africa*. University of California Press.

Ministry of Education, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. (2017). *Education statistics annual abstract 2008 E.C.* (2015/16).

Molla, T. (2014). Knowledge aid as an instrument of regulation: World Bank's non-lending higher education support for Ethiopia. *Comparative Education*, *50*(2), 229-248.

Ordorika, I. (2003). The limits of university autonomy: Power and politics at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. *Higher Education*, *46*(3), 361-388.

Piironen, O. (2013). The transnational idea of university autonomy and the reform of the Finnish Universities Act. *Higher Education Policy*, *26*(1), 127-146.

Reilly, J.E., Turcan, R.V., & Bugaian, L. (2016). (Re)Discovering university autonomy. In R. V. Turcan, J. E. Reilly, & L. Bugaian (Eds.), *(Re)discovering university autonomy* (pp. 239-249). Palgrave Macmillan.

Saint, W. (2004). Higher education in Ethiopia: The vision and its challenges. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa/Revue de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique*, *2*(3), 83-113.

Semela, T. (2014). Teacher preparation in Ethiopia: A critical analysis of reforms. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *44*(1), 113-145.

Smith, L. (2013). *Making citizens in Africa: Ethnicity, gender, and national identity in Ethiopia*. Cambridge University Press.

Smith, D. (2014). The erosion of university autonomy in Manitoba. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, *154*.

Teferra, D. (2014). Charting African higher education: Perspectives at a glance. *International Journal of African Higher Education*, *1*(1).

Tessema, K. A. (2009). The unfolding trends and consequences of expanding higher education in Ethiopia: Massive universities, massive challenges. *Higher Education Quarterly*, *63*(1), 29-45. DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2273.2008.00408.x

UNESCO. (1997). Recommendation concerning the status of higher-education teaching personnel. http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13144&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

World Bank. (2003). *Higher education development for Ethiopia: Pursuing the vision*. A World Bank sector study. http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFRREGTOPTEIA/Resources/Ethiopia_Higher_Education_ESW.pdf

Yimam, B. (2008). Academic freedom at Addis Ababa University: An overview of its past and current experiences. In T. Assefa. (Ed.), *Academic freedom in Ethiopia: Perspectives of the teaching personnel* (pp. 19-64). Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies.

Yokoyama, K. (2007). Changing definitions of university autonomy: The cases of England and Japan. *Higher Education in Europe*, *32*(4), 399-409.

Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 13, Issue 4 (2021), pp. 28-39
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v13i4.3345 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

Psychoactive Substance Use In Medical School Students At A Public University In Argentina: Lifetime Prevalence And Differences

Agustina M. Marconi[a*], Julieta Chiarelli[b], Silvia Baez Rocha[b], Jazmin Freddi[c] and Edgardo Knopoff[b]

[a]*University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA*
[b]*Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina*
[c]*Latinas in Global Health, USA*

[*]Corresponding author: Email: agustina.marconi@wisc.edu.

ABSTRACT

The cross-sectional study assesses lifetime use of psychoactive substances in medical students. During 2018, medical students from "Universidad de Buenos Aires" (UBA) in Argentina were offered the survey. Males significantly used at least one of the substances studied once in their lives compared to women (AOR: 1.75; IC 95%= 1.11- 2.77). Similarly, males used more marijuana (AOR: 1.69; 95% CI = 1.08-2.63). The lifetime prevalence increased with career level for any substance, marijuana and stimulants. Being employed was associated with lifetime consumption of marijuana (AOR: 1.6; 95% CI = 1.03-2.48). Living with peers was associated with lifetime prevalence for stimulants (AOR: 3.5; 95% CI = 1.54-7.97). This study shows a lifetime prevalence for the total substances studied was higher compared to studies in the region. marijuana was the substance with the highest consumption, with more than half surveyed having tried it.

Keywords: higher education, lifetime prevalence, Medical school students, Psychoactive Drugs, substance use

INTRODUCTION

Substance use among young people Worldwide

Substance use and abuse is considered a health risk factor and is one of the major public health problems that affects the entire population generally beginning during adolescence (Salazar Sarmiento, et

Received December 15, 2020; revised January 23, 2021; accepted January 30, 2021; electronically published September 15, 2021

al., 2015; Romero, et at., 2009). According to the 2019 World Drug Report from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in 2017, 271 million people or 5,5% of the world population between 15 and 64 years, used illicit drugs (United Nations, 2019). In 2015 that same report showed that the number of illicit drug users in that age range was 246 million, in 2012 was 230 million, and in 2010 it was just around 200 million. This shows a sustained increase in psychoactive substance use worldwide (United Nations, 2015).

Situation for youth in Argentina

Due to the impact on health, education and public safety, substance use among young people represents a topic of high relevance in our society today (SEDRONAR, 2006). A report conducted in the Province of Buenos Aires by the Secretariat of Programming for the Prevention of Drug Addiction and the Fight against Drug Trafficking (SEDRONAR) shows that between 2001 and 2011 consumption among high school students grew 1200% for ecstasy, 300% for cocaine, and 100% for marijuana. Although, in percentage terms, marijuana showed the lowest growth, it continues to be the most consumed drug, more than tripling the rest (SEDRONAR, 2014). There are multiple causes that explain why certain populations are more vulnerable to drug consumption than others. This vulnerability is the result of social, cultural and economic factors that can impact positively or negatively the consumption (Morera, et at., 2015). In 2017, SEDRONAR conducted a study to obtain reliable and updated information on the magnitude, characteristics and risk factors associated with psychoactive substance use in the urban population from 12 to 65 years. The study showed that alcohol and tobacco (81% and 51.3% respectively) were the substances with the highest lifetime prevalence (percentage of people who report having consumed such substance at least once in their lives), while among the illegal drugs, marijuana (17.4%) and cocaine (5.3%) had the highest prevalence. The lifetime prevalence for tranquilizers without prescription reached 3.2% and for stimulants and hallucinogens was 0.2% (SEDRONAR, 2017). Marijuana and cocaine use was higher among young people between 18 and 24 years with a life prevalence of 17.3% and 5.9% respectively. Finally, the rates of consumption of any illicit drug were higher among the population aged 18 to 34 (more than 17%) compared to 12 to 17 minors and adults from 50 to 65 years (2.7% and 2.3% respectively). Substance use was more prevalent in the population between 18 and 25 years old, an age that coincides with university life (Riquelme Hernández, et at., 2012).

Substance use in College Students. Argentina

The transition from high school to university education entails contact with a new environment, with unique and challenging characteristics. This marks in many the passage from adolescence to adulthood. At this point in their lives many choose to continue the use or try certain psychoactive substances. Arria et al. show that although there is continuation in patterns of consumption started in high school, there is an increase in the use of substances in young people who graduate from high school, after enrolling in the University (Arria et al., 2008).

The information about substance use in college population at a Country level is scarce. In 2006 the Argentine Observatory on Drugs (OAD) developed a research protocol to address this problem within this subgroup of the population. The study focused on psychoactive substance use and its prevalence in undergraduate students from public and private universities throughout the country. Its main objective was to study psychoactive substance use and its prevalence from a sociocultural perspective distinguishing the different types of consumption, the frequency, the modalities and the situations that

facilitate or encourage addictive behaviors and their possible associations with academic, personal and work performance. Tobacco and alcohol were the substances with the highest lifetime prevalence (57.5% and 92.4% respectively). From the illegal substances studied, marijuana (17.6%) and cocaine (2.4%) had the highest lifetime prevalence, being this last one highest within the City of Buenos Aires than in the rest of the country (SEDRONAR, 2006). The higher the level of demand of the career perceived by the students surveyed, the higher the consumption during both the last year and the last month of the career for all the substances studied. A study in college students from Cordoba, Argentina shows a lifetime prevalence for drug use of 33.3% (Pilatti, et al., 2014).

Medical Students

Consumption among medical school students is especially relevant, in addition to the variables that affect the entire population, medical school students are subject to high academic demands that may be associated in some cases to stress, anxiety and mood disorders. These could lead to substance use in students thinking that consumption could improve academic performance, reduce stress or anxiety. In addition, medical school students could have higher access to psychotropic drugs than the general population, which can facilitate abuse and eventual dependence of these substances (Romero et al., 2009; SEDRONAR, 2006).

In a longitudinal study carried out in 1995, 1998 and 1999, the consumption of alcohol, illicit drugs and lifestyles among second and fifth year medical students and one year after graduation, showed a significant increase in consumption of alcohol and the use of illicit drugs in an experimental way, demonstrating an association between career progression and level of consumption (Newbury-Birch, et al., 2001). In line with this, a 2016 study done in medical students from India, shows an increase in substance utilization in the latter years of education (Arora et al., 2016).

Medical Doctors represent a fundamental piece in the treatment of addictions to psychoactive substances. Therefore, medical schools must train students about the risk of using addictive substances and in the promotion of healthy habits. In addition, studying substance use in medical students is important because the perception and detection of addicted patients can be influenced by their own experience (Morera et al., 2015).

Substance use among medical school students could be harmful not only for themselves but also for those around them, as they will be responsible for caring for the health of the community (SEDRONAR, 2006). Medical students will eventually become health professionals and they are expected to become promoters of healthy lifestyles (Romero, et at., 2009).

Although the use of legal and illegal drugs among medical students can be found in international bibliography, no updated national publications have been found that describe the use of antidepressants, psychotropics and marijuana among medical students from public universities (Roncero et al., 2015). The following is a study on drug use among medical school students at a Public University in Argentina in 2018. The University of Buenos Aires (UBA), is one of the main Public Universities in Argentina and in Latina America, with a total enrolled population of over 117.000 students in 2020 (QS Top Universities, 2020). Its school of Medicine is one of the largest, with more than 30.000 enrolled students (Ministerio de Educación, 2018). Although the percentage of international student enrolled in UBA is low, around 4.5%, that percentage has increased almost 500% in the past 20 years (NoticiasUBA, 2016). Considering UBA is tuition free for both domestic and international students, the percentage of international students could

increase in the next years. The objective of this proposal is to study the lifetime prevalence of the main psychoactive substances in medical students at a Public University in Argentina.

METHODOLOGY

We performed a cross-sectional study to assess lifetime use of different psychoactive substances in medical students. We developed a summarized and adapted version of the Argentinean National Survey on the Prevalence of Psychoactive Substance Use, 2011. During March- December 2018, medical students from the first year, fourth year and last year (IAR) from "Universidad de Buenos Aires" (UBA) in Argentina, were offered the survey. This assessment was voluntary and anonymous and was offered to students during Public Health courses. The sample was assumed as a convenience sample. No incentive was offered to answer the questionnaire. Data was analyzed using STATA 16 software. Individuals with missing data for the exposure variables were excluded from the analysis. First, we described the chosen variables and then we examined the differences between the independent variables sex, career level, employment status, household status and the dependent variable, lifetime prevalence. For lifetime prevalence we first included the three analyzed all psychoactive substances studied together and then we analyzed, simulants, sedatives, marijuana and stimulants separately. Next, we examined the association between the individual demographic characteristics and the outcomes. Finally, we performed multivariate analyses controlling for interactions in the final models for the three subgroups of substances analyzed. Multivariate model was adjusted for sex at birth, and career level for the entire sample, sex at birth, career level and employment status for marijuana and career level and household situation for stimulants. For univariate analyses, chi- squared tests and t- tests were used. For the bivariate and the multivariate analyses, logistic regression models were used considering crude OR (COR) and adjusted OR (AOR). The University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the protocol.

Definitions of proposed variables

Lifetime prevalence: proportion of people who used any substance at some point in life out of the total number of people studied (White, et al., 2005). Lifetime prevalence and consumption or use of at least once in life will be used as synonyms in this article.

Tranquilizers or Sedatives: prescribed medications used to reduce anxiety, fear, tension, agitation, and related states of mental disturbance. Examples: Benzodiazepines in general.

Stimulants: includes all general stimulant substances such as amphetamines and ecstasy.

Employment status it refers to whether the student works or not, independently of the Full Time Employee (FTE) status, hours per week, formal or informal employment.

Household situation: It refers to who the student lives with. Possible answers: alone, with family members, with peers.

RESULTS

Descriptive analysis

Table 1 shows the lifetime prevalence distribution for all psychoactive substances and then for each subgroup separately.

Table 1: Descriptive Characteristics of the 477 Sample and Stratified by Lifetime Prevalence Per Substance

	Total sample (N=477)	Lifetime prevalence total			Lifetime prevalence sedatives			Lifetime prevalence for marijuana			Lifetime prevalence for stimulants		
Variable	Total sample N (%)	Yes(n =292)	No (n=185)	p value	Yes (n=78)	No (n=399)	p value	Yes (n=255)	No (n=222)	p value	Yes (n=71)	No (n=406)	p value
Age (years), average (SD)	23.5 (4.2)	23.8 (4)	23 (4.4)	0.052	24.1 (5.7)	23.4 (3.8)	0.15	24 (4.2)	23 (4.2)	0.009	25 (6.1)	23.2 (3.7)	<0.001
Sex at birth				0.01			0.428			0.009			0.077
Male	121 (25.4)	86 (29.4)	35 (18.9)		17 (21.8)	104 (26.1)		77 (30.2)	44 (19.8)		24 (33.8)	97 (23.9)	
Female	356 (74.6)	206 (70.6)	150 (81.1)		61 (78.2)	295 (73.9)		178 (69.8)	178 (80.2)		47 (66.2)	309 (76.1)	
Career level				<0.001			0.576			<0.001			0.012
1 st year	181 (37.9)	85 (29.1)	96 (51.9)		26 (33.3)	155 (38.9)		68 (26.7)	113 (50.9)		18 (25.3)	163 (40.1)	
4 th year	202 (42.4)	138 (47.3)	64 (34.6)		37 (47.4)	165 (41.3)		125 (49)	77 (34.7)		31 (43.7)	171 (42.1)	
Last year (IAR)	94 (19.7)	69 (23.6)	25 (13.5)		15 (19.2)	79 (19.8)		62 (24.3)	32 (14.4)		22 (31)	72 (17.7)	
Employees status				0.007			0.161			0.002			0.083
Does not work	343 (71.9)	197 (67.5)	146 (78.9)		51 (65.4)	292 (73.2)		168 (65.9)	175 (78.8)		45 (63.4)	298 (73.4)	
Works	134 (28.1)	95 (32.5)	39 (21.1)		27 (34.6)	107 (26.8)		87 (34.1)	47 (21.2)		26 (36.6)	108 (26.6)	
Household situation				0.117			0.212			0.260			0.006
Family members	384 (80.5)	229 (78.4)	155 (83.8)		324 (81.2)	60 (76.9)		200 (78.4)	184 (82.9)		48 (67.6)	336 (82.7)	
Peers	33 (6.9)	19 (6.5)	14 (7.6)		24 (6)	9 (11.5)		17 (6.7)	16 (7.2)		10 (14.1)	23 (5.7)	
Alone	60 (12.6)	44 (15.1)	16 (8.6)		51 (12.8)	9 (11.5)		38 (14.9)	22 (9.9)		13 (18.3)	47 (11.6)	

Total sample

For a total sample of 477 students, 61.2% (292) responded affirmatively to having consumed at least one of the analyzed substances during their lives. The average age of those who had experience with the substances studied was 23.5 (4.2) and does not represent a significant difference with those who did not (p value: 0.052). Almost 71% of those who answered affirmatively were women (p value: 0.010). For the career year, one in two students in the fourth year answered yes affirmatively to having consumed at least one of the analyzed substances during their lives and almost one in three of those students in the IAR

did (p value <0.001). Regarding the employment status, those students working represent 32.5% of those having tried the analyzed substances at least once during their lives (p value: 0.007). Household situation variable was not statistically significant.

Tranquilizers or sedatives

For the total sample of 477 students, 16.3% (78) responded affirmatively to having consumed sedatives at least once in their lifetime. None of the variables analyzed show a statistically significant chi2 when analyzing the frequencies distribution.

Marijuana

Of the total 477 students of our sample, 53.4% (255) used marijuana at least once in the course of their lives. The average age of those who had consumed marijuana was 24 (4.2) with a significant difference with those who did not (p value: 0.0009). Almost 70% of those who answered affirmatively were women (p value: 0.009). For the career year, one in two students in the fourth year answered yes affirmatively to having consumed marijuana during their lives and almost one in three of those students in the IAR did (p value <0.001). Regarding the employment situation, over two third of students that worked consumed marijuana at least once in their lives (p value: 0.002). Household situation variable was not statistically significant.

Stimulants

Of the total 477 students of our sample, 14.9% (71) responded affirmatively to having used stimulants at least once during their lives. The average age of those who had consumed stimulants was 25 (6.1), with a significant difference from those who did not (p value <0.001). For the career year, almost one in two students in the fourth year answered yes affirmatively to having consumed stimulants during their lives and almost one in three of those students in the IAR did (p value <0.006). Regarding the household situation, around 18% of the students living alone had consumed stimulants at least once in their lives (p value: 0.006). Sex at birth and employee status were not statistically significant.

Bivariate analysis

Table 2 shows Crude Odds Ratio (COR) of the bivariate analysis for the independent variables and the outcomes.

Table 2: Bivariate Analysis of the Association between Demographic Characteristics and Lifetime Use Per Substance

	Any substance consumer		sedative consumers		Marijuana consumers		Stimulants consumers	
Variable	Crude OR	95% CI	Crude OR	95% CI	Crude OR	95% CI	Crude OR	95% CI
Age								
	1.05	0.99-1.10	1.03	0.98-1.09	1.06	1.01-1.12	1	0.86-1.16
Sex at birth								
Female	Reference		Reference		Reference		Reference	
Male	1.78	1.14-2.29	0.79	0.44-1.41	1.75	1.14- 2.67	1.6	0.94- 2.79
Career level								
1 st year	Reference				Reference		Reference	
4 th year	2.43	1.60-3.69	1.33	0.77-2.31	2.69	1.78- 4.07	1.6	0.88- 3.04

Last year (IAR)	3.11	1.81- 5.36	1.13	0.56- 2.25	3.21	1.91- 5.42	2.8	1.39- 5.47
Employees status								
Does not work	Reference		Reference		Reference		Reference	
Works	1.8	1.17-2.77	1.44	0.86- 2.42	1.92	1.27- 2.91	1.6	0.93- 2.71
Household situation								
Family members	Reference		Reference		Reference		Reference	
Peers	0.91	0.44-1.88	2.02	0.89- 4.57	0.97	0.47- 1.99	3	1.36- 6.78
Alone	1.86	1.20- 1.81	0.95	0.44- 2.03	1.58	0.90- 2.78	1.9	0.97- 3.83

Total sample

Males had a significantly greater probability of a positive response (COR: 1.78; 95% CI = 1.14-2.29) within those who used at least one of the substances studied in their life. In other words, men were significantly associated with a higher lifetime prevalence for all the substances analyzed together. Regarding the career level, the 4th year (COR: 2.43; 95% CI = 1.60-3.69) and the IAR (COR: 3.11; 95% CI = 1.81- 5.36) showed a higher lifetime prevalence for the substances studied. Similarly, working was significantly associated with a positive lifetime prevalence (COR: 1.8; 95% CI = 1.17-2.77). Finally, living alone was significantly associated with an affirmative lifetime prevalence (COR: 1.86; 95% CI = 1.20-1.81) compared to living with relatives.

Tranquilizers

For tranquilizers, none of the variables studied showed statistical significance for lifetime prevalence.

Marijuana

For those who used marijuana at least once in their life, age was statistically associated with a positive consumption (COR: 1.06; 95% CI = 1.01-1.12); males had significantly higher probability of having used such substance (COR: 1.75; 95% CI = 1.14-2.67). Regarding the career level, during the 4th year there was a higher lifetime prevalence (COR: 2.69; 95% CI = 1.78- 4.07) increasing during the IAR (COR: 3.21; 95% CI = 1.91- 5.42). Similarly, working was significantly associated with its use at least once in lifetime (COR: 1.92; 95% CI = 1.27-2.91). Finally, neither living alone (COR: 1.58; 95% CI = 090-278) nor living with peers (COR: 0.97; 95% CI = 0.47-199) was significantly associated with a positive lifetime prevalence for this substance.

Stimulants

When analyzing career level and using the first year as the reference, we observe the last year, IAR had a significant higher lifetime prevalence (COR: 2.76; IC 95%= 1.39- 5.47). Finally, regarding living with family members, living with peers was significantly associated with having consumed stimulants at least once in a lifetime (COR: 3.04; 95% CI = 1.36- 6.78). There was no significant association with sex for those who used stimulants, at least once in their life, nor with working.

Multivariate analysis

Table 3 shows the multivariate analysis with the adjusted ORs (AOR) and the final models.

Table 3: Multivariate Analysis of the Association between Demographic Characteristics and Llifetime Use Per Substance

	Any substance consumer		Marijuana consumers		Stimulants consumers	
Variable	Adjusted OR	CI 95%	Adjusted OR	CI 95%	Adjusted OR	CI 95%
Sex at birth						
Female	Reference		Reference			
Male	1.75	1.11- 2.77	1.69	1.08- 2.63		
Career level						
1 st year	Reference		Reference		Reference	
4 th year	2.43	1.59- 3.69	2.61	1.72- 3.97	1.68	0.89- 3.16
Last year (IAR)	3.1	1.77-5.29	2.77	1.61- 4.75	2.94	1.46- 5.92
Employees status						
Does not work			Reference			
Works			1.6	1.03- 2.48		
Household situation						
Family members					Reference	
Peers					3.5	1.54- 7.97
Alone					1.76	0.88- 3.53

For the total sample, the model included sex and career level. For marijuana, the model included sex, career level, and employment status. In the case of stimulants, the model included the career level and household situation. No interactions were observed in the proposed models.

Total Sample

From the total sample, males used significantly one of the substances studied at least once in their lives compared to women (AOR: 1.75; IC 95%= 1.11- 2.77). Likewise, the lifetime prevalence is significant and increasing, when advancing in the career, 4th year (AOR: 2.43; 95% CI = 1.59-3.69) and IAR (AOR: 3.10; 95% CI = 1.77-5.29).

Marijuana

For marijuana, men had a significant higher lifetime prevalence compared to women (AOR: 1.69; 95% CI = 1.08-2.63). Also, the lifetime prevalence is significant and increasing, when advancing in the career, 4th year (AOR: 2.61; 95% CI = 1.72-3.97) and IAR (AOR: 2.77; 95% CI = 1.61- 4.75). Lastly, working is associated with a significant lifetime prevalence compared to not working (AOR: 1.6; 95% CI = 1.03-2.48).

Stimulants

In the case of stimulants, the lifetime prevalence is significant higher during the IAR (AOR: 2.94; 95%CI=1.46- 5.92). Finally, living with peers is significantly associated with consuming stimulants at least once in a lifetime (AOR: 3.5; 95% CI = 1.54- 7.97).

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

The study shows a lifetime prevalence of 61.2% for the total substances studied, which is higher compared to other studies in the region such as in Colombia, where almost 40% of the college students used at least one psychoactive substance in their life (Oficina de las Naciones Unidas contra la Droga y el Delito, 2016, 2017). Other studies conducted in Colombia show a lifetime prevalence of 29% for any substance, significantly lower than that found in our study (Paez Esteban et al., 2012).

Marijuana is the substance with the highest consumption, with more than half of those surveyed who reported having tried it at least once in their life. This is consistent with regional studies that show a lifetime prevalence for marijuana in a university population being close to 51% (Observatorio Uruguayo de Drogas, 2015; Cazenave et al., 2017). Similarly, other studies in the region show that marijuana is the substance most consumed among university students (Caceres et al., 2006; Observatorio Uruguayo de Drogas, 2015). However, at the national level, the lifetime prevalence in the 18 to 24 age group, including university students and their non college peers, is 29.3, lower than what our study shows. This could indicate that, if non-university youth between 18 and 24 years of age were surveyed, the lifetime prevalence would be lower than their university peers.

Specifically for Medical students, a worldwide systematic review shows an overall lifetime prevalence for marijuana of almost 32% with the United States escalating to over 48% (Papazisis, 2018); A lifetime prevalence of 53.4% in our study is concerningly higher than the worst international scenario.

Males have a slightly higher lifetime prevalence than women for marijuana. This is consistent with the 2017 national data in young adults from the general population (SEDRONAR, 2017) and with international data for Medical students (Papazisis, 2018).

The study shows that both for the total of substances studied and for marijuana and stimulants, the lifetime prevalence increases significantly with the years of the career completed. This could indicate that a percentage of those who answered yes to the use of these substances once in their life tried such substance while they were university students. International studies show that the annual incidence of substances such as cocaine and ecstasy is particularly high during the last years of college (Arria, et al., 2017)

Despite the small number of students who reported a positive lifetime prevalence for consumption of stimulants, our analysis shows a strong association between the consumption of this subgroup of substances and the fact of living with peers. Scott et al. describe a positive association between substance use and the influence of peers (Scott, et al., 2015). In addition, other regional studies report a high percentage of first-time substance use due to the influence of peers or friends (Ortega-Pérez, et al., 2011).

Although the present analysis does not report recent or habitual use, it does report the experience of using these substances. Considering that the analyzed sample corresponds to a young population, it could be inferred that the first-time consumption has been not many years ago. In this sense, the 2017

study on the use of psychoactive substances shows the average age of beginning of consumption for marijuana is 18.6 years and for ecstasy it is 22.1 years (White, et al., 2005).

It is essential to have information about the consumption patterns of university students to detect vulnerable populations within the university population whose contact with psychoactive substances can interfere with their learning process and their health (Ortega-Pérez, et al., 2011). Besides detecting vulnerable groups, our finding demonstrates the need of active prevention strategies during college years. Offering substance- free activities and providing healthy alternatives for students are some options proved effective to reduce risks of substance use (Arria, et al., 2008).

LIMITATIONS AND PROPOSALS

This proposal is a cross-sectional study. Therefore, we cannot assess directionality of the associations between exposure and outcome nor can we evaluate causality. Our sample includes only college students, so findings are not generalizable to their non-college peers. In this study, the universe is reduced to a university population of a single school of medicine of the public subsector. In the future, this universe could be expanded to other schools and even to the private university subsector.

In turn, the study only includes the lifetime prevalence of the different psychoactive substances, it does not delve into recent or current use. It would be interesting in the future to investigate these variables to have a more complete look to the problem of substance use in this population group.

Another limitation in this proposal is the limited number of independent variables used. In the future, variables such as socioeconomic, academic and demographics, including differences between domestic and international students could be added. Finally, the non-probabilistic convenience sample, so our true population may not be represented.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Matias Somoza, LMHC. Researcher at Secretaría de Políticas Integrales sobre Drogas de la Nacion Argentina (SEDRONAR).

REFERENCES

Arora, A., Kannan, S., Gowri, S., Choudhary, S., Sudarasanan, S., & Khosla, P. P.(2016). Substance abuse amongst the medical graduate students in a developing country. *Indian Journal of Medical Research*, *143*(1),101-103. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4103/0971-5916.178617

Arria, A. M., Caldeira, K. M., Allen, H. K., Bugbee, B. A., Vincent, K. B., & O'Grady, K. E. (2017). Prevalence and incidence of drug use among college students: an 8-year longitudinal analysis. *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, *43*(6), 711-718. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/00952990.2017.1310219

Arria, A. M., Caldeira, K. M., O'Grady, K. E., Vincent, K. B., Fitzelle, D. B., Johnson, E. P., & Wish, E. D. (2008). Drug exposure opportunities and use patterns among college students: results of a longitudinal prospective cohort study. *Substance Abuse*, *29*(4), 19-38. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/08897070802418451

Cáceres, D., Salazar, I., Varela, M., & Tovar, J. (2006). Consumo de drogas en jóvenes universitarios y su relación de riesgo y protección con los factores Psicosociales. *Universitas Psychologica*, *5*(3), 501-510. Recuperado a partir de https://revistas.javeriana.edu.co/index.php/revPsycho/article/view/458

Cazenave, A., Saavedra, W., Huerta, P., Mendoza, C., & Aguirre, C. (2017). Consumo de marihuana en jóvenes universitarios: Percepción de los pares. *Ciencia y enfermería, 23*(1), 15-24. https://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0717-95532017000100015

Ministerio de Educación de la Nación Argentina. (2018). *Universidades. Anuarios Estadísticos*. https://www.argentina.gob.ar/educacion/universidades/informacion/publicaciones/anuarios

Cravaca Morera, J. A., Noh, S., Hamilton, H., Brands, B., Gastaldo, D., & Miotto Wright, M. G. (2015). Sociocultural factors e drug consumption among costarrican university students. *Texto & Contexto - Enfermagem*, *24*(spe), 145-153. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1590/0104-07072015001170014

Newbury-Birch, D., Walshaw, D. & Kamali, F. (2001). Drink and drugs: from medical students to doctors. *Drug and alcohol dependence*, 64(3), 265-270. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/s0376-8716(01)00128-4

Observatorio Uruguayo de Drogas (2015). *I Estudio Piloto sobre consume de Drogas en estudiantes universitarios de Uruguay*. http://www.cicad.oas.org/oid/pubs/UniversityStudyReport_Uruguay_SPA.pdf

Oficina de las Naciones Unidas contra la Droga y el Delito.(2016). Informe Mundial sobre las Drogas. https://www.unodc.org/doc/wdr2016/V1604260_Spanish.pdf

Oficina de las Naciones Unidas contra la Droga y el Delito (2017). *III Estudio epidemiológico andino sobre consumo de Drogas en la población universitaria de Colombia.* https://www.unodc.org/documents/colombia/2017/Octubre/Informe_Universitarios_Colombia.pdf

Ortega-Pérez, C. A., Costa-Júnior, M. L. & Vasters Pereira, G. (2011). Perfil epidemiológico da toxicodependência em estudantes universitários. *Revista Latino-Americana de Enfermagem*, *19*(spe), 665-672. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0104-11692011000700002

Páez, E., Astrid, N., Solano Aguilar, S., Durán Parra, M., Mancilla, D., Suarez, E., Melgarejo, P., Flórez, G. & Ortiz, E. (2012). Prevalencia del consumo de sustancias psicoactivas en estudiantes universitarios de la salud y ciencias sociales. *Revista Cuidarte*, *3*(1), 334-341. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.15649/cuidarte.v3i1.29

Papazisis, G., Siafis, S., Tsakiridis, I., Koulas, I., Dagklis, T. & Kouvelas, D. (2018). Prevalence of Cannabis Use Among Medical Students: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *Substance abuse: research and treatment*, *12*, 1178221818805977. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1178221818805977

Pilatti, A., Caneto, F., Garimaldi, J. A., Vera, B. & Pautassi, R. M. (2014). Contribution of time of drinking onset and family history of alcohol problems in alcohol and drug use behaviors in Argentinean college students. *Alcohol and alcoholism*, *49*(2), 128-137. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/alcalc/agt176QS

Riquelme Hernández,G., Simich, L., Strike, C., Brands, B., Girsbrecht, N. & Khenti, A. (2012). Características del policonsumo simultáneo de drogas en estudiantes de pregrado de carreras de ciencias de la salud de una universidad. *Texto & Contexto - Enfermagem*, *21*(spe), 34-40. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0104-07072012000500004

Romero, M.I., Santander, J., Hitschfeld, M. J., Labbé, M. & Zamora, V. (2009). Consumo de sustancias ilícitas y psicotrópicos entre los estudiantes de medicina de la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. *Revista médica de Chile*, *137*(4), 459-465. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0034-98872009000400002

Roncero, C., Egido, A., Rodríguez-Cintas, L., Pérez-Pazos, J., Collazos, F. & Casas, M. (2015). Consumo de drogas entre los estudiantes de medicina: Una revisión de la literatura 1988-2013 [Substance use among medical students: A literature review 1988-2013]. *Actas Españolas de Psiquiatría*, *43*(3), 109-121.

Sarmiento, R., Salazar Morales, R., Noh, S., Brands, B., Hamilton, H., Gastaldo, D., Miotto Wright, M.G., Cumsille, F. & Khenti, A. (2015). Entretenimiento, espiritualidad, familia y su relación con la influencia de pares en el consumo. *Texto & Contexto - Enfermagem*, *24*(spe), 136-144. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1590/0104-07072015001160014

Secretaría de Programación para la Prevención de la Drogadicción y la Lucha contra el Narcotráfico. (2017). Estudio nacional. *Informe de Resultados N° 1 en población de 12 a 65 años, sobre Consumo de Sustancias Psicoactivas. Magnitud del consumo de sustancias a nivel nacional*. http://www.observatorio.gov.ar/media/k2/attachments/2018-10-05ZEncuestaZHogares.pdf

Secretaría de Programación para la Prevención de la Drogadicción y la Lucha contra el Narcotráfico . Observatorio Argentino de Drogas (2006). *Estudio acerca del consumo de sustancias psicoactivas en estudiantes universitarios del interior del país*.

Secretaría de Programación para la Prevención de la Drogadicción y la Lucha contra el Narcotráfico . Observatorio Argentino de Drogas (2014). *Sexto estudio nacional sobre consumo de sustancias psicoactivas en estudiantes de enseñanza media*.

Secretaria de Relaciones Institucionales, Cultura y comunicacion. Noticias de la Universidad de Buenos Aires (2016). http://www.uba.ar/noticiasuba/nota.php?id=16430#:~:text=La%20cantidad%20de%20alumnos%20extranjeros,13.200%20(4%2C4%25)

Scott, M., Noh, S., Brands, B., Hamilton, H., Gastaldo, D., Miotto Wright, M. G., Cumsille, F. & Khenti, A. (2015). Influencia de pares, familia, espiritualidad, entretenimiento y consumo de drogas en estudiantes de Universidad en Manabi, Ecuador. *Texto & Contexto - Enfermagem*, *24*(spe), 154-160. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0104-07072015001180014

TopUniversities (2020). Universidad de Buenos Aires. https://www.topuniversities.com/universities/universidad-de-buenos-aires-uba

United Nations. Office on Drugs and Crime (2015). *World Drug Report 2015*. https://www.unodc.org/wdr2015/

United Nations. Office on Drugs and Crime (2019). World Drug Report 2019. https://wdr.unodc.org/wdr2019/en/exsum.html

White, H. R., Labouvie, E. W., & Papadaratsakis, V. (2005). Changes in Substance use during the Transition to Adulthood: A Comparison of College Students and Their Noncollege Age Peers. *Journal of Drug Issues*, *35*(2), 281-306. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/002204260503500204

Agustina Maria Marconi, M.D, specialist in General and Family Medicine. M.P.H, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. Epidemiologist. University Health Services. University of Wisconsin- Madison.

Julieta Chiarelli, M.D, specialist in General and Family Medicine. Magister in Epidemiology, Management and Health Policies, National University of Lanús, Assistant Professor. Department of Public Health. Faculty of Medicine. University of Buenos Aires (UBA). Argentina.

Silvia Matilde Báez Rocha, M.D Pediatrician, Specialist in public health, Master in health systems, Associated Professor Department of Public Health. University of Buenos Aires (UBA). Professor at the University of La Matanza

Ivanna Jazmin Freddi, M.D, M.B.A and M.P.H Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. Founder of "Latinas in Global Health" a non-profit dedicated to increase Latin American women in leadership positions for a healthier region. Awarded as the Top 100 Leaders in Healthcare.

Edgardo Gabriel Knopoff, M.D, MPH. School of Medicine Board of Directos, UBA. School of Medicine Public Health professor. Chief of Programmatic Area, CABA. Director of Substance abuse Center, UBA.

Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 13, Issue 4 (2021), pp. 40-58
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v13i4.1970 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

Nepalese In Denmark: How Their International Education Aspirations Transformed Into A Quest For 'Greener Pasture'

Nitya Nanda Timsina[a*]

[a]*Roskilde University, Denmark*

[*]Corresponding author: Email: nitya.n.timsina@gmail.com.

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to reflect on how international education has come to be imagined as a quest for 'greener pastures' by many young Nepalese who are on the move in what is increasingly described as a 'globalized world'. Networking and engaging deeply in social, cultural and sporting rituals with the Nepalese students in Copenhagen, first as an Erasmus Mundus fellow from 2006 to 2008 and then as a doctoral student from 2011 to 2015 accompanied by a fieldwork in Nepal, this paper examines how international education has come to serve this diasporic desire for many young Nepalese.

Keywords: international education, development, Nepal, Denmark, greener pastures

INTRODUCTION

> Denmark has finally thrown off its small-state mentality…openheartedness, creativity, humor and diversity shine through Danish smile…in the age of globalization the relationship with the "other" has become more fundamental than ever (Madsen, 2011, p. 35).
>
> The expanding international education market, which has turned international education into a global mass phenomenon, holds out promises for young people from the emerging middle-classes in countries of the global South, both as a means of enhancing one's social standing and as a pathway to personal growth and transformation (Valentin, 2015, p. 318).

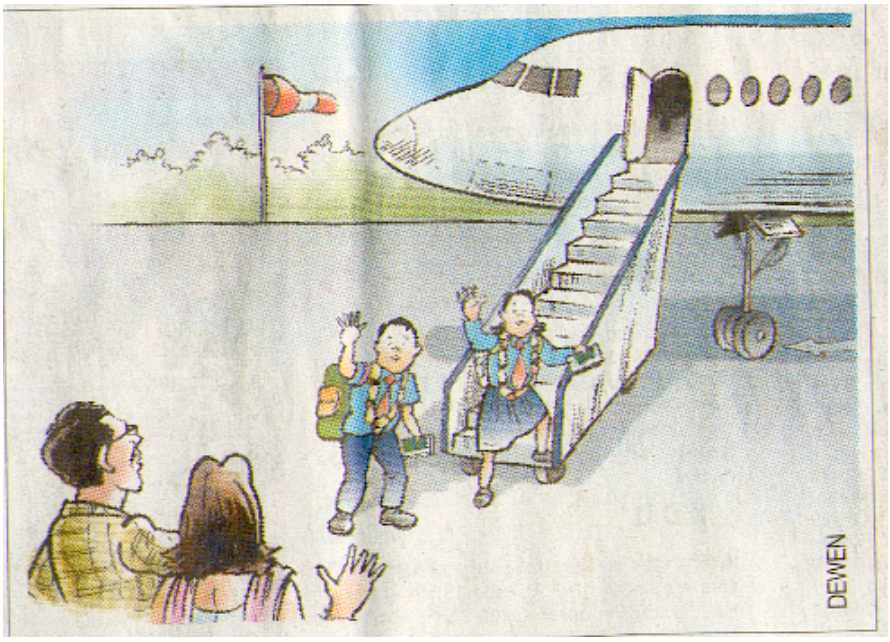
The setting for this story takes place in Copenhagen, Denmark, a fast-growing destination of choice for Nepalese students (see Valentin, 2015, n.d.). Given the growing number of Nepalese students

Received February 7, 2020; revised March 9, 2020, August 24, 2020, September 19, 2020; accepted October 29, 2020; electronically published September 15, 2021

in Denmark, the aim of the study is to shed light on the problems that accompany the 'modern' dream of students who approach international education with a 'greener pasture' mindset.

Before embarking on my own international educational journey to Denmark in 2006, I was working as a journalist for The Kathmandu Post (TKP), Nepal's largest selling English daily, when I had the rare chance to report on Nepalese students going overseas. I was exposed to how mesmerized they were by their dreams of 'greener pastures'. From a dozen or so interviews with the students, I remember one such episode while collecting the international aspirations of the Nepalese students (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: 'Students head outward for higher studies' (TKP, Feb. 5, 2005)



At that time, I remember chatting with a group of elated and proud Nepalese students dreaming high of their futures and leaving Nepal in the pursuit of international higher education. Additionally, as a doctoral student from Roskilde University, my field work in Nepal took me to a group of students who were packing off to what they described as 'greener pastures'. Crowned in marigold flowers and their faces smeared in vermillion, they were headed to that imaginative space called 'greener pastures'. Many of them said on record they would not like to return to Nepal but would instead prefer to settle down in Europe, America, Canada or Australia once they graduated. These exotic places outside of Nepal came to be understood as 'greener pastures'. How to get 'out there' haunts many young Nepalese.

I remember that particular instance in Kathmandu when a score of parents, friends and relatives came to see off their sons and daughters at Nepal's only international airport. Prior to that my own landlady's son who had every comfort in Kathmandu proudly got into a taxi and headed to the airport after bidding goodbye with families, friends and relatives. Crowned in an enormous garland of marigold flowers, that proud and pomp figure slowly getting into taxi, boarding an aircraft propelled by jet engine, and headed to the United States with a sense of belonging to the developed and modern place, is a vision of 'greener pastures' that attracts most Nepalese. These new graduates of new Nepal have such appreciative understanding of the Western hemisphere as the places of abundance while their own country

Nepal is perceived as a place that lags behind in every respect. This paper shows that the international discourses of education and development imparted through national curriculum is the most important in this process in fostering this dichotomy, that is, to imagine Nepal as barren and industrialized countries as greener. However, the RU paper describes the difficulty that awaits the Nepalese international students as they seek 'greener pastures' in Denmark.

Figure 2: RU paper

One third of international students at RU are Nepalese students who hold at least a Bachelor's degree from Niels Brock. Nepalese people have most often been appointed by agents who earn a lot of money from providing international students to Niels Brock, an institution which offers non-Danish accredited international education. The students must struggle hard to get an education in the West. We have met, among other things, a Nepalese student and her husband who work full time to scrape money together for the studies. Many others struggle with the special Danish study form at RU and the academic English level. At the same time, poorly paid jobs fill up so much of their time that they have difficulty following their studies (RU Paper is an independent newspaper of Roskilde University).

When asked to reflect upon, many share their frustrations that their international education does not translate into 'greener pasture' or relevant career in Denmark. Yet, without being relevant to their work practices, for many, international education has become simply the ticket out of Nepal. For many Nepalese students who come to Denmark, they have no option but to choose the non-Danish institution of last resort, popularly known as Niels Brock, a thriving private business college in the heart of the Danish welfare state, which charge exorbitant fees and provide neither recognition for degrees nor prospects of a future employment. Unrecognised and poor, many Nepalese international students perform menial labour in Denmark or move further to Portugal after graduating in Denmark as their last vestige of hope and comfort. Navigating their space in Europe is seldom easy when a disproportionate number of its inhabitants hate them just because they look different from the ideal of sameness. This is made further complicated by the UK divorcing from the European Union sending shock waves across the European

capitals. It has increased the uncertainty and fears for the future of European research and questioned the qualities and reputation of European Universities at large (see Courtois 2018). Beyond any doubt, the far-right anti-immigration movement has dealt one of the deadliest blows to the ideas of globalization and European education cooperation. But this is not the concern here. Rather, this paper is interested in the chatters of global education, its stable order and coherent meaning, which as united by globalization's common ideal of being in the world, has thrown man into the narrow and rigid world of becoming. It is this chatter about international education I set out to examine in this paper with the Nepalese in Denmark as the focus.

My interest in rapidly increasing international student diaspora in Denmark actually grew when in its special June 2018 edition, RU Paper, in collaboration with the local Danish *Dagbladet*, focused on students from Nepal. At that time, there were only a handful of Nepalese students. Two years later, the RU paper (see Dragsdahl & Stærmose 2020) reported that the Nepalese comprise third of international students on campus but unlike their European counterparts who receive grants to go to colleges, they are charged exorbitant tuition fee and subjected to a condition of having to work very hard to meet their financial needs. How widespread are the Nepalese and how is this situation reflected elsewhere will be the focus next?

The Global Nepalese Diaspora

As of July 2019, the global network of international Nepalese diaspora, popularly known as 'Non-Resident Nepalese Association' (NRNA), listed on its website, 'the Nepalese are now scattered in 78 countries around the world.' This trend intensified in 1990, 'when scores of villagers had left for salaried employment in Nepal and beyond, to India, Malaysia, Hong Kong, the Gulf states, South Korea and even farther' (Holmberg, 2017). In 2005, the Migration Policy Institute reported that 'one of Nepal's major exports is labour'. By the end of 2007, an estimated half a million Nepalese were headed to major Indian cities, the Middle East, and South East Asia; and another half to the 'developed' north sending home a remittance worth one billion dollars each year (see Gellner 2007). Here, the international discourse of education and migration is silent on the sufferings, death and destruction it creates and circulates only positivity. As noted by Nepalese journalists Ngamindra Dahal and Bhagirath Yogi (2019), 'nearly 7,000 Nepali migrant workers have died over the last decade while working abroad…'. In 2016 alone, at least fifteen Nepalese 'contractors' were killed in Afghanistan (see Coburn, 2018). Many returned with 'serious physical and psychological damage' but there has been no let-up in the flows (21). It was at this point that Kabi Adhikari (2017), a Nepalese student at Tribhuvan University, Nepal's national flagship of higher education, noted that 'There are many factors that have led to this situation. The most prominent one is the policies of the state that have made all youths see greener pastures outside' and their own country as poor and barren. Like most Nepalese students and youth, Adhikari places the blame at the feet of the 'state policy', which connects international education to the ideal of progress and vision of development in North Western Europe, US and Australia. A vast majority of Nepalese students and youth dream of going to these English destinations. Where they fail to secure these English destinations via tough nationwide contest and rigorous English language tests, Niels Brock in Denmark then offers the last vestige of hope. It accepts all and sundry just based on financial proof.

Notwithstanding geographical distance and climatic contrast, according to NRNA, the number of Nepalese in Denmark reached an estimated 6000 in 2019 and at least 3,000 are students. In contrast, in 2006, the number of Nepalese International students was very low. Their teachers in Denmark had

initially assumed that these students will play influential roles in their home countries once they return. Instead, a huge majority of the students who graduated ended up in EU doing menial jobs, which mostly include cooking and cleaning.

Globally, an estimated 49,500 Nepalese students are studying overseas, and this number has risen from 24,000 in 2010 (Bista, Sharma and Raby, 2019). Denmark has seen a similar trend (see Pradhan, Shrestha and Valentin, 2019). This rising number of Nepalese students in the West is largely a result of globalization and the process of internationalization of higher education. What have however not figured out in the research till date is how in the specific historical context of Nepal, international education has come to be thought in terms of 'greener pastures'. The most important force that shapes this perspective that this paper will show is the international discourse of 'development' which facilitates this one directional South-North flow of students and youth in the name of international education.

Once the Nepalese students land here, many of them dream of fulfilling their cosmopolitan dreams unfulfilled in Nepal in terms of getting an equal ground with the 'developed' people [Nepali term is *bikasi*] (Shrestha, 1995). The 'development', which creates this dichotomy, comes to Nepal from elsewhere; it is not produced locally (Pigg, 1992). The Nepali political elites have since 1950 been so mesmerised by that developmental vision of education and social change as influenced by a Nehruvian dream of freedom in neighbouring India: 'to keep our feet, a head held high, and a place among the equals' (Desai 2006, p. 120). The reason for and need to overthrow the Rana regime in 1951 and Hindu monarchy in Nepal in 2007 came partly from that inspirations and partly from scholarly advocacy (see, e.g. Gellner 2007; Gellner *et al* 1997). The discourses of international development circulated by Nepal's International Development Partners (IDP) played its most decisive part. It promised to bring in places like Nepal what Zygmunt Bauman (2005) would call, 'universally shared and lasting happiness' (p. 68). When such promises fail, a sense of urgency to escape from Nepal in the hope of finding something 'out there' haunts the young Nepalese and which negotiates their international education aspirations in terms of the 'greener pastures'. It is this ubiquitous desire for modernity instead of the genuine needs to complete an international education program which brings them to Denmark. As I show from my private conversation which will be described as chits-chats and daily encounter, many Nepalese feel grudgingly contended in Denmark even as their degrees and diplomas have absolutely no connection with their work practices.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

This paper employs Foucault's poststructuralism as a theoretical lens to understand the emergence of the 'greener pastures' subjectivity among the Nepalese students which negotiates their international education dream in Denmark. It does so by placing the discourse of international development in the historical context of Nepal which has made it impossible to imagine education and social reality in terms other than 'development' (see Fujikura 2013; Pigg 1992; Shrestha 1995). Accordingly, the paper approaches the 'greener pastures' as a typical Nepali linguistic ritual and a subjectivity as fostered by international discourse of development, which provides the wings for the Nepalese imagination to fly to meet that imagined world of abundance. The 'development', in sum, is couched in this paper as the system of power/knowledge, with its unique origin in Nepal in 1951, as the system of reason fostering the 'greener pastures' subjectivity. The year 1951 is important to trace the conditions of emergence for this thinking when the Nepalese political elites exiled in India began to look for changes described similarly for India and elsewhere and synonymously used as 'development' or

'bikas' (see Shrestha 1995; Pigg 1992). Since that time, a 'revolutionary rising expectations' has come to grip the Nepalese (e.g., Mihaly 2009). As I show, when Nepalese students talk 'greener pastures', which negotiates their international education dreams, they refer to that rising revolutionary expectations. As a methodology used to capture their subjectivity 'greener pastures', I applied a particular format and style of gathering data via what I prefer informal 'chit-chats' (Nepali equivalent is *kurākānī* or *guf-gaf*). This is a different type of ethnography.

Discourse as a social text is concerned with talk; it required this format and style of interviewing (Alvesson & Skold-Berg, 2000). The 'chit-chats' hinge between informal interview, talks, group discussions, *tête-à-tête*, common gossips, or an extempore speech. I sum up them as a 'chit-chat'. This was required in a non-Western, non-science, context. This approach was important because this research was concerned with 'a micro-practice of our lived experiences in Denmark (paraphrasing Olssen 2003, p. 192). One must be wary of a systematic qualitative interview in a non-Western context. A chit-chat is an open, informal, and lively talk which suits the Nepalese context which requires alternative voices and practices repressed by the dominant discourses of modernity to capture the *self*. To paraphrase Denzin & Lincoln (2005), those chits-chats were unique and limited to 'interactional moments' (709). This paper brings out this unique and different international education experience in Denmark outside the global hegemonic order of discourse. It does so by 'making an independent inquiry about our own lives and worlds' (Appadurai 2006, p. 173). Foucault's poststructuralism was important in this regard because this approach looks for alternative voices and practices repressed by the dominant discourses of modernity. Accordingly, the fieldwork takes the form of 'an exercise of ethnographic imagination' (Willis 2000, p. 112). If an ethnography is a way of seeing or a way of looking (Wolcott, 1999), then it requires a technique to do so. That is, the chits-chats involve not simply going to the field as an outsider but involving oneself in the micro-practice of lived experience. I submerged myself in the rituals such as 'rice feeding', birthday bashes, fishing and sporting events of the Nepalese in Copenhagen as a way to learn and reflect collectively in what I understand as 'ethnography'. In sum, my take on ethnography is *chit-chats* from where I capture the subjected selves and marginalised voices as repressed by larger discourses of globalization by submerging myself deeply with the actors. I do so not remotely as anthropologists do from their tenured position in universities, but live with them and their rituals. Ethnography is not just about 'listening carefully to the lives of others' or being imaginative and creative to 'infuse lived experience'; it requires us to invent a special technique (Elliott & Culhane 2016, p. 3). Accordingly, I took my role as a poststructuralist ethnographer so as to learn to (re)imagine and reflect. As an exercise of thinking, this type of ethnography enhances our capacity to imagine and retrospect of those things that we claim to know but we do not know yet (Appadurai, 2006). In so doing, more important than a bunch of people physically moving or migrating as most others describe of globalization, my take on globalization is a 'flight of imagination' (original emphasis). It is this flight of imagination which nurtures the 'greener pastures' thinking in Nepal when many young people talk about international education in the western hemisphere. The international discourse of development, which subsumes education and globalization, is the most powerful regime of truth and order through which the Nepalese emulate their heroes in the 'greener pastures'.

> Orientalism ['development'] can be discussed and analysed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient [Nepal/ese]—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it (Said, 1977, p. 3).

Like Edward Said's (1977, 2000) use of the concept 'orientalism' as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient, this paper deploys the concept 'development' as a discourse constituted in the system of power/knowledge (see Escobar 1995) and which fosters the subjectivity 'greener pastures'. The other way of approaching the 'greener pastures' subjectivity is via agency-structure to locate its meaning in objective term. Instead, I argue that this imagination is fostered by the discursive practice of development in Nepal.

In sum, this paper is inspired by the works on postmodern knowledge. Very few works in Nepal are driven by the postmodern knowledge (see, e.g. Robinson-Pant 2001; Madsen and Carney 2011; Carney and Rappleye 2011). Thin on the ground though their works are valuable in thinking about education research beyond the economistic paradigm to include political events and development discourses in Nepal.

Chit-chat with the Nepalese in Denmark

In a chit-chat, I asked my Nepali friend Krishna (some of the other names are changed to maintain anonymity) – who himself came to Denmark as an international student and eventually applied for Green Card to settle down permanently – to reflect on the above cited paradox of international education in Denmark.

> I don't believe that the plight of diligent Nepalese youths to abroad/Denmark is only to pursue higher education. I think, it is very deficient to describe our international education journey like this. However, the extreme foreign euphoria, a well settled socioeconomic status and the catastrophic socio-political turmoil back in Nepal provokes youth's mind to cross the boundary by means of education (Krishna, Nepali Green Card holder in Denmark).

Sunday, 23 December 2018 to be precise, I was attending one of my Nepali friend's daughter's 'rice-feeding' event in Copenhagen when I had a lively face-to-face chit-chat with Krishna. The 'rice-feeding' is a Hindu ritual or a 'Brahmanical tradition' informed by a different reason and morality (Parry, 1985). The practice continues despite the removal of the Hindu state in Nepal. On the occasion, the family introduce solid food for the first time when their child turns six months old. About 80 Nepalese, many of them who have completed their master and bachelor degrees in Denmark, had gathered for the ritual in a party hall in Copenhagen. Loud music including English, Hindi and Nepali was played. Many danced as well. Male members sat around one side drinking Irish whisky, Jack Daniel and Tuborg; their wives sat at the other end drinking mojito. I took the seat next to Krishna, who had just returned from a short visit to Nepal. He appeared cheerful after his Green Card permit got extended for two more years. Next to him sat Rajesh, who was sharing his holiday in Phuket, Thailand. During those banal conversations or what I prefer 'chit-chats', most of my Nepali friends shared their future aspirations. One of my PhD colleagues who had just completed his PhD in nutrition sciences was in a great dilemma whether to return to Nepal or apply for a permanent residency in Denmark. Another colleague completed his PhD in biomedicine from Copenhagen University and his wife completed her post doctorate in a similar field. They migrated to Canada instead of returning to Nepal. Nishant, who graduated from Nepal's iconic Institute of Engineering, came to Denmark under the Green Card scheme but due to language barriers left to live permanently in the United Kingdom. Rajen spent a lot of money for processing his application that included English language test for a permanent residency in Australia. Very few, almost no one showed interest in returning to Nepal after obtaining their international degrees in Denmark. A fairly large number of them wanted to return to Nepal only for holidays and short business trips. When they had accumulated

enough money, they would invest in real estate businesses, hotels and restaurants in Nepal. Quite a few would like to return as business entrepreneurs when their children turn 18 in Denmark to qualify for living independently from parents. On that occasion, I asked Rajesh, a Nepali permanent resident in Denmark, who came here in 2007 as an international student, to reflect on the concept of 'greener pastures'.

Of all the chit-chats, Rajesh's chit-chat is worthy of mention here. He lives a stone throw away from my quarter in Denmark. We often go jogging, fishing, meet on social occasions and play badminton with a group of other Nepalese in Copenhagen, many of them students and their dependent wives or husbands. He reflects on what has happened to his international education aspirations in Denmark.

Rajesh completed a two-year course on multimedia and then a bachelor in international business. While his friend Samir continued with his advance degree in information technology at the University of Southern Denmark, Rajesh quit in favour of a work permit that allowed him a fast-track permanent settlement in Denmark. Samir ended up with a handsomely paid white-collar job in UNICEF, while Rajesh ended up being a head cook in downtown Copenhagen. Both of them now live nearly on same type of villa house and ride same brand cars and enjoy nearly the same quality of life as made possible by the distributive social policies of the Danish welfare state. Many young people emulate Rajesh's success in remitting money to Nepal than emulate Samir's path to social change. What is more, Rajesh went on a summer holiday in exotic places like Thailand's island of Phuket and built a four-storey concrete tower in Nepal. Many in Nepal feel a sense of being left behind in the race when they see Rajesh's achievements in Denmark and his vacations in Phuket on social media. How to reach 'out there' or how to travel forward in time haunts them. International education is the only way to reach there and is part of that long list of dreams, which include among others, the desire to belong to the cosmopolitan center of the White civilization, where the world's most beautiful and secular people live—all of which come to foster the subjectivity 'greener pastures'. International education then takes the shape of a 'greener pastures' serving as a bridge to connect with such real and authentic peoples and places. For many, their immediate thoughts would be a work-study environment in Copenhagen where they dream of working with the pure whites singing and humming Bryan Adams' biggest hit *Hotel California* or *Michel Learns to Rock*. All of those abstract sounds and material images fill their sense of international education as some sort of an object 'greener pastures'. In sum, the discourse of international development circulated in Nepal by international aid agencies provides the wings for such abstract thoughts to fly to meet that imagined world of abundance.

Rajesh's future plans after securing his place in the global Nepalese diaspora (NRN) are clear: To his hometown in Chitwan, popularly known for its biodiversity, dense green forest, home to the world's rare one-horned rhinos and Bengal tigers, and the country's oldest and famous national park', he would briefly return to spend his winter vacation in that four-storey concrete house he had built from the remittance last year. Whilst some of his international education dreams transformed into that concrete tower in his home town, he had to navigate a different path to obtain it. Instead of his degrees and diplomas earned in Denmark providing him an upward social mobility, he had to resort to a job as cook to reach there. After having secured his permanent residency and bought a villa home in Denmark and having accomplished the task of building a tower in Nepal, Rajesh is thinking to invest in real estate, stocks and shares.

Denmark is not an international education destination but a gateway to Europe and a good place to earn remittance

Like Rajesh and Krishna, there are many other Nepalese who are not convinced that Denmark is an exotic destination to realize their international education aspirations but a place of 'greener pastures' or a good source of remittance. International education simply offers a route or a ticket in this process without being relevant to degrees and diplomas earned in Denmark or Europe. How can we understand international education in the light of this paradox?

Shyam, who completed his master degree from RU contests the view that his international education degree from Denmark is equipping him with academic and social skills necessary to improve his livelihoods. He is rather relying on his cleaning job for his livelihoods whilst his socially privileged white mates had their unbroken academic mobility and career progression. He lives with three more friends in a single bedroom and a shared kitchen and toilet with his renter. Each four line-up with their own pressure cookers to cook their meal in turn. Shyam paid 32,600 Danish kroner as tuition fee to RU each semester all by himself working in downtown Hard Rock cafe. In two years, he spent five million Nepalese rupees to RU as tuition fee to obtain his international master degree. When RU teachers compare the Nepalese students with their European counterparts who receive grants to go to university in terms of their 'professional level' to score in exams or ability to pass the exam, they do not know how Nepalese students have to work and study in Denmark on unequal terms.

Radhika became pregnant in her second semester but was not entitled to receive any financial support in Denmark that includes maternity pay on par with her Danish and European counterparts. Rukmini and her newlywed husband arrived next in a row. They married at the age of 21, just before embarking on their international education journey, so that Rukmini could work full-time to support her husband's tuition fee. As a relative, Rajesh who had already belonged to Denmark, was obliged to give them a place to sleep and kitchen to eat. He and his two sons and wife hosted the couple in their 55-square meter one bedroom apartment where they met for their honeymoon. Gauri couldn't find a place to register her address. As a last resort, a Pakistani offered her the address in return for a monthly payment of 1000 kroner but not the place to sleep; it took her almost a year to find a comfortable place to sleep and her own address to rely on, let alone a congenial atmosphere to study. She registered her address with the Pakistani and slept elsewhere with a Nepali family who charged her another 2,500 kroner for rent. She had to work extra hours to meet her monthly expenses on food and tuition. Shyam's roommate Rupak slept a couple of times at the train station after he had no time left to commute between work and study. Despite such hardships, the flow of Nepalese students is unlikely to lose its momentum. Consider this most recent chat on Nepali social media:

> Subedi A.: Can anyone provide me information about Niels Brock plz... I have only this option as my score is only 6.0.
>
> Bishal: Only route to Europe (original Nepali language: *Europe aaune bato ho yo*).
>
> Bijay: Niels Brock now only offers 3-year bachelor degree. It makes no meaning why study here. But if you are only finding a way to enter Europe, it can be best option.
>
> AroOn: Only a way to enter Europe is not a professional decision bro.
>
> Manoj: After completing masters from Niels Brock [in Copenhagen], is there any possibilities to get PR in Denmark? Or, should we return to home country?

> Raut: Niels Brock may be ok to begin with, bro. There are plentiful options. After completing masters, you can apply in another Danish university again for master degree. If accepted, it will be best for you; if not Portugal. A PR in Denmark is not that easy... But why worry? There are 23-24 other countries in EU; you do not have to just return to Nepal.

From their hometown in Nepal, Ajit and Manoj posts open Facebook message to *Nepalese Living in Denmark* on July 23, 2020. Bishal, Bijay and Raut are among the 50 Nepalese at a class of 60 international students at Niels Brock often criticized for charging exorbitant fees. They reply to Ajit and Manoj that Denmark is only a gateway to enter Europe and not a real education destination. Nirmala couldn't qualify to come to Europe on a student visa. The easiest route the 'brokers' in Kathmandu showed her was 'paper marriage' with a student. Nirmala would otherwise live dirt poor in Nepal. Here, conventional anthropologists or ethnographers would miss the story of Nirmala by relying on systematic or rigorous interviews which would not capture her route to and routines in Europe. The other option more common to Philippinos and Thais is to tie the knot with singles or divorced Danish often half their age but the Nepalese wouldn't prefer that route to 'greener pastures'. Upon her arrival, Nirmala found a housekeeping job through her Nepali networks. A week later, she phoned her dad in Nepal and said, 'I will be coming home; it is so difficult to work here.' She then added, 'Baba (dad) Europe is not exactly what we talked and thought about in Nepal.' For a sex-hungry single European, she would have become a hot bride and an easy path to settlement. Even as her one and the only concern is how to belong to the EU she wouldn't choose that route to greener pastures. Priti came a month after her wedding in Nepal. She found no accommodation. A sex-hungry man living single for many years, offered her his luxury apartment, but she preferred to sleep with a Nepali family in their kitchen and go through a cumbersome process of qualifying for settlement in the 'greener pastures'. For the sex-hungry, nothing would have been more pleasurable than to sleep with someone else's hot bride but neither Priti nor Nirmala would agree. Here, the discourses of modernity or development have created a conceptual space to think of our body as devoid of souls, 'the product of our ['his'] own making' (paraphrasing Cohen 2008, p. 506). However, not everybody is dictated by its materialistic and functionalist terms contrary to recent claims that a global consumer culture has come to suddenly dissolve the past traditional Nepalese history and culture (see Liechty, 2003).

> Typically, [these] anthropologists spend time in one place [Nepal], doing participant observation research by attempting to become part of the community and writing ethnographies, holistic accounts of the local culture, explaining phenomena from the ground up' (Coburn, 2018, pp. 17-18).

In these encounters, as Madsen and Carney (2011) have commented, it was futile to find tropes like 'global' or 'globalization' except as through these local enactments (p. 117). The only Nepali girl who broke the Hindu structure or Nepalese social arrangement to fit the European description of the 'middle-class' was Rinku. She was caught up in an extramarital affair with a white European. She eventually left her Nepalese husband for the Whiteman. Her Nepal-bred brown husband was unable to give her time and sexual satisfaction shuttling between college and his workplace. By a happenchance, Rinku found the European man who fulfilled her sexual desires in the daylight while her husband was at college. She eventually eloped with him and settled down. Nirmala and Priti, however, rejected the pervasive views about globalization and 'modernity' as a unified practice and a common experience of time and space. This paper takes into account this diversity or hybrid form of reality in the world.

Tracing 'Greener Pastures' Subjectivity via Genealogy

Following Foucault, every discourse has its own history which requires a little remote historical sense of awareness to understand (see, Saar 2002). Accordingly, I employ genealogy as a tool to trace the discourses of development and education in Nepal to the year 1951. It is the year when international development intervention began in Nepal. Nepal is a 'country of villages' where a vast majority of Nepalese lived as subsidence farmers (Pigg 1992, p. 491). The International Development Partners (IDP) have been in Nepal since 1951 to change that *panaroma of village life* (Desai 2006, p. 34) into a brick, mortar and money economy or what is known as 'developed' or 'modern' (Shrestha 1995; Pigg 1992). History of Nepal since 1950 is in fact a long-drawn struggle for political power than one of a smooth and certain futures (~~see~~ Joshi & Rose, 1966; Rose, 1971). As Eugene Bramer Mihaly (2009) reflects back, 'Nepal from under the grey London skies looked to be what it, in fact, it proved to be—a marvelous laboratory of foreign aid at its best and at its worst'. In the field of education, Dr Hugh Wood, the first Westerner to fly over Nepal sky in 1954 in the capacity of education advisor, describes the exotic culture and romantic landscape in which the Nepalese were living without the phantoms of ambition for or need for the 'greener pastures' or development in Nepal (Wood, 1987). Rather than rely on the state for welfare, help and protection, Dr Wood discovered that they lived by helping each other in *marda-parda* under a folk conception of village (Shah, 2008). When injured or sick, they rarely came to the hospital. Even if they did, they did so only after the last local remedies had failed (Pitt, 1971). The reason why international version of education was required in Nepal, as Dr Wood comments, is to bring about scientific consciousness in Nepal. The development or modernisation of Nepal was the thought of the time. Dr. Wood came to Nepal as part of that larger international development mission. He served as the special education advisor to then His Majesty's Government of Nepal. Since that time, a 'friendly invasion' (Mihaly, 2009) come to construct the images of education in terms of the 'greener pastures' — all in the name of 'development' (Shrestha, 1995). Since that time, international development 'experts' who were European in origin, middleclass by definition, urban in outlook, tall in stature, white in complexion, and ability to bend the nature to their will through the use of science, came to exert a considerable influence in the way Nepalese imagined their education and life. Some 'experts' came from the United States as Public Health Service special mission to heal the illness with the use of Western science and medicine (Shrestha, 1995), others came from Britain to train and recruit strong-bodied men in the art of war to defend the British Crown and its colonial interests, still others came from the United Nations to distribute condoms and family planning education. Soon they gathered around many motley followers in Kathmandu who began to emulate their ideas and institutions. Of the motley group of tourists, hunters, and rock-climbers who arrived, the most important ones were the 'development' brokers who allegedly discovered a primitive Nepal, one which looked very different from the European horizon of progress. Their aim was to 'develop' Nepal. To make that dream possible, according to Mihaly (2009), the year 1989 marked the 'pinnacle' of foreign intervention which contributed to 80 percent of Nepal's development expenditures (xxxii). Total foreign aid disbursed in the past 50 years totalled USD 2.3 trillion (Shrestha, 2006). But despite this increase, Nepal sunk to the bottom of the global economic development hierarchy, enjoying the unenvied status of a 'least developed nation' (Mihaly, 2009). What is more, Nepal figures in the scholarly writings as a 'fragile state', one which is characterised by low income, prone to conflict, weak governance structures, difficult to live and work (Berry, 2010). As a consequence, many young people desire to experience 'development' denied by their own country.

International education serves as the only route in this process. It is this discourse which fosters their sense of 'greener pastures' when many young people imagine international education. It tells them that they are far from being 'modern' or 'they have a long way to go to get there' (Pigg 1992, p. 163). As imparted through international curriculum, how to 'get there' haunts many Nepalese.

> The chief wealth of a nation, some economists believe, is not its land, natural resources, or population. Switzerland is fairly poor in all three, yet it is one of the world's wealthiest nations. Brazil is rich in all three, but incomparably poorer. The German and Finnish experiences after World War II even raises the possibility that, if placed on a barren island, an educated people could, in twenty years, create a more prosperous society than the one now enjoyed by Brazilians and Nepalese. To be sure, countries like Switzerland often enjoy a more congenial climate than Nepal, they are freer, and they enjoy greater political stability ... higher educational levels prevailing in these prosperous nations contribute to their affluence... excellent scholarship can be found nowadays in democracies of North America and North Western Europe (*Moti Nissani, USA,* [*1947*, 73–78)], a lesson included at bachelor's level in Nepal).

The above lesson was enshrined in the national curriculum of Nepal and enacted in the classroom setting where students and their teachers hotly debated the question, *why go to university?* This was the very first sight that struck me during a fieldwork in Nepal in the winter of 2012 sponsored by Roskilde University as part of my doctoral training. The students I observed were in their first semester bachelor degree in business administration, isolated in new college block. Teacher Binod first took their attendance. He was greeted 'good morning'. He called out the roll numbers. No student was absent. After taking the attendance, he asked two students to present the story: *Why go to university?* The students read the story aloud in turn. The lecture was entirely conducted in English. The class was interactive. As the students finished reading the story, teacher Binod finally summed up the moral of the story from Plato's *Allegory of Cave*:

> Going to university liberates one from blind faith in religion and orthodoxy. Education frees oneself from political indoctrination. Had our political leaders been to university things would not have taken such a nasty turn. Education helps to eliminate inequality. Inequality is not biological; it is a social construct. What we call our religion is usually little more than a direct consequence of our accidental birth in a given social context...education shatters some of the invisible prison walls of our minds.

Hardly had teacher Binod finished the lecture and the class was opened to question-answer session, when Student 'E' asked, 'Sir, why everybody nowadays wants to go to America'? Before even Binod sir replied, Student 'D' added, 'Sir, why are Europe and America better than Nepal'? These questions took all my attention not because they were told for the first time in Nepal but because these are the places most youth and students nowadays want to go. These places fuel the imagery of social change or 'greener pastures' in Nepal. Teacher Binod replied, 'There is money and wealth in Europe and America but there is also freedom — a perfect freedom, out there.' He added that such a freedom comes only with discipline which is lacking in Nepal and education is an integral part of that process.

Soon, the next lesson began. Binod sir asked two more students to present the story: 'Marriage is a private affair'. Two students read the story in turn. It was about why love and intercultural marriage was better than the arrange marriage their ancestors followed in Nepal. One of the students couldn't pronounce the word 'cosmopolitanism'. The teacher helped him out. This lesson projected the Euro-US

zone as cosmopolitan space and Nepal as oppositional other in the global hierarchy of nations. The morale of the story ran: 'Sons shall rise against their fathers' in modern times and they must be free to choose their own partners. The first thing that got me struck was how have their fathers fallen into such a disrepute that the sons will now correct them? That lesson was included in the bachelor's degree curriculum and its aim was to subjectively discipline the Nepalese students towards certain ends, mainly to dream of the 'greener pastures'.

This was made clearer by the next lesson: *Plato's Allegory of Cave.* At the outset, the moral of the lesson *Why go to university* enshrined in the national curriculum and imparted to the students nationwide reinforced Durkheim's idea of a university as 'centers of international civilization' (Durkheim, in Collins 1977, 75-87) which seeks to provide all the people all over the world a common experience of being human. This resonates in Kant's philosophy 'what we are, what we think, what we do today is determined by an event called Enlightenment' (Foucault 1984, in Rabinow, ed., p. 32)—an idea that all humans on earth are destined to one journey of life – how to live in the world – by a common pursuit of happiness or freedom. The state discourses in Nepal on modernizing education have inscribed this version of modernity. Implemented by the national government through the pedagogical intervention, how to 'get there' [to that imaginary 'greener pasture'] instead of how to complete a relevant education program come to negotiate international education aspirations for many young Nepalese.

As I closely observed, the entire 50-minute-long class was devoted to the stories of modern progress and places and personalities outside of Nepal. They included Plato's *Republic, Allegory of Caves* and Aristotle's *Democracy*. At the outset, the young Nepalese found themselves suddenly dictated in a radically different way from that which dictated their parents: 'Thou shalt share the same mode of being with the Europeans and Americans!' (emphasis in original). The 'greener pasture' arouses the intelligibility of that shared world in which they are to live differently from now on by partying ways with their immediate parents. The idea that the old must crumble down was explicit in the lesson. The aim of the western education in Nepal is concerned with the production of the new human person - *ramro manche* (English translation is 'good person'), a biological man, Darwin's 'higher animal' (see Richards 2009). Education is key to this process which has redefined Nepal's future.

Nepal's national goal is to become a 'middle-income' country by 2030 and 'higher income' country by 2050. The role of education in this process is to create wealth or income as described for the wealthier nations. Central to education planning and policy in Nepal is this global politics of knowledge and power contaminated with wealth creation with reference to US, UK and Scandinavian 'originals' (see Madsen and Carney 2011, p. 119). In sum, modern education is concerned with not the production of 'educated person' but what Friedrich Nietzsche (2020) would refer to 'money-earning creatures' (p. 29). Many young Nepalese who do not qualify to go to English destinations find themselves contended in Danish or European higher education not because it provides them upward social mobility by way of relevant career progression but a good opportunity to earn money or remittance in the name of 'international education'.

The modern generation of Nepalese are not learning to grow in the historical social structure where their parents grew up but an external one which requires them to earn money which is becoming the global barometer of life. What is called 'knowledge', what Kant might call 'faculties of imagination and understanding', or the 'key to the critique of taste' or 'reason' (see Guyer 2013, p. 330) is referred to everything 'European' or 'western' and those detached and disconnected is to be understood as 'poor',

'other', 'far away', 'uneducated' and so on. The idea that both the beautiful and the sublime of life resides in the Western hemisphere is another claim to truth and knowledge which negotiates the global education discourse. Within this Western semantic of reason, the whole of Nepal and the Nepalese are to be understood as void and empty of meaning. It is this lens through which most Danes and Europeans make the judgment about Nepalese.

Here, the discourse of 'development' as imparted through pedagogic practices increases the self-awareness 'of the semiotic and material goods of the global rich' (Ferguson 2006, quoted in Madsen and Carney 2011, p.119). I asked Rajesh to reflect upon this self-awareness which negotiated his international education journey when he nostalgically recalled that lesson imparted in college which filled in him a sense of urgency to *travel forward in time* (Desai 2006). Consequently, he arrived in Copenhagen as an international student after being unable to secure his way to English destinations due to poor English language.

Tied to a particular system of power/knowledge which produced it, the modern discourses of education and development began to alter the meanings of village in Nepalese social imagination when this predominantly rural nation came under an international intervention regarded as 'inevitable and self-evident' (Pigg 1992). After 1990, the Nepali political mainstream in Kathmandu with the support of its IDP began to link education reform processes to international labour markets and mobility (Carney & Rappleye, 2011). For instance, how close a student lives to the city or village, bus stop or factory site began to determine his/her social status and eligibility for scholarship/financial assistance. Farther one lives from the city or the bus stop, one gets a new social identity 'disadvantaged' or 'backward' in time. The opposite is true if one lives closer to the city or to the bus stop. The 'greener pastures' evokes a sense of living in the centre of the city. Note that this wasn't the rationale social and political order prior to 1951 in Nepal. The earliest in memory was the 'caste' social order that divided the Nepalese in terms of births and beliefs. The geography now takes over the caste as more rational or secular way of understanding what counts as 'equality', 'access' and 'equity' in education. As an effect, a sense of living unequal in the village or being deprived of a rightful place to belong in the world negotiated Rajesh's international education dream. Consequently, he happened to come to Denmark. Unable to find a quick recipe to become equal with others in Denmark in terms of cash and comforts, he quit his international master's in business in favour of a work permit in a downtown restaurant. Pursuing a higher education programme was one option but it didn't provide a quick fix; he had to wait longer and possibly live poorer than his peers who had already purchased villas and autos in Copenhagen from their cleaning and cooking jobs. A restlessness haunted Rajesh to opt for a quick fix when he ended up in a downtown restaurant as a head cook.

Rajesh's father arrived in Copenhagen to meet his son when I had a lively chat with him. He now lives alone in Nepal without his children. One of his sons went to live in Japan and another in Denmark and yet another in Portugal. Until 1990, he remembers living in a joint family in cloistered village high in the mountains of central Nepal.

The discourse of development had then made him believe that to live in the mountainous terrain was being far backward in time from those in the city. His only concern was how to move to the city centre. At about the age of 20, Rajesh's father had the rare chance to see a bulldozer followed by a jeep in the village when the vehicular traffic opened. Soon, the jeep replaced the foot and horses as modes of transport. That image was to be understood as a sign of 'greener pastures' or as 'a promise of universally

shared and lasting happiness' (Bauman, 2005). Soon, schools and hospitals were constructed and fed by generators. The electric bulb was still a distant dream. Colgate, biscuits, Cadburys and jeans, however, flooded the local village but were very expensive. It was only when his father started working as a security guard in India that Rajesh got his first taste of Cadbury chocolate.

For the second time, when Rajesh's father came to Copenhagen, he completed the story why it was necessary for his sons to go overseas in the name of international education when he uttered the word *bikas* (English translation is 'development') as residing in the West and not in the village. He narrated how difficult life was in the village when compared with the town. The nearest town from his village was a two-day journey on foot on the other side of the rolling mountains where he always wanted to go. He also fondly remembers a journey to that town on foot. Of so many thoughts, the fear of being killed by tigers haunted him throughout the journey. A dense jungle and several rivers and streams had to be covered by foot to get any access to the nearest town or bazaar. Without any human settlement, that place was a natural habitat for animals and was later converted into a national park. When the Nepalese youth talk about 'greener pastures' they do not talk about their own jungles, national parks, flora and fauna in the village but of the brick and mortar economy, high-rise buildings, glass towers, electronic gadgets like MacBook, iPhones, Apple watches, automobiles, foreign brand clothes, electric or gas ovens, concrete homes, among others, which cannot be obtained inside Nepal via national education and ordinary employment. All of these goods and goodies negotiate their international education in terms of the 'greener pastures'.

CONCLUSION

The discursive approach used in this paper rejected the objectivist and realist assumptions of international education as a social ladder to regain one's social standings but as an imaginary picture of the 'greener pastures' out there in the EU as fostered by the discourse of international development. It is this picture which negotiates the ongoing international education aspirations of the Nepalese in Denmark as shown in this paper. The end of education as a convergence, that is, everyone must find a universally shared experience, was unobtainable for the Nepalese in Denmark. This paper exposed quite a different paradox of being international students in Denmark outside the imagined global and collective doctrine of truth, and the shared intelligibility of the western culture. The greener pastures subjectivity landed the Nepalese in the basement, the lower ground, instead of the roof space they initially dreamt through Danish higher education. This journey of education moves them from one authentic anticipation of meaningful life as fostered by 'greener pasture' thinking to an inauthentic experience of being in Denmark outside the education's familiarity, generality and finality of being in the world.

This paper traced the 'greener pastures' as an 'incompatible symbols and signs' of international education (Madsen and Carney 2011) as fostered by the pervasive discourse of developmental modernity in Nepal. And, hence, it leaves the Nepalese to navigate their hope of a future via labour of the body detached from their educational degrees and credentials in Denmark. In other words, the intelligibility and sources of this notion of truth (that is, to imagine international education in terms of the materiality of 'greener pastures') are not the Nepalese themselves but the force called 'modernity'.

This paper showed that with the gregarious European man in the centre as the only kind of being allowable and useful to the herd, the focus of international education is about integrating the whole world through a coherent thinking space called 'globalisation' but the practice is deeply divisive. As talked by

the development specialists and written about by education sociologists and development anthropologists from their tenured position in universities, it provides the language for talking about what counts as 'education' within that metaphysics of progress in the Western hemisphere. Many experts or academics who claim to have long engagements in Nepal have attempted to address the issue of Nepal and the Nepalese on the move in a globalized world within this macro policy level and the Western semantic of progress. This paper exposed the historicity of this powerful metanarratives of international development responsible for transforming international education desire among the Nepalese into settlement in the 'greener pastures'. It is this regime of truth and power that this paper showed which subjects the Nepalese in Denmark to perform labour in the name of 'international education'. As Arjun Appadurai (2008) notes, this is because we have handed the future over to the economists who shall decide our fate in terms of how best to live and perish in the world and is to be understood as 'freedom'. Education policy is tied to this global neoliberal ideology. As a system of reasoning, it originates in the economic theory of modern states (Popkewitz 2009; Peters et al 2000, 2003). As a form of power/knowledge, it must never be mistaken with the 'political structures or the management of states; rather, it is designated in a way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed' (Foucault 1982, p.790). In Foucault's sense, international education is then a discursive space to think of what counts as 'progress'. That space, as this paper showed in the historical context of Nepal, is mapped by the development encounter (see, e.g. Pigg 1992; Shrestha 1995). It trains and tortures the Nepalese to seek truth through the ontology of the crowd. The global assessment of international students (PISA) is a classic example of the crowd knowledge (see Komatsu & Rappleye, 2021 for detailed critique). The dominant view of reality most research practices rely upon today are depended on such crowd knowledge. It is this internationalizing and totalizing vision of education that had led the Nepalese to believe that the 'greener pasture' really exists 'out there' or that there is a perfect place to belong to and a permanent freedom to enjoy.

A sense of 'thou shalt recognize their supreme authority in matters of 'truth' (Kierkegaard, quoted in Kaufmann 1956, p. 97) haunted me while thinking about the lesson *Why go to university* imparted in Nepal. As operationalized within a particular historical context of Europe in relation to human knowing, the international discourse of development makes this view of education necessary and inevitable in places like Nepal. In Denmark, as in rest of the Nordic countries, which rank high in the global happiness index, what is called 'research' must provide hard scientific evidence of this relationship between education and economic happiness. This paper showed an outright revolt against this facticity of education tasked to develop not the mental faculty but the production of the materiality.

REFERENCES

Adhikari, K. (2017, June 20). *Students to greener pastures.* The Kathmandu Post. https://kathmandupost.com/opinion/2017/06/20/students-to-greener-pastures.

Alvesson, M. & Skoldberg, K. (2000). *Reflexive methodology, new vistas for qualitative research.* Sage.

Appadurai, A. (2008). The shifting ground from which we speak. In J. Kenway & J. Fahey (Eds.), *Globalizing the Research Imagination* (pp. 41-52). Routledge.

Appadurai, A. (2006). The right to research. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, *4*(2), 167-177.

Bauman, Z. (2005). *Liquid life.* Polity Press.

Bista, K., Sharma, S., & Raby, R. L. (Eds.) (2019). *Higher education in Nepal: Practice, policy and perspectives*. Routledge.

Carney, S., & Rappleye, J. (2011). Education reform in Nepal: From modernity to conflict. *Globalization, Societies and Education, 9*(1), 1-9.

Coburn, N. (2018). *Under contract, The invisible workers of America's global war.* Stanford University Press.

Cohen, A. A. (2008). Kant's answer to the question 'what is man?' and its implications for anthropology. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science, 39*, 506-514.

Courtois, A. (2018). *Higher education and Brexit: Current European perspectives* (working papers no. 28). Danish School of Education, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Dahal, N., & Yogi, B. (2019, July 15). *Climate of death.* My Republica. https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/author/3652.

Desai, K. 2006. *The inheritance of loss.* Grove Press.

Dragsdahl, A. M., & Stærmose, N. (2020, June 28). *Nepalese agencies recruit students for Denmark*. RU Paper. https://rucpaper.dk/2018/06/28/nepalese-agencies-recruit-students-for-denmark-many-of-them-attend-ruc/

Durkheim, E. (1969/1977). *L'evolution pedagogique en France* (P. Collins, Trans.). Routledge & Kegan Paul. (Original work published 1969).

Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the third world.* Princeton University Press.

Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge.* Routledge. (Original work published 1969).

Foucault, M. (2002). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison.* Vintage Books.

Foucault, M. (1982). The subject and power. *Critical Inquiry, 8*(4), 777-795. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343197?origin=JSTOR-pdf&seq=1

Fujikura, T. (2013). *Discourses of awareness: Development, social movements and the practices of freedom in Nepal*. Martin Chautari.

Gellner, D. (2007). Caste, ethnicity and inequality in Nepal. *Economic and Political Weekly*, *42*(20), 1823-1828. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4419601.

Gellner, D., Pfaff-Czarnecka, J., & Whelpton, J. (1997). *Nationalism and ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom: The politics of culture in contemporary Nepal* (1st ed.). Himalaya.

Guyer, P. (2013). The beautiful and the good: Aesthetics, 1790-1870. In A. Wood & S. Hahn (Eds.), *The Cambridge history of philosophy in the nineteenth century* (pp. 323-384). Cambridge University Press.

Holmberg, D. (2017, December 11). *Ethnography*, *history, culture: Enduring oppositions and creative dynamism in Nepal* (Paper presentation). Mahesh Chandra Regmi Lecture, Social Science Baha, Kathmandu. https://soscbaha.org/lecture-series/ethnography-history-culture-enduring-oppositions-and-creative-dynamism-in-nepal/

Joshi, B. L., & Rose, E. L. (1966). *Democratic innovations in Nepal: A case study of political acculturation.* University of California Press.

Kaufmann, W. (1956). *Existentialism. From Dostoevsky to Sartre*. New York.

Kenway, J., & Fahey, J. (2008). *Globalizing the Research Imagination*. London: Routledge.

Komatsu, H., & Rappleye, J. (2021). Rearticulating PISA. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 19*(2), *245-258.* DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2021.1878014

Liechty, M. (2003). *Suitably modern: Making middle-class culture in a new consumer society.* Princeton University Press.

Madsen, U. A., & Carney, S. (2011). Education in an age of radical uncertainty: Youth and schooling in urban Nepal. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, *9*(1), 115-133.

Madsen, U. A. (2011). Danishness and the construction of the other: A postmodern school-ethnography of despair, distrust and desire. In Tobias W. (Ed.), *Heterogenity, general didactics meets the stranger, transformation of education, European perspectives* (pp. 35-55). Waxmann Verlag.

Mihaly, E. B. (2009). *Foreign aid and politics in Nepal: A case study.* Himal Books.

Nietzsche, F. (1910/2020). *On the future of educational institutions* (J. M. Kennedy, Trans.). Platanus Publishing. (Original work published 1910).

Olssen, M. (2003). Structuralism, post-structuralism, neo-liberalism: Assessing Foucault's legacy. *Journal of Education Policy, 18*(2), 89-202. DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.1080/0268093022000043047

Parry, J. (1985). The Brahmanical tradition and the technology of the intellect. In O. Joanna (Ed.), *Reason and morality* (pp. 200-225). Routledge.

Peters, M., Olssen, M., & Lankshear, C. (2003). *Futures of critical theory – Dreams of difference*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Peters, M., Marshall, J., & Fitzsimons, P. (2000). Managerialism and educational policy in a global context: Foucault, neoliberalism, and the doctrine of self-management. In N. C. Burbules & C. A. Torres (Eds.), *Globalization and education, critical* perspectives (pp. 109-132). Routledge.

Pigg, S. L. (1992). Inventing social categories through place: Social representations and development in Nepal. *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History*, *34*(3), 491-513.

Popkewitz, T. S. (2009). The double gestures of cosmopolitanism and comparative studies of education. In R. Cowen & A. M. Kazamias (Eds.), *International handbook of comparative education* (pp. 385-401). Springer.

Pradhan, U., Shrestha, S., & Valentin, K. (2019). Disjunctured reciprocity: Paradoxes of community-school relationship in Nepal. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 17*(5), 561-573. DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2019.1584032

Richards, R. J. (2009). Darwin's place in the history of thought: A reevaluation. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 106*, 10056-10060.

Robinson-Pant, A. (2001). Development as discourse: What relevance to education? *Compare*, *31* (3), 311-328. DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.1080/03057920120098464

Rose, L. E. (1963). Nepal's experiment with traditional democracy. *Pacific Affairs*, *36*(1), 16-31.

Saar, M. (2002). Genealogy and subjectivity. In D. Owen (Ed.), *Michel Foucault* (pp. 64-71). Ashgate.

Said, E. W. (1977). *Orientalism.* Penguin.

Said, E. W. (2000). *Reflections on exile and other essays*. Harvard University Press.

Shah, S. J. (2008). Revolution and reaction in the Himalayas: Cultural resistance and the Maoist "new regime" in western Nepal. *American Ethnologist*, *35*(3), 481-499.

Shrestha, C. H. (2006). 'They can't mix like we can': Bracketing differences and the professionalization of NGOs in Nepal. In D. Lewis & D. Mosse (Eds.), *Development brokers and translators, the ethnography of aid and agencies* (pp. 195-216). Kumarian Press.

Shrestha, N. (1995). Becoming a development category. In Crush, J. (Ed.), *Power of development* (pp. 266-277). Routledge.

Subedi, A. (2020). *Can anyone provide me information about Niels Brock plz?* [Facebook message to *Nepalese Living in Denmark*]. Facebook. Retrieved July 23, 2020 from https://www.facebook.com/groups/607020296028064/permalink/3339350969461636

Valentin, K. (2015). Transnational education and the remaking of social identity: Nepalese student migration to Denmark. *Identities*, *22*(3), 318-332.

Valentin, K. (n.d.). *Formal education: Nepalese students in Danish colleges*. https://dpu.au.dk/en/research/research-projects/

Willis, P. (2000). *The Ethnographic imagination*. Polity.

Wolcott, H. F. (1999). *Ethnography: a way of seeing.* Altamira Press.

Nitya Nanda Timsina, is an independent scholar based in Denmark. He researches on young people, mobility and higher education within the context of globalisation and international development. He obtained a

European Master's degree within sociology of education and a PhD in higher education in Denmark. Prior to coming to Europe, he was a graduate student in Nepal at the Central Department of Political Science and completed secondary education in India. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8843-0018

Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 13, Issue 4 (2021), pp. 59-72
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v13i4.2372| https://ojed.org/jcihe

Traditional Theories For Cross-Cultural Adaptation: Revisiting Their Current Applicability On The Transition Of Mexican Postgraduate Students To Life In The UK

Elizabeth Margarita Hernández López[a*]

[a]*University of Guadalajara, México*

[*]Corresponding author: Email: elizabetm.hdz@csh.udg.mx.

ABSTRACT

Employing traditional approaches for cross-cultural adjustment, this paper presents findings from a qualitative case study about the early adaptation of Mexican international students pursuing a postgraduate degree at a British university during the 2016-2017 academic calendars. Data was collected from 15 participants using focus groups and interviews during their third and fourth week of stay. In consonance with empirical evidence (Brown 2008; Schartner 2014), findings revealed that the participants' feelings within the initial stage of their arrival were not associated with those of "the honeymoon", but were associated with those of "the crisis" stage (Oberg 1960). Nonetheless, evidence suggests the students, particularly those without previous experience abroad, did go through a "honeymoon" period, which took place prior to the sojourners departure. The implications of these findings for a holistic understanding of the international experience are discussed.

Keywords: early adaptation, Mexican international students, pre-departure stage

INTRODUCTION

Despite their cultural uniqueness, international students have been regularly studied as a whole or research specifically focused on the largest subsets of the international student population, like East Asian students (Brunsting et al., 2018). Either approach has encapsulated minority groups, such as Latin American students, under a wide categorization of "other", which makes it difficult to construct a useful understanding

Received May 13, 2020; revised December 15, 2020, February 4, 2021; accepted February 20, 2021; electronically published September 15, 2021

of what their international experience is (Urban et al., 2010), and what their specific adjustment needs are (Brunsting et al., 2018). Furthermore, despite the US being the leading destination of Latin American international students (UIS, 2016), little research has been addressed to explore the studying abroad experience of this group of students (Foley 2013; Tanner 2013). Hence, it is no surprise that in settings like the UK, research focused on the experience of international students from this region is even more sparse. Nonetheless, Mexican students in the UK represent the primary intake of Latin American Higher Education international students in the UK (UIS, 2016). Such was the rationale for focusing on this particular group of students in a setting, where they have been equally understudied. Additionally, referring to Latin American-trained International Medical Graduates in the US, Hausmann-Stabile et al. (2011) concluded "lost time and money" (p.10) could have been saved, would the graduates have been better equipped with knowledge prior to departure. This conclusion calls for a research focus that goes beyond an under-researched group of students and setting, but for one that also considers the participants' departure stage.

Initial work examining the cross-cultural adaptation of different groups of sojourners was conceptualised in stages. This first group of sequential models posited by Lysgaard (1955), Oberg (1960), and Adler (1975), although widely criticized in the literature, still impact research that employs the curvilinear sequence to explain the adjustment of international students (Ahmad et al. 2015; An and Chiang 2015; Chien 2016 for recent examples). According to these paradigms, there are three phases to consider for early adaptation (the honeymoon, the crisis, and the recovery). However, most of the scholarly criticisms have focused on revealing a rejection to the first stage, which claims a period of fascination to be experienced by travelers upon arrival into the host country. Instead, empirical evidence argues on arrival: stress is at peak (Ward, Bochner, and Furnham 2001; Brown 2008; Schartner 2014), greatest adjustment and difficulties are faced (Ward, Okura, Kennedy, and Kojima 1998; Sherry, Thomas, and Chui 2010) and the beginning is not precisely an enjoyable experience (Ahmad et al. 2015). The latter findings emphasize the absence upon arrival of a "honeymoon" phase, leaving room to question whether the fascination period occurs at some other time of the participants' encounter with the new culture and if the other posited cross-cultural stages for early adaptation are actually experienced.

In light of this, and bearing in mind that a better understanding of the full trajectory of the international student's sojourn can be grasped by including the prior to departure stage (Schartner, 2014) and the first weeks of the participants' stay abroad, this study set out to explore if the traditional cross-cultural adjustment stages are experienced in the postulated sequential order, by a group of Mexican postgraduate international students in their early adaptation to the UK.

Given the time focus of this research on the first weeks, it is out of its scope to delve into the fourth, the complete adjustment phase, which may require a different research design with a longer period of data collection. However, by scrutinizing the participants' prior experience abroad, this study is concerned with the fifth stage, the independence (Adler 1975), in which self-awareness and understanding of other cultures is expected to lead to better management of skills in further transitions. On this note, participants with previous living and studying abroad experience were taken into account for the purpose of this study.

After Six Decades: Traditional Approaches Of Cross-Cultural Adaptation

The guiding literature for this study reviews traditional approaches of cross-cultural adaptation and the early period of the transitional experience of international students. It also addresses recent research that has been conducted in the field employing these classic theories.

Despite the vast criticisms, international students mobility has been commonly addressed in the literature by using traditional models coined more than five decades ago by Lysgaard (1955), Oberg (1960), or Adler (1975*).* Lysgaard (1955), a pioneer in the development of international academic mobility research, has been prominently recognized due to his proposition of adjustment as a process over time. Based on his evidence, there was a relationship between duration and adjustment, understood as a 'U-shaped curve', where a series of stages were to happen before reaching "good adjustment". A few years later, Oberg (1960) supporting Lysgaard's view, claimed the existence of an initial stage of fascination; defined as a "honeymoon", marked by feelings of easiness and excitement for being abroad. The former on arrival phase lasting from a few days up to a longer period*,* was supplanted by a "crisis" period, where the "real conditions of life" were experienced and the sojourner sought "refuge" by establishing contact with fellow nationals (Oberg 1960, 178). By the third, the recovery stage, the traveller had grasped some cultural and linguistic understanding of the host culture enabling them to better find their way around. Finally, complete adjustment occurred when acceptance and enjoyment of the new customs were reached, and negative feelings like anxiety had vanished.

Similarly, Adler in 1975 proposed five stages for the understanding of the transitional experience of cross-cultural sojourners. The first four stages he proposed (contact, disintegration, reintegration, autonomy, in that order) show substantial similarity with the conceptualizations and the adjustment trajectory presented by Lysgaard (1955) and Oberg (1960). However, Adler (1975) did not regard the transitional experience as a negative happening; instead, he conceived it as an opportunity for "culture learning, self-development, and personal growth" (Adler 1975, p.14). Thus, the process would not finish when adjusting to the host environment in the "autonomy" stage, but rather followed an "independence" phase, in which the sojourner had a deeper self- awareness and a more grounded understanding of cultures not being better or worse, but different (Adler 1975). This discovery was expected to lead the sojourner to more skilled management of "further transitions" as well as to trigger the interest to undergo other cross-cultural experiences. Thus, the purpose of this study is two-fold: (1) to identify the first three stages (the honeymoon, the crisis, and the recovery) as coined by Oberg (1960), during the early adaptation of a group of Mexican postgraduate international students to life in the UK, and (2) to scrutinize elements of skillful strategies employed by participants with prior experience abroad.

The above classic theories of sojourners' cross-cultural adjustment (stages, curves, and types) are still dominant in the field (Rhein 2018), but have equally been widely criticized on the decades to follow. For instance, through a comprehensive review of literature, Church (1982, 542) mainly rooted on the lack of support for a "honeymoon stage" at the beginning of the sojourn, concluded the U-curve hypothesis was "weak", "inconclusive", and "overgeneralised". Supporting this claim, Furnham and Bochner (1986) acknowledged the early stage as the most stressful period, assertion (e.g., Brown & Holloway 2008; Healy & Bourne 2013; Mann et al. 2013; Schartner 2014; Ward et al. 1998). Furthermore, research by Hirai et al. (2015), in their longitudinal study to identify multiple trajectories of first-year international students' adjustment in U.S. universities, concluded the U-curve theory (initial excitement, followed by distress, and then recovery) did not occur among their participants. Nonetheless, the authors acknowledged the lack of assessment of the pre-arrival stage as a limitation of their study. Similarly, Geeraert and Demoulin (2013, p.1242) claimed though stress is known to be part of the adjustment process, it has not been clear what its "exact temporal occurrence" is. Therefore, the latter researchers used as post-entry measure of the stress their Belgian adolescents participants faced, six weeks into the sojourn. Likewise, Brown (2008), based on

her postgraduate international students in the UK's findings, stated four to five weeks post-arrival when stress was at its highest. This seems to indicate that former scholarly work has focused on two specific ele-

Table 1: Traditional Theories of Cross-Cultural Adaptation

	Stages, curves, and types:	Cross-cultural contact perceived as:	Criticisms:
Lysgaard (1955)	"U-shaped curve"	Adjustment as a process over time.	Church (1982): "Weak", "inconclusive" and "overgeneralized"
Oberg (1960)	"Honeymoon, crisis, recovery"	A shock on behalf of the sojourner.	Furnham and Bochner (1986): The beginning of the sojourn not depicted as a "honeymoon" stage with an impressionistic behaviour.
Adler (1975)	"Contact, disintegration, reintegration, autonomy, independence"	Learning experience.	

ments to explain the cross-cultural adjustment of international students: the beginning identified as the arrival to the host country and culture, and the (in)experience of a stage of fascination. Thus, this research aims to explore other venues within the stages of adaptation model proposed by Lysgaard (1955), Oberg (1960), and Adler (1975), which might bring relevant insights for the understanding of the early adaptation of international students, in this case of Mexican origin, relevant to this recent era. Consequently, the research question that drives this study is: Do the Mexican postgraduate participants prior to departure and within their first four weeks go through the stages as posited by traditional frameworks of cross-cultural adaptation?

METHODS

Data for this study derived from a doctoral research on the adaptation experience of Mexican postgraduate students in the UK. A qualitative case study was chosen as its research design given the distinctiveness of its context on an understudied group of international students and in a setting where they have also been little explored (Stake, 1995). This in addition to the flexibility to combine different methods for data collection, which lends the opportunity to gather extensive and rich information to deeply understand the stages the participants had gone through to adapt during their first month overseas (Punch 2014). In this view, 15 students volunteered to participate in three focus groups and in four individual interviews during their third and fourth week, respectively, of their arrival to the host culture.

The rationale for implementing focus groups and interviews on the third and fourth week respectively was grounded on several accounts. First, focus groups were chosen because group interaction could prompt and facilitate data that could not be otherwise obtained (Punch, 2014). Furthermore, individual interviews were conducted to explore the participants' perceptions (Thomas, 2016) and redress any possible superficiality resulting from the focus groups. Second, individual interviews were pondered

as a suitable alternative method for those participants who might not feel comfortable sharing their views and opinions in a group and preferred an individual face-to-face exchange. Finally, focus groups were scheduled for third week, and interviews were scheduled for the fourth week. The data collection phase took place in Spanish, as that was the participants' preference; the researcher, therefore, translated the study's direct quotes.

The timeframe for this research on the first weeks has been informed by the review of literature, which acknowledges this transitional stage as the most difficult (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Though little specificity for the length of this period has been described in research in the field, Brown (2008) in her study of postgraduate students in the UK recognised the first four or five weeks as the most difficult period. Moreover, Schartner's (2014) empirical findings urged for more research that contemplated the pre-departure stage of the international sojourn if aiming to get a rounded understanding of it. With that in mind, this study set out to collect data concerning the participants' prior to departure stage. Though these insights were gathered retrospectively, during the focus groups or the interviews, the data reported was still fresh as it corresponds to a maximum of four weeks from the participants' arrival to the UK, and arose as spontaneous and deep reflections on how the situations had unfolded upon arrival based on pre-arrival own circumstances.

The inclusion criteria for selecting the participants were that they were of Mexican origin to undertake postgraduate studies commencing on the 2016-2017 academic calendar and had not been in the UK for more than a month at the time data was collected. With the assistance of an institutional gatekeeper, I approached the potential participants in an official gathering for Latin American students 10 days after their arrival to the host university. Fifteen students volunteered to participate in the form of a focus group or an interview to take place on their third or fourth week, respectively, of their stay in the UK. Thus, except for one student, the focus group's participants were all on their third week whilst the interview's participants were on their fourth week. More males than females participated in the study and according to Richardson (1994), most of the students belonged to the mature-aged group of students since they were 25 years or older at the start of their postgraduate studies. Equally, most of the participants were to pursue a Master's Degree while a few others were enrolled in a PhD. They were registered in different subject areas, being the STEM disciplines their main interest due to the financial support granted by Mexican government bodies (Rushworth, 2017). Nearly half of the students lived in private accommodation whilst the others lived in university lodging. Moreover, it was the first experience abroad for half of the students while, as posited by Klineberg and Hull (1979), the other half had previous experience abroad since they had spent more than 30 consecutive days in a foreign country, in this case in countries like: Brazil, Guatemala, Japan, Spain, United States, and the UK.

Complying with the ethical regulations stipulated by the Ethics and Research Governance Online (ERGO) system of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University under study, the participants were advised in written form about the aims of the research and what their contribution entailed (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2011). They were also asked for written consent and their names were anonymized, taking into account their cultural context, when reporting the findings (Creswell 2014; Guenther 2009).

Given the aim of this research to identify patterns of information that would fall within the stages for adaptation suggested by traditional cross-cultural theories, and possibly experienced by the participants, data was analyzed thematically (Bloomberg and Volper 2012; Boyatzis 1998). A framework using deductive coding categories as informed by the literature (Berg and Lune 2002), was implemented to

analyze the data. For instance, Oberg's (1960) three first stages: "the honeymoon", "the crisis", and "the recovery" stages, as well as Adler's (1975) "the independence", served as the pre-determined themes to explore and identify the participants' insights. Given this study's specific focus on the first four weeks, it was out of its scope to consider "the complete adjustment" phase. Likewise, although it was not possible to follow up the participants until their postgraduate studies' end and gather whether they acquired management skills for further transitions; given the selection of participants with and without previous abroad experience, it was feasible to identify differences between the adaptation of these two groups of participants.

FINDINGS

The findings reflect a chronological order, unveiling the students' insights prior to departure, on arrival, and on their current (third and fourth) week at the time of data collection. To analyze the skillfulness of those participants with previous experience abroad, a subsequent section presents their reflections indicating the tactics they implemented and where they had previously been. Each section encapsulates a different time and length period. The "on arrival" comments range as of the participants' arrival to the host city and until the end of their second week of stay given that their insights reflected consistency on the circumstances and feelings involved during that period. Thus, the selection of direct quotes contemplates the identification of time pointers (e.g. before coming here, the first night, the first days, the first two weeks, etc.) to guide the reader through the narrative and follow the sequence of the participants' experience as it happened during the first month. Furthermore, though data is reported retrospectively, the comments elucidated were still fresh as they only refer to a maximum of four weeks from the time they were collected.

Prior To Departure

Data on this section refers to the pre-arrival stage and the recollections came from students without previous experience abroad. These findings indicate that prior to the departure the participants were looking forward to their experience overseas and what it entailed could not be crystallised until arrival to host city: "(…) you don't visualise it until you're here, it doesn't dawn on you (…)" (Armando, Focus Group 2). With that in mind, before departure, the possibility of studying abroad was seen as "something unreal". This conception clouded the possibility to foresee real challenges, apart from linguistic ones, likely to emerge when adjusting to the host environment:

> (…) I didn't really think (…) it'd be a reality (…) so, before coming here, (…) the only thing that distressed me was the language and I didn't even think about life, I mean, that kind of things. (Natalia, FG 2)

On that note, prior to travelling, infatuated by the idea of going abroad, the participants did not realize about the actual implications of their decision to study and live overseas. These surfaced as a shock and bewilderment upon arrival:

> You let yourself be carried away a little by the emotion (…) suddenly you forget all that it implies (…) You come here with all the excitement, so you arrive, and OW! You have so many things to do that you say 'what do I do here?' (Mateo, FG 1)

Consequently, the determining element from a dreamlike situation to a real-life one was time. Thus, prior to departure, studying and living abroad felt imaginary while upon arrival reality struck the participants:

> The first time you have the idea to come, well, it's like, 'Well, I'm going to send the papers to see what happens' (…) honestly, I did not dawn on me almost until I was on the plane (…) And the

> moment comes, (…) I found an empty cupboard, I had not brought my towel, I was missing a lot of things (…) So, it was like reality hit me when I arrived (…) (Gustavo, FG 2)

On Arrival

Right upon arrival, insights of a stormy beginning came from students with and without experience abroad. For instance, even when the University's airport service had been used and had saved the worry of transport, accommodation had been previously arranged and this was not the first time travelling abroad for studies; the arrival due to emotional exhaustion and triggered by the lack of some unmet "elementary necessities" (Maslow, 1954), was acknowledged as the most difficult task dealt with:

> (…) the first night it was emotionally tiring, arriving at 10:00p.m to a place that you don't know, freezing, very hungry, after I've flown like 15 hours, that was the most difficult part. (Ariana, FG 2)

In that sense, the experience of being emotionally taxed on arrival was not different from a student who had not taken the University pick-up service, but had been accompanied by her father, and whose first experience abroad was this. Lacking culture-specific knowledge such as being unaware of public transport's cost in the host city, prevented her from taking a taxi on arrival and making her start be perceived as "horrible":

> I arrived with many suitcases, my bike box (…) one thinks that taxis are super expensive, so I said 'let's walk and there we were at midnight carrying the bloody suitcases (…) it was horrible (…) (Natalia, FG 2)

Despite a stressful beginning, dealing with homesickness and depression was smoothed by finding refuge with conational fellows. Thus, the establishment of relationships with people from the same culture allowed for a sense of connection and camaraderie for the challenges to endure:

> I thought (…) the first days I was going to be super depressed (…) homesick to its fullest, but (…) it helped me a lot to meet (…) Fernando who lives close by (…) we go running and things like that (…) (Sergio, FG 3).

In addition to the previous upon arrival concerns, financial hardship equally contributed to feeling vulnerable. Over-reliance on scholarship led to feeling financially and emotionally unstable due to lacking own funds:

> I didn't come with a lot of money (…) and I said to myself 'this has to be enough' until [sponsor's name] deposits (…) So, I was a bit (…), too apprehensive the first two weeks; I couldn't enjoy all of it (Armando, FG 2).

Third And Fourth Week

By the third week, the participants recognized that the academic component of their journey also required an adaptation and there was hope that in a week's time, they will have come to grips with their scholarly demands: "I'm still adapting (…) I think next week I'll be more oriented to the academic, but I'm still struggling" (Jorge, interview).

Likewise, the quality of transport and the availability of public places appeared as contributing elements to adjust to the host city: "It's small, but, it has a good quality of travel, (…) public transport, I do give that a good point about living here" (Fernando, FG 3). Bound to money concerns, the availability of "wide and quite clean" public places featured as a suitable free leisure activity to enjoy during the first three weeks:

> (…) the city has many public spaces, and that there are many places by which you can walk, you can stay for a while, without having to be locked up all day in the house, and you don't really have to pay anything for the parks(…)(Roberto, FG 3)

Pleasant communication with English academics had helped to adjust to the host environment:

> (…)I've been quite happy with my teachers, who are mostly English, and with whom I've had very good conversations, and (…), who have welcomed me very well, who have made it very easy for me to adapt. (Alberto, FG 2)

By the fourth week, the students were more familiarized with culture-specific procedures, and some of the daily-related challenges started to fade away. Thus, although expenses on food seemed excessive, by the beginning of the fourth week, the participants had built an estimated budget for it. Having an estimate of living costs at this point allowed them to have more control over their finances and hence, felt safer about their expenditures.

> I spent seventy pounds [on the first week] and I didn't buy anything (…) next week I spent fifty-something. Now, what I'm spending is twenty pounds, and I even have extra food (…) with twenty pounds (…) a week you have enough. (Pablo, interview)

In addition to the previous view, having a more precise budgeting of expenses by the end of the fourth week heightened the participants' confidence in their own finances. However, there was awareness the first month required a larger budget to settle in. "For money, (…) I was making like a recount, and with the scholarship; really, money is well enough, as long as you don't pay tuition" (Enrique, interview).

Likewise, in the fourth week, to get acquainted with daily habits, such as food, there was openness and curiosity to observe, to learn the British way of doing it:

> At least, this week I have tried, to be much more observant in the habits of other people around me (…) for example, food, and it has been working for me, I think, (…) quite well, (…) because it is a relatively drastic change (Julia, interview)

Previous Experience Abroad

Quotes for this theme came from participants with previous abroad experience and such featured as an element that boosted the participants' creative approaches implemented to adapt, which in turn enabled them to be better prepared for the challenges to face. For instance, based on a prior lived experience, it was learned that finding their way around, including food for the first days is difficult. Therefore, such recollection animated the participants to have food at close reach: "Since it had already happened to me [in Guatemala], the first two, three days, you arrived and you don't know what's going on, right? So, I brought food just in case (…)" (Enrique, interview). Similarly, having a clearer understanding of how first world countries are organized and making use of technology, finding supplies during the first days was easily sufficed:

> Well, (…) since I already had the experience (…) from the United States, (…) I just investigated, for example, where is such supermarket in google, IKEA and I just go to the directions (…) so that part, of having already lived alone and cooking myself, (…) was not a great…(Jorge, interview)

Likewise, because of a previous international experience, there was awareness the difference in the weather between home and host country was something to look out: "I was in Japan on an exchange programme (…). So, I was already aware about the weather, about how extreme it can be (…)" (Daniel, FG 1). Furthermore, students who had previously studied abroad, perceived the interaction with local fellows as positive. This was compared with a former and first experience in England: "(…) I don't know if I am

lucky, but now I found more friendly people (…) this time, there were more people who came to me, and did talk to me" (Eduardo, FG 3).

DISCUSSIONS

In relation to Oberg's conception of the beginning of the sojourn as a honeymoon, the present study found little evidence to support such claim. The participants' feelings in their first stage upon arrival did not correspond with those of the honeymoon phase. Rather they likened with those of the crisis stage, where the sojourners were actually experiencing "the real conditions of life" (Oberg1960, p. 178), and undergoing a significant amount of stress, in consonance with former empirical research (Brown, 2008; Schartner, 2014). Nonetheless, as suggested by Oberg (1960), it was in this crisis stage in which the participants looked for succor from their conational colleagues as they were striving to settle into the UK. This moral support emanating from fellow nationals was equally reported by Urban et al. (2010) in their research of Dominican international students in the USA. The existence of a bond with people from similar social and cultural backgrounds granted a space for mutual support, feelings of ease and understanding in times of social vulnerability, which can lead to "social isolation, identity crises, and anxiety" as reported by Hausmann-Stabile et al. (2011, p. 35). In this sense, interactions with other co-nationals acted as a buffer in this crisis stage.

Despite the lack of support for the on arrival stage as a fascination period, evidence from this research suggests participants, particularly those with no previous experience abroad, did go through a honeymoon stage, however it took place prior to the sojourners departure. It was in this pre-departure phase that the latter participants appeared, in accordance with elements of the honeymoon stage, captivated about the culture and the idea of going abroad, without being fully aware about what the experience entailed. Based on this, the participants, especially those without previous experience abroad, followed the sequence of the first two stages (the honeymoon and the crisis) for the adjustment cycle as proposed by Oberg (1960), but they did not obey the timeframe offered as the honeymoon phase took place prior to departure. Consequently, the beginning of the sojourn did not seem to be marked by the arrival to the host culture instead it was aligned with the conception of the experience abroad as an integrative event which takes into account the prior to departure stage and practices, as postulated by Furnham and Bochner (1986).

With respect to how far into Oberg's (1960) adjustment cycle the participants progressed within their first four weeks, it seemed that they were in the recovery stage by the fourth week. At that point, stress started to decrease as more culture-specific knowledge was acquired inside and outside the University context. Consequently, by week 4, the students were grasping a better understanding of the English culture and such had helped to build more confidence with matters of concern in earlier weeks. For example, the financial hardship the participants had initially faced due to the high living costs in the UK and their lack of financial preparedness, and the inherent emotional insecurity it conveyed, had all started to decrease by the fourth week, once a budget for their expenditures was built.

Additionally, Oberg's complete adjustment phase was not reached within the timeframe of this study. However, the first three stages of the adjustment process proposed by Oberg were followed to some extent, if it is taken into account that students with no previous abroad skills appeared to have experienced the honeymoon stage prior to departure.

Concerning Adler's (1975) "independence" phase, although within the timeframe of this study, it was not possible to document whether the participants at the end of their adjustment cycle had increased

their self-awareness and deeper understanding of other cultures; findings supported the notion that students with previous experience were more self-aware of what the experience entitled and showed a better management of the challenged faced. Thus, this finding resonates with Klineberg and Hull (1979) in their first cross-sectional study on adaptation and coping strategies' proposition, which claims previous experience abroad accounts as a preparation strategy that positively influences the individual's transition to the host culture. Knowing how things can be helped the participants be better prepared for the change to face. Thus, students with prior experience abroad were more skilled in developing relationships with local students, for example, than those who were on their first sojourn.

Although findings from this study seemed to demonstrate that some participants better adapted as time passed by, in agreement with Lysgaard's (1955) proposition of a relationship between duration and adjustment, evidence also suggested that the students felt more at ease when they had come to terms with the appropriate cultural skills. Thus, adjustment might not solely relate to a time condition, as Lysgaard (1955) proclaimed, but to a combination of acquiring the necessary skills to perform in the new context (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). For instance, when a more solid management of finances through the building of a budget was achieved by the third and fourth weeks, less stress and more satisfaction was perceived. Therefore, how adjusted the participants felt by weeks three and four, did not exclusively respond to have been in the UK for a month (or nearly), but to have acquired or not the skills needed to properly function in the host context. Thus, although this study observed an improvement in the participants' adjustment as time passed, as theorized by Lysgaard (1955), findings support a relationship between adjustment and the acquisition of skills that is not uniquely linked to a time condition.

IMPLICATIONS

After six decades, these traditional theories appear to bring relevant insights for understanding the early adaptation of this group of Mexican postgraduate international students. First, it offers a new perspective about these approaches for cross-cultural adjustment, which suggests "the honeymoon" stage might take place for first-time international students prior to departure. Second, the participants with previous international experience showed more skillful management of their transition. Thus, the results of this study add to the literature on the transition and adaptation of understudied groups of international students, in this case of Mexican origin, and their rite of passage during their first month overseas. Although the results do not aim to be generalized, this research offers some cultural-specific hints that could be relevant to students of similar cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, this study's findings call for raising awareness about the pre-arrival stage's importance and considering it as part of the international experience. The scrutiny of the pre-departure phase has proved to be an area that warrants further investigation to tackle some of the possible challenges the international participants are to face upon arrival. In addition to more scholarly efforts on the study of the pre-arrival stage, assistance on behalf of the host institution and the corresponding sponsor with pre-arrival planning that goes beyond administrative assistance with procedural tasks is encouraged. In this vein, providing students with timely pre-departure assistance and information about areas of known difficulty and uncertainty could be of aid to increase their awareness and chances of preparation about what they will encounter in the host environment. Thus, this paper claims efforts to understand that the cross-cultural adaptation of international students should be rerouted towards a more comprehensive methodology; one that includes the pre-arrival stage and considers the participants' previous experience abroad (or lack thereof), to appreciate a more holistic understanding of their adaptation

experience. In this sense, the identification of two groups of students, those with prior overseas experience and those travelling to a foreign country for educational purposes for the first time, has important implications for policy and practice. Opposite to what might have been considered, the overseas experience of these two groups of individuals starts and unfolds in different ways depending on their previous international experience or not. As per this study's findings, it is recommended that institutional support is arranged and provided for students with and for students without previous experience abroad as their degree of conscientiousness about what the experience entails appears to be different. Consequently, both groups of participants are likely to face a different scenario depending on their previous international experience upon arrival.

Concerning the Mexican origin of the participants, international students come from very diverse backgrounds, which include different socio-emotional and academic models, behaviors, and expectations (Brunsting et al. 2018); it is therefore critical to develop research that is inclusive and diverse, and focuses not only on the largest groups of students and regions, but also contemplates minority groups in order to understand and as institutions, serve their culture-specific needs.

Even though this research focused on Mexican international students, findings on arrival seem to be in consonance with empirical evidence from other groups of international students, which support the notion that upon arrival and during their first weeks, students undergo an extensive array of challenges leading to a stressful period (Brown, 2008; Schartner, 2014; Ward et al., 2001). However, how different or similar their experience prior to arrival may be, compared to other subsets of the international students' population, is yet to be known, as there is not much research that has focused on the pre-departure stage of the sojourn.

LIMITATIONS

Related to individual variations in the participants' early experiences, mature-aged students have been recognized as a group of students prone to actively engage with their learning process (Devlin, 1996; McCune et al., 2010; Richardson, 1994); thus, a similar level of engagement could be expected as to their process to adapt. In this regard, it was observed that non-mature aged students responded similarly to their mature-aged fellows. The main difference between these two groups of participants rested on having had or not previous experience abroad. Likewise, there were no differences identified in the participants' perception based on their gender or discipline. However, it is acknowledged that the group of participants was rather homogeneous as they were mainly matured-aged men to pursue a Master's Degree in a STEM discipline area. Hence, exploring a more varied group of students in terms of their demographics may contribute to identify more heterogeneous conclusions.

CONCLUSION

Findings from this study do not seem to support traditional views of culture shock (Lysgaard 1955; Oberg 1960), in which feelings of excitement mark the early stage of the experience. Instead, this research identified the first four weeks as a period where stress and uncertainty were at peak. Nonetheless, it shows some consonance with Lysgaard's (1955) proposition of adjustment as a process since taxing feelings appeared to decrease in some cases, as time passed, over the lapse of 4 weeks, and as more confidence and culture-specific knowledge were built on (Ward, Bochner, and Furnham 2001).

Having previous experience was identified in this study as a preparation strategy for the students' transition (Klineber & Hull 1979; Kim 2001; Liu & Winder 2014). Students with prior cross-cultural experience showed to be better equipped than those who did not have any prior cross-cultural experience. Upon arrival, the students with experience navigated easier in the environment with aspects such as daily life. They found it easier to integrate with the host community and perceived host nationals friendlier. Equally, the participants who claimed having lacked preparation and reported to have been "hit" by reality were those who had never been abroad before. Thus, the adaptation process for those without prior experience appeared to be steeper.

An essential contribution of this study is the methodological consideration it gave to the beginning of the experience. For instance, this study did not ponder the arrival of the sojourners to the host city and institution as the beginning of the experience. Instead, it conceived the pre-departure stage as the start of the continuum. Therefore, this research scrutinized the under-explored pre-arrival aspect of the sojourn in an effort to better understand how the participants bridge between home and host context. This allows for a critical consideration, which is that research on international students' mobility has been largely based on data collected upon the students' arrival, and it has mainly examined the participants' experience from that point onwards. Whereas this study allowed realizing the sojourn started well before the participants' traveled, and the extent of pre-departure preparations had important ramifications for the challenges each group of participants, with and without previous experience abroad, faced.

REFERENCES

Adler, P. S. (1975). The transitional experience: An alternative view of culture shock. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*.

Ahmad, A. L., Noh, M. N. M., Mohamad, E. M. W., Mohd, R. H., & Salman, A. (2015). THE EXPLORATION OF THE INTERCULTURAL ADAPTATION OF MALAY STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIA AND UNITED KINGDOM. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, *31*(2).

An, R., & Chiang, S. Y. (2015). International students' culture learning and cultural adaptation in China. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *36*(7), 661-676.

Berg, B. L., Lune, H., & Lune, H. (2012). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (8th, ed.). Pearson.

Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2018). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A road map from beginning to end*. SAGE.

Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Sage.

Brown, L., & Holloway, I. (2008). The initial stage of the international sojourn: excitement or culture shock?. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, *36*(1), 33-49.

Brown, L. (2008). *The adjustment journey of international postgraduate students at a university in England: An ethnography* (Doctoral dissertation, Bournemouth University).

Brunsting, N. C., Zachry, C., & Takeuchi, R. (2018). Predictors of undergraduate international student psychosocial adjustment to US universities: A systematic review from 2009-2018. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *66*, 22-33.

Chien, Y. Y. G. (2016). After six decades: Applying the U-curve hypothesis to the adjustment of international postgraduate students. *Journal of research in International Education*, *15*(1), 32-51.

Church, A. T. (1982). Sojourner adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin*, *91*(3), 540.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2002). *Research methods in education*. Routledge.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage.

Devlin, M. (1996). Older and wiser?: A comparison of the learning and study strategies of mature age and younger teacher education students. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *15*(1), 51-60.

Foley, A. G. (2013). *The role of international school counselors in US college recruitment strategy*. University of Delaware.

Furnham, A., & Bochner, S. (1982). Social difficulty in a foreign culture: An empirical analysis of culture shock. *Cultures in Contact: Studies in Cross-Cultural Interaction*, *1*, 161-198.

Geeraert, N., & Demoulin, S. (2013). Acculturative stress or resilience? A longitudinal multilevel analysis of sojourners' stress and self-esteem. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *44*(8), 1241-1262.

Guenther, K. M. (2009). The politics of names: rethinking the methodological and ethical significance of naming people, organizations, and places. *Qualitative Research*, *9*(4), 411-421.

Hausmann-Stabile, C., Zayas, L. H., Hauser, D., Carvajal, C., Mejia, C., & Nieves, D. (2011). Challenges and solutions for Latin American-trained international medical graduates in psychiatry residency. *International Journal of Mental Health*, *40*(3), 29-40.

Healy, A. F., & Bourne Jr, L. E. (2013). *Foreign language learning: Psycholinguistic studies on training and retention*. Psychology Press.

Hirai, R., Frazier, P., & Syed, M. (2015). Psychological and sociocultural adjustment of first-year international students: Trajectories and predictors. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *62*(3), 438.

Kim, Y. Y. (2000). *Becoming intercultural: An integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation*. Sage.

Klineberg, O., & Hull IV, F. W. (1979). *At a foreign university: An international study of adaptation and coping*. Praeger Publishers.

Liu, D. W. Y., & Winder, B. (2014). Exploring foreign undergraduate students' experiences of university. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *27*(1), 42-64.

Lysgaand, S. (1955). Adjustment in a foreign society: Norwegian Fulbright grantees visiting the United States. *International Social Science Bulletin*.

McCune, V., Hounsell, J., Christie, H., Cree, V. E., & Tett, L. (2010). Mature and younger students' reasons for making the transition from further education into higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *15*(6), 691-702.

Mann, C., Canny, B. J., Reser, D. H., & Rajan, R. (2013). Poorer verbal working memory for a second language selectively impacts academic achievement in university medical students. *PeerJ*, *1*, e22.

Maslow, A. H. (1981). *Motivation and personality*. Prabhat Prakashan.

Oberg, K. (1960). Cultural shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments. *Practical Anthropology*, (4), 177-182.

Punch, K. F. (2013). *Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches*. Sage.

Richardson, J. T. (1994). Mature students in higher education: I. A literature survey on approaches to studying. *Studies in Higher Education*, *19*(3), 309-325.

Rhein, D. (2018). International university students in Thailand: Shifting from universalistic models to an ethnicity matters approach. *Journal of Research in International Education*, *17*(3), 286-308.

Rushworth, P. (2017). Latin America set to become third largest global region for international HE recruitment. *Neil Stewart Associates*.

Schartner, A. (2014). *Cross-cultural transition in higher education* (Doctoral dissertation, Newcastle University).

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Sage.

Sherry, M., Thomas, P., & Chui, W. H. (2010). International students: A vulnerable student population. *Higher Education*, *60*(1), 33-46.

Tanner, G. G. (2013). *The Graduate Experience of Mexican International Students in US Doctoral Programs*. ProQuest LLC. 789 East Eisenhower Parkway, PO Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Thomas, G. (2021). *How to do your case study*. Sage.

UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), 2016.*Net flow of internationally mobile students.* http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-student-flow-viz.aspx (Accessed 31 May 2016).

Urban, E. L., Orbe, M. P., Tavares, N. A., & Alvarez, W. (2010). Exploration of Dominican international students' experiences. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, *47*(2), 233-250.

Ward, C., Bochner, S., & Furnham, A. (2020). *The psychology of culture shock*. Routledge.

Ward, C., Okura, Y., Kennedy, A., & Kojima, T. (1998). The U-curve on trial: A longitudinal study of psychological and sociocultural adjustment during cross-cultural transition. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *22*(3), 277-291.

Elizabeth M. Hernández López, is a research lecturer in the Modern Languages Department at the University of Guadalajara in Mexico. She undertook a PhD at the University of Southampton, on the adaptation experience of international students of Latin American origin to life in the UK. Elizabeth earned her Master of Arts in Intercultural Communication from the University of Maryland, USA. Her research interests include intercultural mediation, international mobility, organisational practices and the processes of orientation, culture shock, and adaptation.

Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 13, Issue 4 (2021), pp. 73-84
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v13i4.3267 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

'Those First Few Months Were Horrible': Cross-Cultural Adaptation and the J-Curve in the International Student Experience in the UK and Norway

Caroline Dailey-Strand[a], Helen Collins[b] and David Callaghan[c]

[a]*Hult Business School, San Francisco, USA*
[b*]*Liverpool John Moores University, UK*
[c]*Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, UK*

[*]Corresponding author: Email: h.collins@ljmu.ac.uk.

ABSTRACT

Since the 1970s, international students have represented a growing proportion of the global student body, yet how they adjust and how universities can support them is relatively unexplored. We conducted a qualitative study of 36 international students of 11 nationalities studying in Norway and the UK and found that their experience did not fit the dominant 'U-Curve' of adaptation that suggests there is a honeymoon period on arrival. Confirmed with conversations with student wellbeing staff, who suggest that anxiety and culture shock are the norm, the data allows us to suggest factors that trigger adjustment and interventions to improve students' experience. Our contribution is a 'J-Curve' model comprising cultural challenge, adjustment, and mastery, to reflect the reality of the international student experience.

Keywords: cross-cultural adaptation, cross-cultural adjustment, culture shock, intercultural contact, international students, Norway, sociocultural and psychological adaptation, J-Curve, U-curve, UK

INTRODUCTION

Internationalization is the most revolutionary development in higher education in the twenty-first century (Seddoh, 2001), and universities that shut themselves off from global events risk becoming "moribund and irrelevant" (Altbach 2004, p. 6). International student numbers are growing (UNESCO, 2016), and to keep up with changing markets, students need to gain knowledge and skills by studying abroad (Yu & Moskal, 2019; Brown, 2009). Changes in student populations influence intercultural contact, understood as 'direct face to face communication encounters between or among individuals with different cultural backgrounds' (Kim, 1998, p.12); fostering intercultural interaction can prepare students for an international workforce, yet studies (for instance, Volet & Jones, 2012) confirm that international and host students have little interaction.

Received August 1, 2020; revised Octtober 2, 2020, November 7, 2020; accepted November 23, 2020; electronically published September 15, 2021

We define international students as individuals who move to another country to study. Two terms are used in the literature: cross-cultural adjustment and cross-cultural adaptation. The adjustment refers to making minor changes, and adaptation to larger changes (Haslberger & Brewster, 2007). This study adopts these views.

How international students adjust and how universities can support them is a relatively unexplored area. We responded to this with a qualitative study of 36 students of eleven nationalities at three universities, two in the UK and one in Norway. Participants were interviewed about three issues: why study abroad, what happened, and why stay, underpinned by our research questions: What is the lived experience of international students in the UK and Norway – does it align or challenge the U Curve? What are the benefits and problems encountered by international students?

The paper makes three contributions. First, it exposes the leading model of cross-cultural adaptation, Lysgaard's (1955) U-Curve with its focus on an initial honeymoon period as obsolete and posits a new model, the J-Curve. Second, it contextualizes student reported experience within their own expectations of international study at the point at which it is experienced, and like Brown (2008), investigates the role of psychological and social factors in modulating adjustment. Third, it exposes the conceptualization of students as passive recipient of general interventions and invites universities to create purposeful solutions to facilitate adaptation.

We begin by grounding our analysis within the literature on studying abroad, in particular around the theoretical construct of the U curve, followed by the methodology, findings, and discussion around factors affecting adaptation. We propose the J-Curve, posit interventions that trigger improvements, and end with suggestions for further research.

CONCEPTUAL ARGUMENT

The U-Curve

Lysgaard's (1955) U curve, Oberg's (1960) seven-step acclimation process, Gullahorn and Gullahorn's (1963) W curve, and Adler's (1975) five-step developmental process are among the approaches used to explain cultural adaptation, and the U curve has held a dominant position for over half a century. Originally developed by Lysgaard in a study of Norwegian scholars in the US, the U curve portrays the lowest point of adaptation, called Crisis, but is more commonly associated with its emphasis on the initial honeymoon phase during which newcomers tend to feel optimistic about making new friends in their new culture. Lysgaard has stated that the adaptation processes of individuals who have to live in a different culture change in time, underscoring the U curve with four stages of adaptation; namely the honeymoon, culture shock, adaptation, and double culture (or recovery). According to Oberg too, cultural adaptation starts with a honeymoon stage. Both authors assert that the honeymoon is followed by a culture shock, what Lysgaard originally called the crisis, and at this stage newcomers are likely to suffer from anxiety and stress. The final stages focus on recovery, during which cultural differences are managed, and finally the full adaptation stage, where individuals are able to function well.

So while the U curve has held an important place in the literature on international student adaptation and provides a strong heuristic approach to understanding the adaptation pathways, it is by no means universal to every individual in every situation (Moghaddam, 2011). Nevertheless, it enabled a time frame to be used in managing adaptation and encouraged consideration of both positive and negative that impact international students. In turn, this enabled universities to adapt inductions and international student activity accordingly.

Rather than lacking detail the fault line with the U curve is its order of adaptation. In this paper, we assert that culture shock and its associated high levels of anxiety and stress ought to precede a honeymoon period in any model describing international student adaptation. While there has been some acknowledgment of the crucial importance of those first few weeks and months for international students and a growing recognition of just how overwhelming they can be (Brown & Holloway, 2008), there is a paucity of research into the actual lived experience of international students during this vital first period. Wang et al. (2018) suggest a two phase U-curve that accounts for the fact that most culture shock lasts for the first 9-24 months. While this might be the case, since many students become international students for

one or two years only, we posit that a model that enables adaptation problems to be acknowledged and resolved as they occur early in the student's experience is both urgent and timely. In turn, Many universities are likely to respond the anticipated honeymoon with activities that might be quite out of step with what is actually needed.

According to Chien (2016), many students' adaptation is a much more complex process of adjustment than the U curve depicts. Chien argues that the U curve ignores context, cultural experiences, attitudes, and global developments that all influence student experience. It is likely the case that the scale of the challenges is much bigger than can be met by any model. The U-Curve underscored with honeymoon, culture shock, adjustment and recovery, has assumed a dominant position for over 60 years. Its most extensive critique is over 20 years old (Ward et al., 1998), and highlighted how problems were highest on entry to a new culture, yet like Schartner and Young's (2015) intersectional approach that combines adjustment and adaptation, did not posit a new model. Opposition to the U-Curve can be found in the integrative communication theory of cross-cultural adaptation that provides a model to explain how people are changed by relocating from a familiar home culture to a new culture. Kim et al.'s (2017) integrative process model presents the stress-adaption-growth dynamic to describe an individual's gradual transformation towards being able to function in the new culture. Of course, a model is not essential but since it does influence behavior we assert that it is important and therefore ask What is the lived experience of international students in the UK and Norway – does it align or challenge the U Curve? Or is a J-Curve, with its focus on the anxiety of adjustment more accurate?

Study Abroad: Benefits, Problems, Wellbeing and Culture Shock

Benefits

Benefits include: better career opportunities, academic attainment, language skills, international knowledge, understanding of different cultures (Freedman, 2010; Deardorff, 2006), that can last a lifetime (Gullekson & Tucker, 2013), and remain pertinent for contemporary international students (L. Bennett, personal communication, 8 January 2020). International students facilitate cross-cultural understanding (L. Bennett, personal communication, 8 January 2020; Marangell et al., 2018), and enrich a country financially (Ploner, 2017) – with figures of £10 billion for the UK (Sachrajda & Pennington, 2013) and A$20 billion (Deloitte Access Economics, 2016) for Australia. International students have the potential to change the content and process of education. Choice of a particular university enhances its reputation and encourages networks of international peers (Pittaway et al., 1998); networks ripe for marketing, recruitment, research, and knowledge transfer.

Problems

In the 1930s Stonequist's The Marginal Man (1937) considered the difficulties facing individuals caught between two cultures. Two decades later two new concepts were developed, the U-Curve of adjustment (Lysgaard, 1955), and culture shock (Oberg, 1960). The U-Curve posits that international students go through four phases: honeymoon, culture shock, adjustment, and recovery, while Oberg's 'culture shock' captured emotional problems encountered in a new culture.

Studying abroad can be a challenge. Problems include homesickness and loneliness (L. Bennett, personal communication, 8 January 2020; Oberg 1960), loss of support (Cho & Yu, 2015), language difficulties (Marangell et al., 2018; Mori 2000), culture shock (Torbiörn 1982; Oberg, 1960), poor mental health (Forbes-Mewett & Sawyer, 2019), unfamiliar academic approaches (Barton et al., 2019), and peer pressure to remain in a 'monolithic [cultural] ghetto' (Brown, 2009, p. 184).

International students may possess norms and patterns of behavior that conflict with host students (Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002), and negative perceptions around lower entry requirements and pass marks persist (Baron, 2006; Strauss et al., 2014). Relations with host students might be difficult due to language issues (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009), perceived discrimination (Russell et al., 2010) and host established friendship networks (Hendrickson et al., 2011). Lack of friends can create emotional pain for international students and lead to self isolation (Wang et al., 2018).

Wellbeing and Culture Shock

Wellbeing during adjustment is an indicator of successful adaptation and encompasses sociological and psychological factors (Ying & Liese 1991). Bierwiaczonek and Waldzus (2016) identified five antecedents of social adaptation: cultural distance (e.g. degree to which the new culture differs from one's own culture), social interaction (e.g. quality and frequency of contact), social resources (e.g. social support from peers), social stressors (e.g. perceived discrimination) and family related variables (e.g. marital status). Psychological well-being is influenced by personality (Ward & Kennedy, 1999; McIntyre et al., 2018); students with what Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2000) call multicultural traits of empathy, open-mindedness, emotional stability, and flexibility adjusting more easily. Tomich (2000) adds that cultural similarity or distance from home is a powerful determinant of psychological adaptation.

Immersion in a new culture causes culture shock (Kim & Gudykunst, 1988; Oberg, 1960), a period of anxiety highest among international students (L. Bennett, personal communication, 8 January 2020; Furnham, 2004), characterized by feelings of helplessness, anger, loneliness, and homesickness (Oberg, 1960). Lack of social support increases culture shock, some authors posit that most international students have poor social support (L. Bennett, personal communication, 8 January 2020; Marangel et al. 2018; Brown, 2009), contributing to stress, anxiety, and depression (Yeh & Inose, 2003) and isolation into 'monolithic ghettos' (Brown, 2009, p. 184).

Oberg (1960) suggests that the best way to overcome culture shock is to get to know local people. Suggestions to invest in international students through organized events are not widely applied (L. Bennett, personal communication, 8 January 2020; Gautam et al., 2016). Host students' support can ease adjustment, though challenged by attitudes that range from 'indifference' to 'racial and Islamaphobic prejudice' (Brown, 2009, p. 439).

METHODOLOGY

Applying a qualitative methodology as better suited to exploring lived experiences and individually constructed meanings (Golafshani, 2003), the data gathering method was semi structured interviews, with convenience sampling used to select cohorts from the three universities. Out of 140 full time undergraduate or postgraduate students contacted by email, 38 agreed to participate, with over 30 aged between 18 -24. Two subsequently dropped out citing work pressure. Interviews took place between May and September 2018, with each participant interviewed once for approximately 40 minutes, tape recorded with permission, and transcribed verbatim. A pilot interview served as a 'practice run', helpful since for all participants, the host country language was not their first language.

We kept interviewing until we stopped generating new themes, signaling that we had approached theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Our final sample consisted of 36 students: 24 female and 12 male. Twelve came from the EU, four from Africa, four from the Middle East, and the rest from China and Pacific Rim countries. Over half the participants had spent less than one year in their current institution, a quarter between one and two years, and the rest a little over two years.

Participants were interviewed to elicit responses to why study abroad, what happened, and why stay? Broad questions gradually focused on narrower areas as data collection and analysis progressed in parallel (Spradley, 1979), with follow-up questions used for clarification. For example, the interplay between cultural adjustment and getting to know people emerged early on as a significant topic, so we oriented our questions accordingly, guided by the following:

1. How long have you been in the UK/Norway?
2. Do you have any previous international experience?
3. Why did you choose to study abroad?
4. Why did you choose the UK/Norway?
5. What has been the best/worst part?
6. Have you experienced any stress, culture shock, or homesickness?
7. Has it lived up to your expectations?
8. Do you think studying abroad will affect your employability?

Data Analysis

Lincoln's work (Lincoln, 2005, 2010) – with her intent to understand the lived experience of participants – guided the analysis process. The transcripts were analyzed through a flexible approach of moving backwards and forwards (Mason, 2002), the aim being not only to explore connections but to ensure that key themes emerged from participants. Following lengthy analysis, conceptual codes were extracted from the data and grouped into themes and the final analysis, similar to the constant comparison method Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015), was used to seek connections between themes. The emerging concepts were classified and grouped into categories for comparison in the analysis process (Birks & Mills, 2011). To achieve credible research there is an audit trail to evidence the analytical process (Richards & Morse, 2007).

Wherever possible, we used in–vivo codes, drawn from participants' descriptions of their experiences (Locke, 2001). For example, raw data describing participants' search for support collated under categories titled 'triggers to acclimatize'. In stage two, the categories were interpreted at a theoretical level, and in stage three, we thread the theoretical elements that emerged in stage two. After around ten hours of meetings focused on ten interviews, we had a preliminary coding theme. We returned to this stage three times: after initial data collection, after feedback, and after second data collection. During our first iteration, we were struck by the precariousness and determination of participants' attempts to settle, and the data called for a deeper look into what triggered adjustment.

FINDINGS

We present our findings under three headings: Why go? What happened? Why stay? Country code, gender and age are in brackets after the quote – for example, 'In F 21' is Indonesian Female 21yrs old – table 1 below lists nationalities and the code used in the referencing. All sections are illustrated with verbatim quotations.

Table 1: Nationalities Interviewed, and Abbreviations Used in Referencing

Nationality	Abbreviation
Slovakia	Sl
Swedish	Sw
Vietnamese	Vi
Spanish	Sp
Mongolian	Mo
Swiss	Sz
Indonesian	In
Jordanian	Jo
Chinese	Ch
Nigerian	Ni
Norwegian	No

Why Go?

Family expectations were a major driver for studying abroad, with a few commenting that they could not remember a time when it was not part of their family's plan. Comments included: "My family and my school, it was all about going for an international education, especially in the UK" (Ni F 21).

There were echoes of Trower & Lehmann's (2017) study of Canadian students' shift away from 'hard' drivers such as career enhancement – to softer aspects, the '… potential of personal growth, to get away from their everyday lives, to see somewhere new, challenge themselves to gain independence and have new cultural experiences' (ibid:281). For instance: "The course looked good but the chance to get away, be independent was just as important" (Ch F 20).

Social or softer aspects of studying abroad were mentioned frequently. For many participants, there was a desire to gain "a wider view of things…" (Sp M 27) and that study abroad gives an experience of

"being in a different place is the best part of being an international student …the culture and the language…" (Vi M 24) "…learning more Western culture…" (Mo F 18). There were frequent references to meeting new people "the student villages [student flats] … help to meet new people" (No F 23) and developing new skills to help with: "understanding people, what's happening in their life…" (Mo F 18). International students in Norway were more positive about meeting locals than those in the UK, although there were shared frustrations: "I wanted to experience studying abroad with locals, it's why I came really but it's not happened. They don't seem interested in international students." (Mo F 18).

While the majority referred to the social side of international study, most also spoke quite negatively about that aspect that was overwhelmingly disappointing. Words and body language highlighted how many participants had struggled: "…It was worse than I imagined…I did research … but when I came here, it was different, it's hard to make friends…" (Vi M 24). Even when participants had tried actively to meet others there had been setbacks, for example: "… I expected to make more friends than I have; I've joined things but it hasn't worked. This side has been a big disappointment…" (Sw F 22).

Studying in a new language was a concern for some (Sl F 31) whilst for others "… worries disappeared after the first day…" (Sw F 22). Language was both positive (particularly beneficial to future careers) and negative: "…hard to fully understand what the teachers are saying…" (Vi M 24). Language difficulties "…feel kind of like a disability…" (Sz F 24) and misunderstandings lead to "…mistakes when doing some papers … but that's part of the learning…" (Sp M 27).

Some felt that they had underestimated the pressure of learning and socializing in a new language: "I thought my English was good … not being a native speaker was a massive problem" (Vi M 24). Pressed to expand his point: "Academically I worked twice as hard, and socially, it's hard work so we stay in our mini groups and don't mix".

The drive to develop a multi-cultural perspective was important: "I know about more cultures than just an English person or just a Kenyan…" (In F 21) and "…I know about Asia and the culture, but also the culture here" (Mo F 18). Varied experiences were attractive to many: "I want to keep living away and understanding other ways to live…" (Sp M 27) "…Hong Kong or Singapore… I want to change my job many times…, and travel and meet different people…" (Vi M 24).

A picture emerged of students shopping around for best value, based on reputation and cost, and choosing to study in the UK or Norway because of the "…good [international] reputation..." (In F 21) of their qualifications (Vi M 24; Mo F 18), and that "…the education system is pretty good…" (Mo F 18). Others were critical, one saying that UK qualifications are not so esteemed nowadays: "… the internet means that employers know exactly the rank of your university so it's not as straightforward now…" (Ch F 28).

Financially, UK study was "Good value" (In F 21), "… much better value than other countries..." (Sw F 22). One illustrated with a comparison: "…if you study masters in Australia it takes two years, in the UK one year…you save time and money…" (Vi M 24)

Excitement about engaging with new teaching and learning styles engaged some participants. There were frequent references to "…different ways to learn … to understand a discipline" (Sp M 27) such as tutors using "…real life or real cases… it motivates me and makes sense" (Sp M 27). Discovery style teaching (Kirschner et al., 2006) was well received: "… I love the action learning sets that we work in…" (In F 21) and the relaxed environment, and "less formal teaching than [at] home…" (Ch F 20).

What Happened?

Loneliness, isolation, and, uncertainty were common at first, with little support in their new environment compounded by an unwillingness to confide in the family: "I would probably be seen as a bit of a failure if I had moaned about being lonely" (Ch F 28). There were suggestions of fairly strict family backgrounds where homesickness would not be regarded as serious enough to stop studying: "My family would think I wasn't studying enough if I told them I was homesick" (Sz F 24).

Asked if they experienced an initial honeymoon period, most responded with incredulity. For instance: "Honeymoon? It was horrible. I felt so homesick and miserable. I was contacting my family all day." (Mo F 18). Homesickness was common, some finding it difficult to adapt to a "… different culture … I miss my family and friends…" (Sl F 31). Worse at the beginning of the course, holidays and weekends

when many "…always feel like going home…" (Sw F 22). Asked about initial university support "…the induction program was ok, but didn't give chance to get to know each other…" (No M 23).

Another said they may not be experiencing homesickness, rather: "… culture shock… how people talk to each other…you can just meet someone and talk…in China you don't bump into each other and talk, that's weird…so there was culture shock…" (Mo F 18). Stress was an issue, with some having "…two jobs and studying fulltime…" (Sl F 31). Many recognised that all students experience academic stress, but emphasised that "…international students are affected more…" (Vi M 24) explained by the "…time it takes to know a new culture, language, communicating, new academic styles…" (Ni M 23).

To increase wellbeing, some practiced self care and sought solace within their own culture. Prayer, daily meditation, running were mentioned frequently in the context of managing their new environment. For most, the relative hostility or disinterest felt in their new environment found gravitating to students from their own country or region imperative: "I made my room like home, and invited other Nigerians back" (Ni F 21).

Time and purposeful interventions were helpful, exemplified in the following quote: "With time, and especially through the activities where we had to mix, things became easier". (Vi M 24). When pressed about the types of activity they added: "Socially, the group work when we met outside of class time was good. Things were getting easier for me by then anyway …. I wish the activities had been sooner ….. I wasted a lot of time being lonely".

Postgraduate students at two institutions undertook their dissertation module in Action Learning Sets (ALS). Developed by Revans in the 1940s to unite individuals with a major piece of work (Revans, 2011), sets comprised groups of eight who met regularly over six months. For many it was a useful intercultural opportunity: "The ALS groups were great for mixing and learning about other students" (Sl F 31). Another quote exemplifies the mix of social and academic afforded by the ALS: "The ALS was about our course but became social too with food, drinking Chinese tea and tai chi. It was brilliant. I wish we worked like this for all modules" (Sp M 27). Collins and Callaghan (2018) in their research into action learning concur with these findings of the usefulness of action learning in supporting international student adaptation.

Asked if they would study abroad again, the consensus was "Yes", highlighting the emotional resilience developed: "I feel like I can do anything now … if you do this you can manage anything…it's been very hard (laughs and sighs)" (Sl F 31). Another said, "If you asked me in the first three months no no no but now maybe yes." (Ni F 21).

Why Stay?

Asked about why stay, many spoke about advantages they were accruing for their future career, and compartmentalized problems in a spirit of delayed gratification summed up by "all this suffering and frustration will be worth it for my future career". Typical attitudes included "… the best part is not now … but I hope future job opportunities…." (Ch F 28), prospective employers would see them "… as brave and open minded…" (Sw F 22), and that study abroad provides a "…good CV and good experience…" (Sp M 27). Some highlighted "…more opportunities for work in England…" (Sl F 31), whilst another contrasted his UK experience with a "…lack of opportunity at home… so should make a career here" (Ni M 35). Five participants aspired to an international career "... yes, of course, international student, international career, 100% ..." (Sw F 22), suggesting that it will make them "… more valuable when I go back [home]…" (Sp M 27).

Asked about triggers that enabled adjustment, time, and structured activity dominated, particularly sociable activity: "A couple of our assessments were group projects and reallygood socially. I got to know host students, it was the best" (Sw F 22). Another spoke about a mentoring scheme that they felt had been very well received: "We had a buddy scheme at the end…..I wish it was available sooner, like before arriving." (Ch F 20)

Language skills were mentioned many times: "…to learn English…and America is quite far so…I'm from the EU, and [this] was the nearest country where I could speak English…" (Sl F 31) and an "…opportunity to study language…" (Vi M 24) to learn "… good English for future jobs…" (Jo M 24).

Others realized the opportunities once here: "… I started seeing it as an opportunity…to learn English better…" (Sw F 22). Some were specific about "…learning the academic language…" (Sw F 22), concerned that their "… English would be good enough" (Sw F 22), though these concerns quickly evaporated. Two commented how improving their English would benefit their careers more than their degree (Mo F 18; In F 21).

DISCUSSION

Participants reported positive outcomes and attributed them to participation in structured activities, particularly the Action Learning Sets. Listening to participants highlighted Action Learning's key principles of *Group work*, *Inclusivity*, *Listening*, and *Equality* that in this study provided support, countering some of the problems of adaptation. The emphasis on structured opportunity is not new; Allport (1954) demonstrated its role in supporting intercultural behavior that has been replicated in studies since (Jon, 2013; Soria & Troisi, 2014). Creating the social context for intercultural interaction, with space to collaborate, beyond and inside the classroom is key.

We contribute to understanding international students' expectations and adjustment, and synthesize findings into three dimensions: why go, what happened, and why stay? Family expectations underpinned key drivers to study abroad, students stayed for insights into new cultures, language improvement, enhanced career prospects, and, exposure to different learning and teaching styles. Challenges were culture shock, homesickness, and language barriers. These challenges are known (Marangell et al., 2018; Bochner et al., 1977), yet had limited address for our cohort.

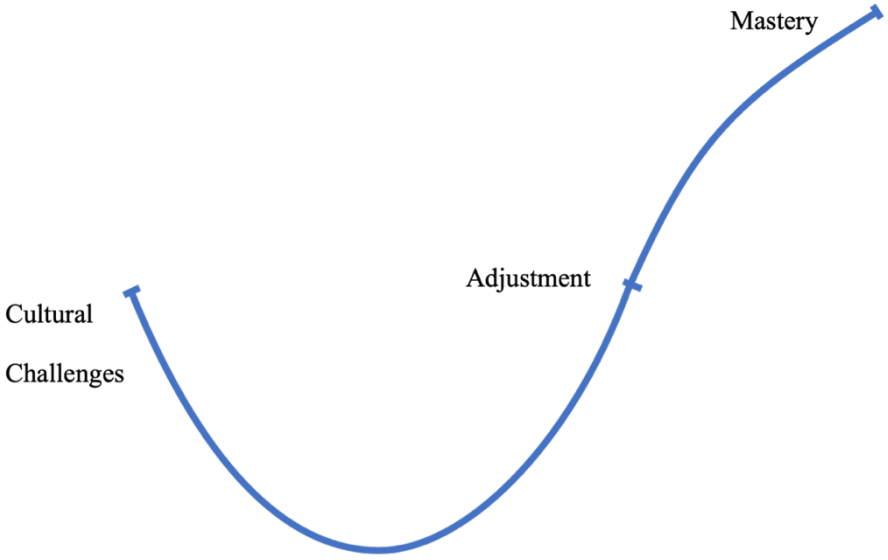
Culture shock is reduced through supportive social networks (Marangell et al., 2018; Cho & Yu, 2015). Poor support increases dropout rates, loneliness, and, extended culture shock searlway to overcome culture shock is to get to know locals, yet the interaction between students and host nationals remains low (Costello, 2015; Rosenthal et al., 2007).

Overwhelmingly, answers to the question 'why stay?' focused on the utility of their endeavors for future careers. Studying abroad improves employability (Nilsson & Ripmeester, 2016), even a short period delivers better prospects (Di Pietro, 2013).

This study shows that adaptation can be overwhelming, and given the costs of poor adjustment, knowing more about when and how to support students is vital. Armed with the knowledge of the difficulties students experience, universities can target support and offer well-planned inductions with language, social and cultural elements.

Figure 1: The J-Curve

Theoretical Implications – J-Curve



We found that international students do not experience a 'honeymoon' period, and suggest a 'J-Curve' – first stage 'cultural challenges' where students are unfamiliar with the host country, what Lysgaard (1955) calls 'culture shock'. The second stage, 'adjustment', students have 1) a familiarity with the new culture, 2) accepted cultural differences, and 3) socially adjusted. The third stage, 'mastery', students are 1) mastering the new environment, 2) functioning effectively, 3) comfortable with the new culture, and 4) socially adjusted. Time getting to know people, practicing the language and, participating in purposeful activity trigger progression from cultural challenge to mastery, manifest in managing dual cultures in everyday life without being anxious or worried.

Practical implications

Overwhelmingly students reported homesickness, culture shock, and loneliness. Many had overcome their difficulties through self help or withdrawing into their community. However, as became clear, the organized social opportunities, across academic and extracurricular contexts, were hugely popular and successful in enabling adaptation. Interventions such as group learning, action learning, charity events, and social events were highlighted as 'brilliant' chances to network and make friends, in turn enabling the student experience to be enhanced. In the words of the student wellbeing staff member, 'it is often just the low cost simple interventions that bring people together, especially in the early days, and stop that awful loneliness that can be crippling'.

Further Research

International students contribute to universities financially, educationally, and culturally, and universities can reciprocate by understanding their expectations. This paper raises many questions. For instance, what is the impact of cultural distance from home on adaptation? We listened to participants' stories of creating a version of a home by importing home comforts. Does this offer a temporary escape or increase the cultural challenge by highlighting the contrast between the new culture and home? Do attempts to normalise the new culture amplify or reduce cultural challenge? Do some teaching and learning styles work better with international students than others? Finally, the impact of international students on host students is an area of nascent research and more understanding of this might resolve some of the tensions that can arise, leading to a better experience for both.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With thanks to the participants at our three university sites, and to Lesley Bennett at Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine for her time, generously given, to share her insights into the wellbeing of international students and suitable interventions to support their adjustment.

REFERENCES

Adler, P. S. (1975). The transitional experience: An alternative view of culture shock. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, *15*(4), 13-23.

Allport, F. H. (1954). The structuring of events: Outline of a general theory with applications to psychology. *Psychological Review*, *61*(5), 281.

Altbach, P. G. (2004). Globalisation and the university: Myths and realities in an unequal world. *Tertiary Education & Management*, *10*(1), 3-25.

Baron, L. (2006). The changing world of international students. *National Education Association*.

Barton, G., Hartwig, K., & Le, A. H. (2019). International Students' Perceptions of Workplace Experiences in Australian Study Programs: A Large-Scale Survey. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *23*(2), 248-264.

Bierwiaczonek, K., & Waldzus, S. (2016). Socio-Cultural factors as antecedents of cross-cultural adaptation in expatriates, international students, and migrants: A review. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022116644526

Birks, M., & Mills, J. (2011). *Grounded theory: A practical guide* (1st ed.). Sage Publications Ltd.

Bochner, S., McLeod, B. M., & Lin, A. (1977). Friendship patterns of overseas students: A functional model. *International Journal of Psychology*, *12*(4), 277-294.

Brown, L. (2008). The Incidence of Study-Related Stress in International Students in the Initial Stage of the International Sojourn. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *12*(1), 5-28. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315306291587

Brown, L. (2009). An ethnographic study of the friendship patterns of international students in England: An attempt to recreate home through conational interaction. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *48*(3), 184-193. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2009.07.003

Brown, L., & Holloway, I. (2008). The adjustment journey of international postgraduate students at an English university: An ethnographic study. *Journal of Research in International Education*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240908091306

Chien, Y.-Y. G. (2016). After six decades: Applying the U-curve hypothesis to the adjustment of international postgraduate students. *Journal of Research in International Education*, *15*(1), 32-51. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240916639398

Cho, J., & Yu, H. (2015). Roles of university support for international students in the United States: Analysis of a systematic model of university identification, university support, and psychological well-being. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *19*(1), 11-27.

Collins, H., & Callaghan, D. (2018). The role of Action Learning in supporting cross-cultural adaptation of international students. *Action Learning: Research and Practice*, *15*(3), 267-275.

Costello, J. (2015). Students' stories of studying abroad: Reflections upon return. *Journal of International Students*, *5*(1), 50.

Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *10*(3), 241-266.

Deloitte Access Economics. (2016). *The value of international education to Australia*. Australian Government Department of Education and Training Canberra.

Di Pietro, G. (2013). *Do study abroad programs enhance the employability of graduates?* Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit Institute for the Study of Labor.

Eriksson, P., & Kovalainen, A. (2015). *Qualitative methods in business research: A practical guide to social research*. Sage.

Forbes-Mewett, H., & Sawyer, A.-M. (2019). International students and mental health. *Journal of International Students, 6*(3), 661-677.

Freedman, E. (2010). Media, tourism, environment, and cultural issues in Australia: A case study of a study abroad program. *Applied Environmental Education and Communication*, *9*(2), 87-95.

Furnham, A. (2004). Education and culture shock. *Psychologist*, *17*(1), 16.

Gautam, C., Lowery, C. L., Mays, C., & Durant, D. (2016). Challenges for global learners: A qualitative study of the concerns and difficulties of international students. *Journal of International Students*, *6*(2), 501-526.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory Chicago. *Adeline, USA*.

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, *8*(4), 597-607.

Gullahorn, J. T., & Gullahorn, J. E. (1963). An extension of the U-curve hypothesis. *Journal of Social Issues*, *19*(3), 33-47.

Gullekson, N. L., & Tucker, M. L. (2013). An Examination of the Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Intercultural Growth for Students Studying Abroad. *Journal of the Academy of Business Education*, *14*.

Haslberger, A., & Brewster, C. (2007). *Domains of expatriate adjustment with special emphasis on work*. Cadiz University's VI. International Workshop on Human Resource Management, Jerez, Spain.

Hendrickson, B., Rosen, D., & Aune, R. K. (2011). An analysis of friendship networks, social connectedness, homesickness, and satisfaction levels of international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *35*(3), 281-295.

Jon, J.-E. (2013). Realizing internationalization at home in Korean higher education: Promoting domestic students' interaction with international students and intercultural competence. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *17*(4), 455-470.

Kim, J., Choi, J., & Tatar, B. (2017). English-Medium Instruction and Intercultural Sensitivity: A Korean Case Study. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *21*(5), 467-482. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315317720767

Kim, Y. Y. (1998). On theorizing intercultural communication. In *Theories in intercultural communication* (pp. 11-21). SAGE.

Kim, Y. Y., & Gudykunst, W. B. (1988). *Cross-cultural adaptation: Current approaches.* (Vol. 11). ERIC.

Kirschner, P. A., Sweller, J., & Clark, R. E. (2006). Why minimal guidance during instruction does not work: An analysis of the failure of constructivist, discovery, problem-based, experiential, and inquiry-based teaching. *Educational Psychologist*, *41*(2), 75-86.

Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Revolutions in qualitative research: From just experience to experiencing justice. *Journal of Thought*, *40*(4), 25-40.

Lincoln, Y. S. (2010). "What a long, strange trip it's been…": Twenty-five years of qualitative and new paradigm research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *16*(1), 3-9.

Locke, K. (2001). *Grounded theory in management research*. Sage.

Lysgaard, S. (1955). Adjustment in a foreign society: Norwegian Fulbright grantees visiting the United States. International Social Science Bulletin, 7, 45-51.

Marangell, S., Arkoudis, S., & Baik, C. (2018). Developing a Host Culture for International Students: What Does It Take? *Journal of International Students*, *8*(3), 1440-1458.

Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative researching* (2nd ed.). Sage.

McIntyre, J. C., Worsley, J., Corcoran, R., Harrison Woods, P., & Bentall, R. P. (2018). Academic and non-academic predictors of student psychological distress: The role of social identity and loneliness. *Journal of Mental Health*, *27*(3), 230-239.

Moghaddam, J. M. (2011). Perceived effectiveness of business internships: Student expectations, experiences, and personality traits. *International Journal of Management*, *28*(4), 287.

Montgomery, C., & McDowell, L. (2009). Social networks and the international student experience: An international community of practice? *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *13*(4), 455-466.

Nilsson, P. A., & Ripmeester, N. (2016). International student expectations: Career opportunities and employability. *Journal of International Students*, *6*(2), 614.

Oberg, K. (1960). Cultural shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments. *Practical Anthropology*, *7*(4), 177-182.

Pittaway, E., Ferguson, B., & Breen, C. (1998). Worth more than gold: The unexpected benefits associated with internationalisation of tertiary education. *Outcomes of International Education: Research Findings*, 61-72.

Ploner, J. (2017). Resilience, moorings and international student mobilities – Exploring biographical narratives of social science students in the UK. *Mobilities*, *12*(3), 425-444.

Revans, R. W. (2011). *ABC of action learning*. Gower Publishing, Ltd.

Richards, L., & Morse, J. M. (2007). *'Coding' a users guide to qualitative methods.* Sage.

Rosenthal, D. A., Russell, J., & Thomson, G. (2007). Social connectedness among international students at an Australian university. *Social Indicators Research*, *84*(1), 71-82.

Russell, J., Rosenthal, D., & Thomson, G. (2010). The international student experience: Three styles of adaptation. *Higher Education*, *60*(2), 235-249.

Sachrajda, A., & Pennington, J. (2013). Britain wants you! Why the UK should commit to increasing international student numbers. *Report Published by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR). Accessed January 8*, 2015.

Schartner, A., & Young, T. (2015). Culture Shock or Love at First Sight? Exploring the 'Honeymoon' Stage of the International Student Sojourn. In A. H. Fabricius & B. Preisler (Eds.), *Transcultural interaction and linguistic diversity in higher education: The student experience* (pp. 12-33). Palgrave Macmillan UK. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137397478_2

Seddoh, F. K. (2001). Internationalization of higher education: What for, how, and at what cost. *International Association of Universities Newsletter*, *7*(3), 1-3.

Soria, K. M., & Troisi, J. (2014). Internationalization at home alternatives to study abroad: Implications for students' development of global, international, and intercultural competencies. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *18*(3), 261-280.

Spencer-Rodgers, J., & McGovern, T. (2002). Attitudes toward the culturally different: The role of intercultural communication barriers, affective responses, consensual stereotypes, and perceived threat. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *26*(6), 609-631.

Spradley, J. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*.

Stonequist, E. V. (1937). *The marginal man: A study in personality and culture conflict.*

Strauss, P., U-Mackey, A., & Crothers, C. (2014). 'They drag my marks down!' – challenges faced by lecturers in the allocation of marks for multicultural group projects. *Intercultural Education*, *25*(3), 229-241.

Tomich, P., McWhirter, J. J., & King, W. E. (2000). International student adaptation: Critical variables. *International Education*, *29*(2), 37.

Torbiörn, I. (1982). *Living abroad: Personal adjustment and personnel policy in the overseas setting*. John Wiley & Sons.

Trower, H., & Lehmann, W. (2017). Strategic escapes: Negotiating motivations of personal growth and instrumental benefits in the decision to study abroad. *British Educational Research Journal*, *43*(2), 275-289. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3258

UNESCO. (2016). *Global flow of tertiary-level students*. http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow

Van Der Zee, K. I., & Van Oudenhoven, J. P. (2000). The Multicultural Personality Questionnaire: A multidimensional instrument of multicultural effectiveness. *European Journal of Personality*, *14*(4), 291-309.

Volet, S., & Jones, C. (2012). Cultural Transitions in Higher Education: Individual Adaptation, Transformation, and Engagement. In S. A. Karabenick & T. C. Urdan (Eds.), *Transitions across schools and cultures* (Vol. 17, pp. 241-284). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1108/S0749-7423(2012)0000017012

Wang, Y., Li, T., Noltemeyer, A., Wang, A., & Shaw, K. (2018). Cross-cultural adaptation of international college students in the United States. *Journal of International Students*, *8*(2), 821-842. DOI: https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v8i2.116

Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (1999). The measurement of sociocultural adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *23*(4), 659-677.

Ward, C., Okura, Y., Kennedy, A., & Kojima, T. (1998). The U-curve on trial: A longitudinal study of psychological and sociocultural adjustment during the cross-cultural transition. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *22*(3), 277-291.

Yeh, C. J., & Inose, M. (2003). International students' reported English fluency, social support satisfaction, and social connectedness as predictors of acculturative stress. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, *16*(1), 15-28.

Ying, Y., & Liese, L. H. (1991). The emotional well-being of Taiwan students in the US: An examination of pre-to post-arrival differential. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *15*(3), 345-366.

Yu, Y., & Moskal, M. (2019). Missing intercultural engagements in the university experiences of Chinese international students in the UK. *Compare A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, *49*(4), 654-671. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2018.1448259

Caroline Dailey-Strand, Hult Business School, San Francisco. After graduating from Liverpool John Moores University (U.K), Caroline undertook postgraduate study at Hult Business School in San Francisco. From an early age, Caroline was exposed to different cultures and this inspired her lust to move overseas. Since graduating from Liverpool she continues to work and study abroad. Email: carolinestra@gmail.com

Helen Collins, is a Senior Lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU). As Programme Leader of a Master's in International Human Resource Management, she has an interest in the pastoral care of international students. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9380-9025

David Callaghan, is a Senior Education Technologist at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, researching effective use of learning technologies and supporting delivery to students. He has an interest in using technology to amplify the voices of participants (tutors and students) via online discussion forums and peer review. He tweets at @dbcallaghan and @LSTMTEL. Email: David.callaghan@lstmed.ac.uk. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8918-3541

Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 13, Issue 4 (2021), pp. 85-100
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v13i4.2867 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

Finding a New 'Normal': Factors Affecting Resilience of Female Burmese International Students at a Chinese University

Aye Chon Chon Moe[a,b*]

[a]*Northeast Normal University, China*
[b]*Sagaing University of Education, Myanmar*

[*]Corresponding author: Email: aim0927@nenu.edu.cn.

ABSTRACT

Studying in a foreign country is a big challenge for many international students. They face many difficulties in adapting to an unfamiliar situation. Under such circumstances, they need good resilience to overcome and bounce back from these difficulties. This study aims to explore (i) the problems encountered by international Burmese female students while studying abroad and (ii) the factors contributing to their resilience to continue pursuing their graduate degrees. Four Burmese female students studying at one university in China were purposely chosen and interviewed for this study. Findings showed that they mostly encountered language and academic problems and psychological distress at the beginning of their studies, but they adjusted well and were able to overcome these problems. Moreover, both internal (e.g., optimism and self-confidence) and external factors (e.g., social support and religious practices) were important in the development of their resilience to survive in a foreign country and continue pursuing their graduate studies.

Keywords: China, external factors, international Burmese female students, internal factors, resilience

FINDING A NEW 'NORMAL': FACTORS AFFECTING RESILIENCE OF FEMALE BURMESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT A CHINESE UNIVERSITY

Currently, many students all over the world are choosing to study abroad to widen their horizons, gain international experience, and progress in their academic careers. Among the most popular destinations

Received July 1, 2020; revised August 22, 2020, December 17, 2020, January 16, 2021; accepted January 31, 2021; electronically published September 15, 2021

for international students in China. It stands as the third most popular destination after the United States and the United Kingdom since 2017 (Callan, 2020; Yan, 2017). Each year, the number of international students studying in China is rapidly increasing. Like international students in other countries, they face many difficulties in adapting to different cultures, languages, weather, foods, and social relationship styles. Resilience is an essential ability for all international students to bounce back from these difficulties. The resilience of a student in the university context is best conceptualized as a personality characteristic that moderates the negative effects of stress and promotes adaptation; it has been associated with increased psychological well-being (Pidgeon et al., 2014).

Higher education institutions have identified the characteristics of an at-risk student: racial and ethnic minorities, economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, the first generation to attend college, international students, women, non-traditional age students, athletes, and transfer students (Martin, 1991). Female international students in China meet several characteristics of at-risk students. They certainly struggle to survive as women in a foreign country with different gender norms than in their home countries. International students face many problems that arise from maladjustment when first living in a foreign country. However, students differ greatly from each other in adjusting to their new circumstances because a person's resilience level may vary according to different internal and external factors. Despite a large body of quantitative studies about the concept of resilience and factors affecting it, little attempt has been made to use a qualitative approach to understand them more deeply. A qualitative approach is suitable to explore more fruitful information thoroughly to achieve an in-depth understanding of the construct of resilience and the factors affecting it. It particularly addresses two specific shortcomings noted by resilience researchers: arbitrariness in selecting outcome variables and the challenge of accounting for the sociocultural context in which resilience occurs (Ungar, 2003).

Previous studies have primarily focused on resilience in children who are either deemed at risk or already experiencing trauma or psychopathology (Himmel, 2015). Little research has been done on resilience in healthy, emerging adult populations. Moreover, of the studies of resilience within college populations, very few have focused on female international students. Therefore, there is a need to investigate in greater depth to understand the factors affecting their resilience. This study explores (1) the problems encountered by international Burmese female students while studying abroad and (2) the factors contributing to their resilience through the interviews of four international female students studying at a university in China.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Resilience emerged as a concept in the literature on psychopathology in the early 1970s. It was conceptualized as a personality characteristic that remains stable (Himmel, 2015). In contrast, Bernard encouraged educators to think about resilience as an innate capacity that can be developed rather than a preexisting trait in some people but not all. An online brochure from the American Psychology Association (APA) in 2010 supported Bernard's thought: "Resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have. It involves behaviors, thought, and actions that can be learned and developed in anyone" (APA, 2010).

When coming from different cultures, international students cannot avoid culture shock and often face astounding difficulties (Pruitt, 1978). While all students entering higher education institutions have to cope with the myriad new facets of the educational environment, the majority of international students have to deal with additional challenges such as language (Le et al., 2016), academic, and social problems.

International students in China mainly face language, academic, social (Mohsin & Naseem, 2018; Sumra, 2012), and emotional problems (Mohsin & Naseem, 2018).

Language problems also indirectly increase the workload burden of international students (Okusolubo, 2018). International students studying in non-English speaking countries may encounter two types of language problems. The first one is a lack of confidence in their English ability. It is a common problem inevitably encountered by international students who are studying either in English-speaking (Andrade, 2006; Lin & Scherz, 2014) or non-English-speaking countries (Nwokedi & Khanare, 2020) including Asian countries (Lee, 2017; Yu et al., 2019). They feel inadequate in their English ability when communicating with others both inside and outside the classroom. The second one is a lack of knowledge of the local language of the host country. It creates a gap in communicating with local people for international students in China (Mohsin & Naseem, 2018). Most universities provide Chinese language courses for them, but they are less effective (Yang & de Wit, 2019) and can provide minimal linguistic skills (Zhu & Ma, 2011). International students have suggested that host universities should provide much more time for language learning (Sumra, 2012).

Another problem is the academic problem concerned with the curriculum gap, different teaching styles, and communication with their professors. These realities create a stressful situation and make it difficult for them to achieve their academic goals. Moreover, socialization is also a common problem faced by international students in China (Sumra, 2012). International students' behaviors, values, and social interaction styles may vary because they come from quite different cultures and circumstances (Wang, 2009). Even the normal behavior, actions, and gestures often used within a country sometimes lead to misunderstanding in a new social context.

Emotional and mental health problems, such as depression, psychosomatic complaints, and anxiety, have been found to be more common than physical effects for international students (Le et al., 2016). International students who leave their families, friends, and home country to pursue a degree often experience ups and downs as part of the process of cultural adjustment (Subhan et al., 2015). As they adapt to a new social and academic environment, they are susceptible to psychological distress, and consequently, they are likely to experience mental health problems. One study found depressive symptoms in international students in China (Liu et al., 2016).

FACTORS AFFECTING THE RESILENCE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDNETS

An Atlanta-based consulting firm, Organizational Development Resources (now Conner Partners, 2001) concluded that resilient persons were positive about life and themselves; flexible in thoughts and social relations; and could be described as concentrated, organized, and proactive. In addition to internal factors, the development of a person's resilience includes environmental or external influences, such as social support, spirituality, and religious practices. Previous literature on this subject describes two main agents affecting resilience: intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

Intrinsic Factors Affecting Resilience

- ***Optimism*** is a strong predictor of resilience in university students (Dawson & Pooley, 2013; Himmel, 2015). Optimistic people believe that they can overcome inevitable obstacles in the future and that setbacks are only temporary (McIntosh & Shaw, 2017). There is an interactive relationship between optimism and resilience of international students (Sabouripour & Roslan, 2015).

- ***Goal-setting*** is a process that promotes purpose and agency. Goals direct and sustain people's energies toward performing a particular action and achieving a successful outcome. Resilient students have high expectations and goals concerning their academic future (Cavazos et al., 2010; McMillan & Reed, 1994; Splan et al., 2011).
- ***Self-confidence*** is a positive belief that one can generally accomplish what one wishes to do in the future (Zellner, 1970). People with strong self-confidence can effectively and efficiently solve everyday life problems and overcome many barriers that would otherwise delay or prevent them from achieving their goals. Rutter (1985) stated that resilience is characterized by several related elements: self-esteem, self-confidence, self-efficacy belief, and adaptation (p.608).
- ***Self-control*** is the ability to wait longer or delay gratification to achieve a better, more positive outcome in the future (McIntosh & Shaw, 2017). It is an essential characteristic of the development of resilience. People who can control their emotions are unflappable and calm even when they face stress in their daily life.
- ***Endurance and persistence*** are needed to overcome obstacles and complete work successfully. Endurance is the personal strength and fortitude that one possesses to withstand unpleasant or difficult situations without giving up (Taormina, 2015); according to the Oxford English Dictionary, persistence is the act of adhering to an opinion or course of action despite difficulty or opposition. A combination of both abilities is required to be a resilient person.

Extrinsic Factors Affecting Resilience

- ***Perceived social support*** is a person's perception of physical and emotional care received from family, friends, and significant others. Social support significantly impacts the resilience of international students (Sabouripour & Roslan, 2015). International students with lower resilience levels have reported lower perceived social support (Pidgeon et al., 2014). One's social network is a student's fortress: it plays a vital role in their well-being and their decisions to accomplish their goals in college (Mullen, 2008). Family support results in high expectations and encourages students to pursue their academic goals and expectations. International students whose parents strongly encourage their academic goals are resilient (Cavazos et al., 2010). Moreover, having a strong network of good friends supports the spiritual strength of students when facing adverse circumstances (Mullen, 2008).
- ***Spirituality and religious practices***: Spirituality is the human experience of discovering meaning, purpose, and values, which may or may not include the concept of a god or transcendent being (Prest & Keller, 1993). It can assist people in overcoming conditions caused by stress and protect them when facing depression. Religion plays a vital role throughout the lifespan and may be particularly important when people confront stressful life experiences (Park, 2005). Studies indicate that religious practices have a positive correlation to a person's general well-being and enhance their resilience (Ellison et al., 2009; Javanmard, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In the present study, a qualitative research design was used to deeply and comprehensively explore the problems encountered by female international students in China and how they navigate them.

Qualitative research can explain a particular phenomenon under investigation (Marshall & Rossman, 1989) and uncover the nature of experiences related to a social phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Participants

A total of eight international students from Myanmar including the researcher are currently studying at a Normal University in China. There is one, male, Master's level student and seven, female, doctoral candidates. Among them, four female Ph.D. students were purposely chosen following these criteria: (i) participants must be female, (ii) they must be pursuing a Ph.D. degree, and (iii) the medium of instruction must be English. All are scholarship students and had already been in China for three years at the time of this study. The participants' true names have been anonymized with the following nicknames: Tresa (28), Sophie (29), Ame (29), and Rosy (38). Tresa and Sophie are majoring in Education and were formerly senior teachers at high schools; Ame and Rosy are majoring in Science and were university teachers in their home country.

Data Collection

Based on previous literature regarding the resilience of international students, a semi-structured interview guideline was designed to elicit the participants' perspectives on the problems they encountered during studying abroad and the factors influencing their resilience. The researcher constructed the questions carefully to ensure that they reflected the participants' own experiences related to their problems and factors affecting their resilience. First, general questions such as, "What kind of problems did you encounter while studying abroad?", "How did you handle these problems?", and "What factors motivated you to return to your normal condition after escaping from the stress and problems?" were asked to get a wide scope of their answers. Based on their answers, specific follow-up questions were asked. The individual face-to-face interviews were conducted in their native language, Burmese. Each interview lasted 60 minutes and was audio-recorded and transcribed. These transcribed interviews were then checked three times for accuracy to avoid losing and missing data. During the interview sessions, the researcher encouraged the participants to share their experiences and feelings by prompting them with responses such as, "Yes, of course, next?", "Anything else?", and "Would you tell me more about that?".

Data Analysis

The process of accurately analyzing the data is critical for any research study. It involves determining the meaning of the information by looking for themes, commonalities, and patterns to make sense of the information (Guion, 2001). To analyze the data collected through these interviews, the researcher applied the thematic analysis approach in which the researcher identifies, organizes, and develops themes and principal categories to condense content into key ideas. The data were analyzed according to the phases identified by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, the researcher read the transcript of each interview at least three times to become familiarized with the data and gain an initial impression of themes in the responses. The researcher then elicited the meaningful responses and discarded the irrelevant ones from each transcribed interview. After generating codes for each meaningful unit, the researcher clustered codes that share a unifying feature and put them into two main themes named: (i) the problems encountered during studying abroad, and (ii) the factors affecting their resilience. Each theme was then subdivided into smaller categories for a more granular and comprehensive understanding of the data. Afterward, the words from the participants' responses were coded into psychological terminology.

RESULTS

The results from interviews of four female international students were discussed in two main themes: (i) the problems encountered during studying abroad, and (ii) the factors affecting their resilience. The data for each theme has been purposely categorized into subthemes for clarity and easy comprehension. The first main theme was divided into three subthemes: (a) language problem, (b) academic problem, and (c) psychological distress. The second main theme was divided into two subthemes: (a) intrinsic factors affecting resilience, and (b) extrinsic factors affecting resilience.

Theme 1: Problems Encountered During Studying Abroad

(a) Language Problem

In this study, participants encountered both English and Chinese language problems. Regarding the first, they described their experiences in detail. In their home country, the official language is Burmese and English is a foreign language. Therefore, communication in English is not common for most people from Myanmar. Sophie reported this situation: "English was a challenge to me before. Back then, my speaking skill was poor to have even a normal conversation. Listening skill was poor as well, but better than speaking. So, it was difficult to participate in classroom discussions."

Similarly, Ame admitted her poor skill in speaking: "I already studied four skills of English in my country before studying here. But I think I did not have enough practice with speaking and listening."

Rosy shared her weak English skills impacted her interactions with other students: "Because of my poor skills, I did not want to communicate with other students, I always avoided their eye contact because I was afraid to speak with them."

It appears that they faced English language problems at the beginning of their studies. In particular, they were weak in listening and speaking rather than reading and writing. Related to the Chinese language problem, Sophie expressed her experience:

> I missed the flight on the way to the university from my own country. Almost all instructions at the airport were in Chinese. Moreover, most of the staff there could not understand and speak English well. Therefore, I could not ask them for any information.

Ame said that she struggled in public settings when shopping, going to the medical clinic, and traveling because she had very limited Chinese language proficiency. Likewise, Tresa attested to her own struggles with the language barrier when seeking out services in China:

> The worst thing was when we got sick and need to go to the hospital, the staff there could not speak English. So, I had to always ask for help from a Chinese friend who can speak both languages. But we should not ask help from others many times.

Host universities in China provide a basic Chinese course as a compulsory subject for all new international students in which they have to learn only daily Chinese conversations mostly used in public places. Due to its character-based writing system and tonal nature, the Chinese language is a relatively difficult foreign language for most learners. Samimy and Lee (1997) found that speaking Chinese is more difficult than understanding (listening). The process of language acquisition requires significant time and effort. Rosy reflected on her tribulations learning Chinese: "I think it was the most difficult language in the world. I could not communicate with others in Chinese well until now even though our university gives Chinese language courses."

All participants were studying their respective majors in English as a medium of instruction. Although they struggled with English at the beginning of their study abroad experience, they had more

difficulties using Chinese. According to their statements, a basic Chinese language course was not sufficient for them to become proficient enough to communicate with local people.

(b) Academic Problem

International students often experience linguistic, cultural, instructional, and academic challenges (Lin & Scherz, 2014). When they come into a new academic environment, they experience different teaching-learning styles and curriculum gaps. In this study, all participants faced each kind of academic problem despite their different majors.

Rosy, a Cell Biology major, shared that she confronted some difficulties because of the curriculum gap; there were some curriculum and syllabus differences between her home country institution and Normal University. Ame, who is majoring in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, described a similar problem: "I could not handle the machines well in the laboratory here. Honestly, the universities in my home country mostly provided lectures, and thus, we had less exposure to using machines."

The other problem was "supervisor" (faculty advisor) involvement in their academic progress. Three of the participants spoke about their difficulties in this area. Rosy noted:

> My supervisor is an American citizen, a mixed American-Chinese. He stayed in China just for a few months per year. Even during his stay, I did not have enough time to discuss my research progress because he was always busy with his other work.

Similarly, Tresa stated her academic difficulty related to her faculty advisor and her dissertation:

> My supervisor and I had different research interests because we are from different fields of interest (backgrounds). So, we have many arguments in choosing my research topic and I felt like I lost my way at the beginning of the journey.

(c) Psychological distress

When people encounter a new intercultural situation, such as living in a foreign country for the first time, they may feel uncomfortable. Consequently, their self-confidence and ability to navigate daily life decline gradually. These symptoms can cause stress, anxiety, and depression. Ame attested to experiencing these feelings during her studies:

> My big problem was unfamiliarity with new machines and techniques. I failed, again and again, although I tried to get the expected result in my experiments. I felt things were not going through as I expected and then hopeless, stressed, and depressed at that time.

Sophie described two stressful events that impacted her during her studies:

> The first one was my proposal defense time. I felt overwhelmed before this defense and felt like I was carrying a heavy burden on my head. There was nothing in my mind all the time: while eating, walking, and talking with others, but the proposal defense.

Indeed, the proposal defense process can be a source of stress for many graduate students who must complete this requirement. Sophie also mentioned another serious event that had a traumatic impact on her:

> It was the first day of snowfall in my life. I was enjoying the view of the outside world through the window. Suddenly, I saw a girl on the 15th floor of the opposite building, who was stepping out of the window. Suddenly, she jumped down right in front of my eyes. I was shocked. Consequently, I was interrogated by police three times as a witness. It was a very stressful time for me.

Except for this traumatic event that Sophie witnessed, most of the participants in this study indicated that they experienced mental problems caused by academic rigors related to their dissertation and work on experiments.

Theme 2: Factors Affecting Their Resilience

Factors affecting the resilience of female Burmese international students: intrinsic and extrinsic factors, will be discussed here. Participants' responses showed that the intrinsic factors affecting their resilience were optimism, goal-setting, self-confidence, self-control, endurance, and perseverance and they contributed to their persistence in continuing their degrees at their host universities.

(a) Intrinsic Factors Affecting Resilience

Optimism

Participants in this study commented that an optimistic attitude helps them to release stress and overcome difficulties. Tresa stated: "Life is too short. It is a gift for everyone. Therefore, we have to go on whatever. I often tried to remind myself that nothing lasts forever."

Similarly, Ame also expressed her tendency toward optimism: "I had heard an English proverb, "Every cloud has a silver lining". I realize that difficult times always lead to better days. Every negative situation has the potential to produce something positive."

Likewise, the other two participants shared that they believe adverse circumstances are not permanent and can even benefit them. All participants in this study were accepting of both good and bad things that happened to them and believe in the promise of a bright future.

Goal-setting

Participants in this study had clear and realistic goals. They considered that they were responsible for their dreams and goals. Tresa shared the following reflection about her goal of studying abroad one day: "Studying abroad was one of my dreams. I love to touch with different cultures and customs. So, I was always looking for opportunities to study abroad."

She also described her plans for after she graduates and returns to her home country:

> I wanted to share what I learned here with all the ones who have the same interest as me. Furthermore, I wanted to improve my country's education system like other developed countries. I hope my knowledge gained from studying here could contribute to it somehow.

Likewise, Sophie said that her goal to earn her degree abroad gives her the courage to overcome the challenges of her academic work. All participants had a dream of studying abroad. They were interested in gaining international experience. Moreover, after completing their studies in China, they would like to contribute to the good of their home country. According to their statements, goal orientation plays a significant role in overcoming difficulties when studying abroad.

Self-confidence

Self-confidence is an individual's trust in his or her own abilities, capacities, and judgments, or belief that he or she can successfully face day-to-day challenges and demands (Psychology Dictionary Online). Even when people face adversity, those with self-confidence believe they can do their best and tackle any problem. Tresa shared how success during her undergraduate studies engendered her self-confidence: "I had been chosen to study in Thailand among many students by a scholarship program in my bachelor student life. Since that time, I believe I can do it. I was motivated to try for any scholarship program."

Ame illustrated her own self-confidence and determination in the following quotation: “I would continue to reach my destination enduring all obstacles. I believe that I can get the benefits from my effort.”

Similarly, Sophie asserted her self-confidence as a means to overcoming adverse situations: “I thought I had enough ability to get a life that I want. I could deal with any problem.”

Participants in this study possessed high self-confidence. They believe that self-confidence is an essential tool to achieve their academic goals.

Self-control

Self-control is an essential tool to become a resilient person who can control their emotions and remain calm even when facing the daily pressures of life. On this topic, Tresa shared the following reflection:

> When I felt stressed, I tried to forget anything and stop trying to solve it out. Then, I tried to recall the good things I had done before and the good time I had with my family, relatives, and friends.

Rosy commented on how she exercises self-control and copes with stress by absorbing herself in her studies: “When I felt very stressed, I always channeled my mind into my work and took more effort to forget everything that made me stressed.”

In this study, Sophie was the only participant who witnessed a traumatic event that caused emotional distress. She admitted that for many months she dared not look at the building across the way from her home where the suicide occurred. Sophie also said that after the incident she sometimes dreamt of jumping to her death from a building. She explained how she was able to cope with the emotional distress she suffered after the event and eventually overcome her fear:

> Later on, I decided to face my fear. I told myself that everyone must die and it is just a matter of time. In the daytime, I pulled the curtain and looked at that building. I told myself that Okay, Sophie, I need to be familiar with that view, and I must decondition the effects of that suicide event. It was like I forced myself to get rid of fear, using the ideas of Pavlov’s classical conditioning theory. Now, this memory was no longer a bitter one.

Participants in this study demonstrated self-control when faced with challenging situations during their study abroad experience in China. They knew how to effectively and efficiently handle stressful events. Their statements depicted self-control as an essential skill for overcoming stressful events and obstacles.

Endurance and Persistence

All participants in this study attested to their own experiences enduring adversity, overcoming obstacles, and progressing toward their goals. Ame averred: “I never thought to give up my study here. No one urged me to go to study abroad. It was just my choice.”

Similarly, Rosy also decisively declared her conviction to persevere in her studies:

> My sole aim of coming here was to complete a Ph.D. degree and contribute to my country. Why I give up! Even though I encountered many obstacles on my academic way, I tried to remove them and continue my work.

Despite many difficulties, they continued to pursue their academic goals without hesitation as Sophie attested:

> When I felt stressed, I wanted to give up my study. But this thought did not last long. I did nothing special to get rid of it. I just sat in silence and sang a song. Then, I braced myself by saying that I must complete my Ph.D. anyhow

Based on their responses, participants in this study resolved themselves not to give up on their academic goals. They appeared to be emotionally strong and determined to complete their Ph.D. programs.

(b) Extrinsic Factors Affecting Their Resilience

Social Environment

Family

Although some research has found that international students carry parents' expectations when they study abroad, most participants in this study did not discuss family involvement as a factor in continuing their studies. Only one participant, Sophie, described the importance of family support in helping her reach her academic goals:

> I always made video calls with my family members every night, especially my mother and my little sister. Whenever I felt disappointed in something here, I always told my sister. She was like my friend. She always helped, comforted me, and could give good advice.

Friends

Participants in this study stated that during their academic program they received much support from their friends, especially those from their home country. On this topic of friendship, Sophie remarked: "I had many countrymates studying together at my university. One of them got close to me and became like my own sister. We were interdependent with each other and went through both good and hard times together."

Tresa also commented on the importance of her network of friends: "When I had a big problem and cannot move on if I cannot solve it, I often tried to consult with my friends first because I thought they can understand my feelings."

Other participants stated that they usually told their friends about their difficulties, which helped relieve stress and anxiety. Ame explained how studying with classmates from her home country mitigated homesickness: "Studying together with many countrymates at the same university may be a kind of support. I did not feel lonely even though we were staying away from our families."

All participants usually utilized their in-country friend network to vent their stress and cope with the challenges of studying abroad.

Spirituality and Religious practices

Spirituality and religious practices are factors in helping people deal with adversity and attain resilience. Tresa discussed her own religious practices:

> When things did not go in their way, I worshipped our Lord Buddha. It was like I left it for God to solve and let Him find the way for me because I did not know what to do and how to go on.

Ame commented on how religion and meditation help her cope with stress: "For me, I got more involved in religious habits than usual whenever I felt stressed. I worshipped to Buddha, followed His teachings, and meditated to calm me down."

Rosy also described how her religion informs how she lives her life:

> According to our religious belief (Buddha's teachings), being a human is a rare and invaluable thing in the world. Every person might die in a short time. So, we should forget bad memories, live happily, and do for the good of the world and humans as much as we can.

All participants in the study engaged every day. They believed that their religion supports them and helps them to improve their confidence.

DISCUSSION

Findings showed that female Burmese international students in China mostly encountered language and academic problems that caused psychological distress. All participants in this study encountered both English and Chinese language difficulties. At the beginning of their studies, they had limited proficiency in listening and speaking English, although they had high proficiency in reading and writing. Hnin (2017) also consistently found that Burmese students were not strong in listening and speaking English, but had confidence and proficiency in reading and writing (p.25). Although the Chinese language is less of a barrier in the academic context, it was a significant challenge for Burmese international students when communicating with people in the local community, such as in shopping and clinical settings. Ding's (2016) study on international students studying in China also found that they would encounter significant difficulty communicating in public settings if they could only speak English as a foreign language (p.14). Lack of proficiency in speaking the local language is a big challenge that makes international students feel stressed and insecure when living in a community in a foreign country (Lee, 2017; Nwokedi & Khanare, 2020). It has been found to have a detrimental effect on cross-cultural adaptation (Hsiaowen & Chang, 2011).

When international students transition to a new academic environment, they often experience different teaching-learning styles and curriculum gaps. All participants in this study faced each kind of academic problem despite their different majors. Students majoring in science encountered some difficulties in doing experiments such as lack of foundational knowledge; less exposure to specific machines and their differences, and limited involvement from their faculty advisor during the research process. A student majoring in education, on the contrary, rarely faced this problem. Only one participant stated that she and her supervisor had some arguments in choosing her dissertation topic.

Participants in this study often faced stress, anxiety, and depression. Interestingly, unlike previous studies (Ding, 2016: Zhu & Ma, 2011), the psychological distress they experienced was caused by academic problems rather than other typical stressors such as social relationships. When they faced difficulties in their academic work, they felt anxious about whether they would be able to reach their academic goals.

Factors contributing to the participants' resilience during their study abroad experience were also explored in this study. In an intercultural context, a person needs to possess internal strengths and also leverage environmental or external factors to become a resilient person. Participants reported that the intrinsic factors facilitating their resilience were optimism, goal-setting, self-confidence, self-control, endurance, and perseverance.

Optimism contributes to international students' ability to bounce back from adverse circumstances that arise when adjusting to a new environment. Participants in this study shared the optimistic belief that problems are just temporary and every success that is born from adversity is valuable. Even when suffering from physical and mental problems, they remained hopeful about achieving their academic goals. ODR (2001) stated optimism as a characteristic of resilience and people who view the world optimistically can see opportunities in a difficult situation; find solutions to problems, and create positive change (p.4). From the results of this study, it can be concluded that female, Burmese, international students possessed an optimistic view of the challenges they faced in adjusting to a new environment.

Goal-setting is essential to be a resilient person (Colzato, Szapora, Pannekoek, & Hommel, 2013). Resilient students have clear and realistic goals (Leak, 2003). All participants in this study reported their dreams about their academic goals and their eagerness to serve their country. Moreover, they affirmed that they have the responsibility and commitment to endure and solve every problem they encounter because they chose to study abroad. Their goals seem to remind them to not give up easily on their studies despite many challenges in the academic setting.

Although goal-setting is crucial in academic success, the self-belief that one can accomplish those goals has been found to be more important (Cavazos et al., 2010). Participants in this study considered self-confidence to be an essential tool to overcome adverse circumstances and achieve their academic goals. Moreover, they believed that they are capable of creating the life that they want. Leak (2003) found that resilient students felt that they were successful because they opted to work hard to accomplish their academic aims (p.32). They felt good about their abilities and prospects and gave credit to themselves.

Moreover, self-control facilitates the process of cultural adjustment and achievement of academic goals for international students. Resilient people believe that their internal and external worlds are controllable (Kumpfer, 1999). This sense of control allows them to maintain order and structure in their lives. In this study, participants revealed that they could control themselves to overcome physical and mental problems that emerged inside and outside the academic setting in their daily life. Moreover, they claimed that self-control was an essential skill to overcome stressful events and achieve their goals. They handled their problems in various ways, such as recalling good memories; channeling their efforts into their work; and motivating or encouraging themselves.

Other internal characteristics possessed by participants in this study were endurance and persistence. Gandara (1995) argued that hard work, effort, and persistence play a more vital role than intelligence in academic achievement (p. 83). In this study, participants could withstand difficult situations studying and living in China without feeling discouraged or demoralized. Despite many challenges, they did not falter and persevered to reach their goal.

Extrinsic factors, such as perceived social support and spirituality, and religious practices, were also featured in this study. There is a strong link between resilience and perceived social support because the latter contributes to one's ability to navigate adversity (Pidgeon et al., 2014). Moreover, people with high levels of social support have been found to be 40 percent to 60 percent more resilient than those with low levels of social support (Herrman et al., 2011). Aligning with the findings of Sabouripour and Roslan (2015), participants in this study described how social support helped them deal with their academic and emotional problems. Interestingly, most of them acknowledged that they received much social support, especially from their friends but not necessarily from their families.

Previous studies have found that people cope with difficulties more effectively when they have someone with whom they can share their daily struggles (Garmezy, 1991). Having friends with the same academic and social values has empowered international students to achieve their goals (Mullen, 2008). Similarly, participants in this study embraced opportunities to seek out support from their friends. They usually only vented to their friends, especially their home-country peers at the same university, rather than their friends back in Myanmar. Moreover, they consulted their friends when trying to solve problems in both their personal and academic life. Indeed, having a network of home country peers at the same university can be a valuable support to international students during their study abroad experience.

Religion and spirituality played a role as resilience factors in helping people deal with adversity (Ellison et al., 2009; Javanmard, 2013); Sossou et al., 2008). All participants in this study possessed a strong religious orientation and valued their involvement in practicing spirituality. Worshiping and praying to Buddha is a habitual practice for them. However, most of them became more active in their religious activities when faced with adversity. They followed the teachings of Buddha; put them into practice in their daily lives; and meditated when they felt stressed. They believed that such practices calmed their mind and helped them deal with difficulties. It seems that religious teachings instill a moral compass, self-reliance, and an optimistic outlook on life; they helped participants in this study realize the value of life and karma. Moreover, the religious foundation helped them to become resilient people who can endure and overcome difficulties in their daily lives.

In conclusion, the female, Burmese, international students in this study were optimistic about the world; had self-confidence and believed in themselves; and possessed future academic orientation. Moreover, they could control themselves to stay focused on achieving their academic goals without hesitating or feeling demoralized by challenges. These intrinsic factors contributed to their persistence in continuing their degrees at Normal University in China. In terms of extrinsic factors, they received social support from their friends and strength from their religious beliefs. These results highlighted that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors significantly helped international students to be resilient. McMillan and Reed (1994) also claimed that the development of resilience involves a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The results from this study suggest that international students need to cultivate their internal strengths; seek involvement in a social network and respective religion; find additional incentives to motivate them to work on areas of concern to raise their resilience level.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDIES

There may be three limitations in this study. The first one was a small sample size. This study explored the perspectives of only four international students. If future studies involve more participants than this study, they may yield a more generalized figure related to factors affecting resilience.

Secondly, this study was conducted only on international students studying at a university in China. Each culture has its barometer for measuring traumatic life events (Smith, 1985). Therefore, what is stressful in one culture or to one individual will not necessarily be distressing to another. Moreover, factors influencing resilience can vary according to the different demographic and socio-economic backgrounds of a participant group. If future studies are conducted in other countries with different cultural contexts, other kinds of problems and factors affecting resilience may appear.

Finally, this study chose only scholarship students as participants. Other types of students such as self-financed students, students who are taking loans and paying some, if not all, of the cost of their education and working simultaneously while studying, may experience more pressure to succeed. Future researchers should choose self-financed international students as their participants to receive different information about the problems and factors contributing to resilience during a study abroad experience.

REFERENCES

Andrade, M. S. (2006). International students in English-speaking universities: Adjustment factors. *Journal of Research in International Education, 5*(2), 131-154.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

Callan, Q. (2020, June 16). *China MOE moves to close int'l student loophole*. The Pai News. https://thepienews.com/news/china-gov-international-student-loopholes/

Cavazos, J., Johnson, M. B., Fielding, C., Cavazos, A. G., Castro, V., & Vela, L. (2010). A qualitative study of resilient Latina/o college students. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, *9*(3), 172–188. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431003761166

Colzato, L. S., Szapora, A., Pannekoek, J. N., & Hommel, B. (2013). The impact of physical exercise on convergent and divergent thinking. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, *7*(DEC). DOI: https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2013.00824

Dawson, M., & Pooley, J. A. (2013). Resilience: The role of optimism, perceived parental autonomy support and perceived social support in first year university students. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, *1*(2). DOI: https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v1i2.137

Ding, X. (2016). Exploring the experiences of international students in China. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *20*(4), 319-338. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315316647164

Ellison, C. G., Burdette, A. M., & Hill, T. D. (2009). Blessed assurance: religion, anxiety, and tranquility among US adults. *Social Science Research*, *38*(3), 656-667. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2009.02.002

Gandara, P. (1995). *Over the Ivy Walls : the Educational Mobility of Low-Income Chicanos.* State University of New York Press. https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=3406958

Garmezy, N. (1991). Resiliency and vulnerability to adverse developmental outcomes associated with poverty. *American Behavioral Scientist*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764291034004003

Gordon, P. S. (2016). *Psychosocial interventions in end-of-life care. The hope for a "good death".* Routledge.

Guion, L. (2001). *Conducting an in-depth interview*.

Herrman, H., Stewart, D. E., Diaz-Granados, N., Berger, E. L., Jackson, B., & Yuen, T. (2011). What is resilience? *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, *56*(5), 258-265. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/070674371105600504

Himmel, J. P. (2015). The understanding and promotion of resilience in college students. *Antioch University New England*, *77*(4-A(E)), 101. http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2016-37857-237&authtype=sso&custid=s8993828&site=ehost-live

Javanmard, G. H. (2013). Religious Beliefs and Resilience in Academic Students. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *84*, 744-748. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.06.638

Kumpfer, K. L. (1999). Factor and processes contributing to resilience: The resilience framework. *Resilience and Development: Positive Life Adaptations*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/b108350

Hnin, O. K. (2017). Comparing English learning of university students in Japan and Myanmar. *Nihon Naika Gakkai Zasshi*, *106*(11). DOI: https://doi.org/10.2169/naika.106.Contents11

Le, A. T., LaCost, B. Y., & Wismer, M. (2016). International female graduate students' experience at a midwestern university: Sense of belonging and identity development. *Journal of International Students*, *6*(1), 128-152.

Lee, J. S. (2017). Challenges of international students in a Japanese university: Ethnographic perspectives. *Journal of International Students*, *7*(1), 73-93.

Leak, J. (2003). A qualitative study of resilience among African-American adolescent male students in North Carolina. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 199-199. http://search.proquest.com/docview/305314469?accountid=14902%5Cnhttp://lib6.wsulibs.wsu.edu:8888/sfx_local?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:dissertation&genre=dissertations+&+theses&sid=ProQ:ProQuest+Dissertations+&+Theses+A&I&atitle=&

Lin, S., & Scherz, S. D. (2014). Challenges facing Asian international graduate students in the US : Pedagogical considerations in higher education. *Journal of International Students*, *4*(1), 16-33.

Liu, Y., Chen, X., Li, S., Yu, B., Wang, Y., & Yan, H. (2016). Path analysis of acculturative stress components and

their relationship with depression among international students in China. *Stress and Health*, *32*(5), 524-532. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/smi.2658

Martin, D. (1991). Project Good Money. In R. C. Morris (Ed.), *Youth at-risk: A resource guide* (pp. 69-70). Technomic.

McIntosh, E., & Shaw, J. (2017). Exploring the positive case for resilience. *Student Resilience Book*, *May*, 46. http://www.unite-group.co.uk/sites/default/files/2017-05/student-resilience.pdf

McMillan, J. H., & Reed, D. F. (1994). At-Risk students and resiliency: Factors contributing to academic success. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.1994.9956043

Mohsin, M., & Naseem, S. (2018). International students confront the problem studying in China: a review from Liaoning Technical University. *European Journal of Research*, *1*(2), 17–38. DOI: https://doi.org/10.26739/2521-3253-2018-1-2-2

Mullen, K. P. (2008). *Social and Academic Factors that Contribute to Resiliency for At-Risk Students in Georgia Universities*.

Organizational Development Resources [now Conner Partners]. (2001). ODR personal resilience profile feedback. (Available from Conner Partners, 1230 Peachtree St., Suite 1000, Atlanta, GA 30309)

Okusolubo, G. S. (2018). Academic and social challenges faced by African international students in Collegiate institutions in America. *International Journal of Economics & Management Sciences*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4172/2162-6359.1000514

Park, C. L. (2005). Religion as a Meaning-Making Framework in Coping with Life Stress. *Journal of Social Issues*, *61*(4), 707-729. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2005.00428.x

Pidgeon, A. M., Rowe, N. F., Stapleton, P., Magyar, H. B., & Lo, B. C. Y. (2014). Examining characteristics of resilience among university students: An international study. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, *02*(11), 14-22. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2014.211003

Prest, L. A., & Keller, J. F. (1993). Spirituality and family therapy: Spiritual beliefs, myths, and metaphors. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, *19*(2), 137-148. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.1993.tb00973.x

Pruitt, F. J. (1978). The adaptation of African students to American society. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *2*(1), 90-118. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(78)90030-5

Rutter, M. (1985). Resilience in the face of adversity. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, *147*(6), 598-611. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.147.6.598

Sabouripour, F., & Roslan, S. B. (2015). Resilience, optimism and social support among international students. *Asian Social Science*, *11*(15), 159-170. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v11n15p159

Samimy, K. K., & Lee, Y.. (1997). Beliefs about language learning: perspectives of first-year Chinese learners and their instructors. *Journal of Chinese Teachers Association*. *32*(1), 40-60.

Smith, E. M. J. (1985). Ethnic minorities. *The Counseling Psychologist*, *13*(4), 537-579. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000085134002

Sossou, M. A., Craig, C. D., Ogren, H., & Schnak, M. (2008). A qualitative study of resilience factors of Bosnian refugee women resettled in the Southern United States. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, *17*(4), 365-385. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/15313200802467908

Splan, R. K., Brooks, R. M., Porr, S., & Broyles, T. W. (2011). Resiliency and achievement goal orientation among agricultural students. *NACTA Journal*, *55*(4), 31. https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?auth=shibb&url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edo&AN=71940182&site=eds-live&scope=site

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques. In *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques.* Sage Publications, Inc.

Subhan, M., Amat, S., Abu Bakar, A. Y., Zainal Abidin, M. H., Ahmad Faisal, R., Tohirin, & Kamin, A. H. (2015). Level of resilient among international students in public higher education institutions in Malaysia. *Scientific Journal of PPI-UKM*, *March*, 181-188. http://www.indjsp.org/text.asp?2017/33/2/148/209186

Sumra, K. B. (2012). Study on adjustment problems of international students studying in universities of The People's Republic of China: A comparison of student and faculty/staff perceptions. *International Journal of Education*, *4*(2), 107. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5296/ije.v4i2.1181

Taormina, R. J. (2015). Adult personal resilience: A new theory, new measure, and practical implications. *Psychological Thought*, *8*(1), 35-46. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5964/psyct.v8i1.126

Ungar, M. (2003). Qualitative contributions to resilience research. *Qualitative Social Work*, *2*(1), 85-102. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325003002001123

Wang, J. (2009). A study of resiliency characteristics in the adjustment of international graduate students at American universities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *13*(1), 22-45. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315307308139

Wang, M. (2011). Adjustment challenges for East Asian international students. Master's Thesis. New York: The State University of New York.

Yan, H. (2017). *China named third most popular destination of overseas students.* https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d516a4d33636a4d/share_p.html?t=1488377994590

Yang, Z., & de Wit, H. (2019). International students in China: Facts, paths, and challenges. *International Higher Education*, *97*, 18-20. DOI: https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2019.97.10945

Yu, B., Bodycott, P., & Mak, A. S. (2019). Language and interpersonal resource predictors of psychological and sociocultural adaptation: International students in Hong Kong. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *23*(5), 572-588. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315318825336

Zellner, M. (1970). Self-esteem, reception, and influenceability. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1037/h0029201

Aye Chon Chon Moe, is a final year doctoral student at Northeast Normal University, China. Her major is Developmental and Educational Psychology and her research interest areas are resilience and creativity. She am now an assistant lecturer at Department of Educational Psychology, Sagaing University of Education, Myanmar and has 4 years' experience as a university teacher. Email: mayjunemoe21@gmail.com. ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0813-7653

Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 13, Issue 4 (2021), pp. 101-117
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v13i4.2833 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

Challenges Of The Re-Entry Experiences Of Returning Saudi International Students After Studying Abroad

Naif Daifullah Alsulami[a*]

[a]*Umm Al-Qura University, Saudi Arabia*

[*]Corresponding author: Email: ndsulami@uqu.edu.sa

ABSTRACT

This research aims to describe the challenges of Saudis' re-entry experiences returning to Saudi Arabia after studying abroad. The total number of participants in the research was 21, consisting of 13 male and eight female participants returning from studying in the U.S., U.K., and Australia. With semi-structured individual interviews, the overall findings of this study showed that the returnees experienced some socio-cultural challenges that eventually dissipated over time and few educational challenges related to their work field. Implications of the findings and directions for future research are provided.

Keywords: international education, re-entry experience, returing home, studying abroad, Saudi international students

INTRODUCTION

Returning home after studying abroad is the most common type of re-entry found in the literature. In fact, there is no specific agreed definition explaining what 're-entry' is. Researchers (such as Westwood et al., 1986) defined re-entry from psychological viewpoints. They defined re-entry as:

> the continuum of experience and behaviours which are encountered when an individual returns to a place of origin after having been immersed in another context for a period of time sufficient to cause some degree of mental and emotional adjustment. (p. 223)

This definition specifies some level of acculturation in the host culture, both behavioral adaptation and psychological adjustment, to influence the stage for re-adaptation and re-adjustment upon returning home.

Received October 8, 2020; revised November 2, 2020; accepted January 17, 2021; electronically published September 15, 2021

Without some acculturation to the host environment, students re-entering their home environment might not face re-entry issues. Merely skipping along the surface of another culture, for example as a tourist, would not provoke re-entry issues. Immersion is what sets study abroad apart from other forms of travel and contributes to the complexity of re-entry (Gray & Savicki, 2015). Similarly, Arthur (2003) defined re-entry as 'a psychological process rather than physical relocation home' (p. 174). On the other hand, other researchers defined re-entry from a sociological perspective. Adler (1981), for instance, defined re-entry as a 'cross-cultural re-adjustment as one transitions from a foreign culture back into one's home culture' (p. 343). Likewise, Jung, Lee and Morales (2013) conceptualised re-entry experiences more in terms of a cultural re-adjustment process.

Few published research studies on re-entry experience have been conducted by scholarship sponsors or the like. Szkudlarek (2010) and Young (2014) deemed that issues related to re-entry experience to home countries are as crucial as those associated with the host country while studying abroad. This issue is often neglected in academia.

One part of the re-entry experiences is exploring the re-entry challenges for returning Saudi international students after studying abroad. The significance of this research is obvious, especially with particular reference to the participants in this study. Although the recent statistics showed 140,000 Saudis studying internationally, mostly in English speaking countries such as the U.S., the U.K. and Australia (Ministry of Education, 2018), little is known about what challenges Saudi returnees experience upon returning home. This research is therefore significant for both the Saudi government and Saudi returnees in order to explore the issues of re-entry and help returnees re-adapt smoothly to their home culture. Moreover, this research is also significant for returnees' parents, educators, and businesses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Compared to the initial adjustment process of international students in their host countries, some researchers (such as Larson, 2006; MacDonald & Arthur, 2004) have argued that returning international students experience greater difficulties and challenges upon returning home. Nevertheless, many studies in the literature on international education have focused on the challenges experienced by international students during studying abroad. Yet challenges experienced by returning international students after returning home continue to be neglected in academia (Arthur, 2004; Young, 2014).

As noted, in the literature about re-entry experiences, most of the studies conceptualise the re-entry as a negative experience. It has been described as 'difficult' (Rogers & Ward, 1993), 'grieving' (Butcher, 2002; Chamove & Soeterik, 2006; Lester, 2000), 'painful' (Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010), 'problematic' (Brabant, Palmer, & Gramling, 1990), 'shocking' (Gaw, 2000; Thompson & Christofi, 2006), and even 'traumatic' (Pritchard, 2011). Most of the re-entry challenges explored in the literature could be classified into two main types: psychological re-adjustment challenges and socio-cultural re-adjustment challenges. Both of these terms are further reviewed in the following sections.

Psychological Challenges: Reverse Culture Shock

The psychological challenges are mainly termed as 'reverse culture shock' or psychological symptoms of reverse culture shock, such as grief, anxiety, interpersonal difficulties, fear, and a sense of helplessness and frustration (Butcher, 2002; Christofi & Thompson, 2007; Gill, 2010; Pritchard, 2011; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010). Uehara (1986) defined reverse culture shock as the 'temporal psychological difficulties returnees experience in the initial stage of the adjustment process at home after

having lived abroad for some time' (p. 420). Although some researchers describe reverse culture shock as somehow similar to culture shock (Gaw, 2000), it seems to be more severe because 'it comes at a time that the returnees believe that life is finally going to go back to normal and they discover that there is actually no going back' (Malewski, 2005, p. 187). It is indeed an unexpected phase experienced by returnees. Surprisingly, reverse culture shock has drawn the attention of scholars as early as 1944, when Schuetz, a sociologist and philosopher, investigated reverse cultural adjustment in returning armed forces veterans (Gaw, 2000). However, little research has been done on reverse culture shock (Christofi & Thompson, 2007). Therefore, reverse culture shock still needs much more attention.

Previous research has demonstrated that returnees experienced reverse culture shock or psychological symptoms of reverse culture shock upon returning home after staying abroad (Alandejani, 2013; Dettweiler et al., 2015; Hadis, 2005). Hadis (2005), for instance, explored the cluster of experiences that 536 returning students of the U.S. went through, both during studying abroad and immediately after returning home. It was found that 62.8 percent of the participants 'agreed' or 'very much agreed' with the following statement: 'When returning from studying abroad, I experienced reverse culture shock in the United States. Similarly, Dettweiler et al. (2015) conducted a study about the re-entry experiences of German students after six months of expeditionary learning program overseas. The findings from surveying 56 students showed that all participants experienced reverse culture shock. Moreover, Alandejani's (2013) dissertation, which examined the transformation stories of six female Saudi assistant professors who returned to Saudi Arabia after studying in the U.S. and the U.K., revealed that all the participants experienced reverse culture shock upon returning home.

Many researchers confirm that returnees also experience some psychological symptoms, like feeling anxious, less relaxed, stressful, grief and disillusionment, as a result of reverse culture shock (Butcher, 2002; Christofi & Thompson, 2007; Gill, 2010; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010). Wielkiewicz and Turkowski (2010), for instance, investigated the impact of studying abroad on the interpersonal relationships of 669 returnee American students. The results of their quantitative online survey showed that students scored significantly on a re-entry shock scale, reflecting their skepticism towards their home culture. They were also more likely to consume alcohol, and women who had studied abroad reported being less able to cope with anxieties, feeling less relaxed and more stressed in their relationships with a significant other. Moreover, Gill (2010) conducted an in-depth, qualitative case study and narrative interviews with eight participants (five females, three males) returning to China either directly or after a couple of years of working in the U.K. The purpose of Gill's study was to explore the individuals' overall experiences of homecoming. The findings showed that all participants experienced anxiety after returning home, primarily about their families' expectations for them to find work. Furthermore, Butcher's (2002) study examined the grief experiences of East Asian students returning to their countries of origin after studying in New Zealand. The results showed that their re-entry involved the loss of friends, overseas experiences and ways of life in the host country, giving rise to a type of grief that he termed 'disenfranchised', because it was viewed as illegitimate and was incapable of finding acknowledgement. Additionally, due to the sense of frustration, some returnee students reported that they wanted to return to their host country. In a qualitative phenomenological study, Christofi and Thompson (2007) interviewed eight students from different countries who studied in the U.S. and then returned home, they asked participants to describe their re-entry experiences in their home country and whether they could go home

again. They found that the returnees had less desire to go back home again, which illustrates the difficulties and frustrations experienced by many re-entering their home culture.

It is noticeable that returnees to their home culture after living abroad experienced reverse culture shock regardless of the extent of the status of their original culture. Studies indicated that individuals from developing countries experienced reverse culture shock upon their re-entry to their developing environment, as Butcher (2002) showed in samples of students from East Asia. On the other hand, individuals from developed countries also experienced reverse culture shock upon their re-entry to their developed environment, as Hadis (2005) and Wielkiewicz and Turkowski (2010) showed in samples of students from the U.S.

Despite the fact that returnees experience reverse culture shock regardless of the development status of their home culture, literature shows that returnees experience reverse culture shock differently. The high or low level of reverse culture shock is subject to different variables such as personality of returnees, the availability of support services for returnees, and the cultural context of returnees. For instance, Gaw (2000) conducted a study examining reverse culture shock of 66 U.S. college students returning from overseas. The findings from the surveys showed that participants who experienced a high level of reverse culture shock reported problems that are more personal and retiring than those who experienced a low level of reverse culture shock. Moreover, a negative correlation was found regarding reverse culture shock and student support services. As the service usage decreases, reverse culture shock increases. Additionally, Leung et al. (2014) assessed the existence and severity of reverse culture shock in 42 music therapy professionals from the Asia Pacific Rim area who returned home after formal music therapy training in the United States. The findings showed that participants experienced low levels of reverse culture shock during the re-entry to their home country. Hence, the personality of the participants in this study and their job as professional therapists might have assisted them not to experience high levels of reverse culture shock.

Furthermore, Jandová (2014) conducted a study to examine reverse culture shock in Czech students returning from the U.S. by distributing questionnaires to 35 respondents. The study revealed that Czech students encountered reverse culture shock because they encountered a major surprise regarding the differences in behaviors and attitudes of both Americans and Czechs. Perhaps the historical backgrounds of Czech citizens and their general temperament as timid and shy people are what is considered as a big difference (Jandová, 2014).

The question that could be raised here is: what is the duration of reverse culture shock? The researcher did not find any study that specified the duration of reverse culture shock. However, what is expected is that reverse culture shock is not something that returnees will experience interminably. They will eventually re-adjust themselves to their home countries, although with some problems and difficulties. In a study conducted by Welsh (2015) exploring various long-term effects of reverse culture shock among 206 overseas alumni at a land grant institution, it was found that the long-term effects of reverse culture shock did not exist. However, the majority of the respondents did experience short-term impacts of reverse culture shock that dissipated over time. However, this study did not clarify the meaning of long-term and short-term effects.

Although most of the research findings show that returnees experienced reverse culture shock upon returning home, some other studies indicate that reverse culture shock is not something that was always present. This can be seen, for example, in a study conducted by Pritchard (2011) that examined a number

of Asian students' re-integration after studying in the West. The participants included 12 Taiwanese and 15 Sri Lankan graduates. The findings did not show any evidence of re-entry trauma or reverse culture shock in the psychological sense. However, it revealed some socio-cultural difficulties associated with tension between Eastern philosophy and Western philosophy, such as modernism and traditionalism, or individualism and collectivism. A similar phenomenon is found in Gill's (2010) study investigating the effects of studying abroad on Chinese students after returning home. The findings from the interviews with eight returnees showed that none of the participants considered the re-adjustment to China as a shock. However, they confirmed that what students experienced was some unexpected difficulties in daily life.

To conclude this section, most of the literature indicated that returnees experienced reverse culture shock regardless of the status of their home culture. However, the severity or low level of reverse culture shock are subject to different factors mentioned in this section. The literature did not determine the duration of reverse culture shock. On the other hand, this section showed that some returnees did not experience reverse culture shock in the psychological sense; rather it is about socio-cultural challenges resulting from living across cultures. These socio-cultural re-adjustment challenges will be explained in the following section.

Socio-cultural Challenges

Returnees to their home culture after living abroad experience socio-cultural challenges, as while studying abroad part of their cultural identity might have changed, modified or developed. However, upon their re-entry they experience challenges related to living between two different cultures. Existing literature shows that returnees undergo some socio-cultural re-adjustment upon returning home. These challenges differ from person to person and from culture to culture. This includes conflicting values, challenges with third-culture kids, and challenges with cultural norms.

Conflicting values

Casinader (1986) classified values into two main types:

> material values which is related to acquisition of physical objects that are considered important such as house, car, money and fashionable clothes. The second one is spiritual values which is related to feelings and or states of mind and body that are considered important such as happiness, good health and education. (p. 2)

Both types of values can be closely linked. For instance, the desire to own your own house (material) could be a direct result of the wish to have a general sense of security (spiritual).

It is acknowledged that there are common values between all cultures, either material such as house and money, or spiritual such as happiness and good health. However, there are also culture-based values. For instance, religious values are highly appreciated within Saudi culture and have great impact on Saudi people (Alkhidr, 2011; Ibn Sonitan, 2008). On the other hand, religious values might not have high status in secular or liberal societies. In the case of returnees, it is hypothesised that they acquire new values as result of living in a different culture. Upon their re-entry, these new values might be misread by people of the home culture and not accepted. As stated by Bhabha (1994),

> the problem of cultural interaction emerges only at the significator boundaries of cultures, when meanings and values are (mis) read or signs are misappropriated. Culture only emerges as a problem, or problematic, at the point at which there is a loss of meaning in the contestation and articulation of everyday life, between classes, genders, races, nations. (p. 50)

Previous literature showed that returnees experienced some challenges in terms of conflicting values between themselves and their fellow citizens who have never been abroad (Brown & Graham, 2009; Gray, 2014; McNair, 2014; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010). For instance, Brown and Graham (2009), in their study about discovering the self through the academic sojourn, found that their qualitative study showed that all participants described themselves as more culturally aware and more confident. However, they had difficulty re-adapting to their home culture as they were stuck between different cultures and sets of values. Similarly, the study by Wielkiewicz & Turkowski (2010) confirmed returnees experienced conflicting values and looked toward their home culture with suspicion. On the other hand, Gray's (2014) study contradicted with a line of results that returnees experience conflicting values in the re-entry. The participants of this mixed methods study were 81 U.S. university students who spent time studying abroad and returned to the U.S. The study found that the challenges were not related to the clash with the U.S cultural values upon their re-entry. Rather, they were personal challenges.

McNair's (2014) study provided a major reason for why returnees experience conflicting values and challenges upon re-entry. He used multiple qualitative and visual methodologies, including in-depth interviews, auto-ethnography, photo and object elicitation, and portrait photography with eight repatriates who either studied or worked overseas for more than four months and returned to the U.S. The findings showed that returning home after spending time abroad often provides returnees with a new, hybrid identity, which is complicated and unpredictable. It is noticeable from the above-mentioned studies that they indicated conflicting values as one of the re-entry challenges. However, they did not specify which values are in conflict with which. Detailing these values is mainly context-based, depending on the values of both the host culture and home culture of returnees.

Challenges with 'Third Culture Kids'

'Third culture kids' is a term used to refer to children who are raised in a culture outside of their parents' culture for a significant part of their developmental years (Benjamin & Dervin, 2015). While the vast majority of literature focuses on returnees' challenges, there are not many details about family members accompanying them during their stay overseas, particularly about their children. However, some data sheds light on children's re-entry experiences. The existing data show that these returnees also face certain difficulties in their re-adjustment. This can be seen for example, from one part of the findings of the afore-mentioned Alandejani's (2013) study, in which she found that parents expressed their worries and sadness for their children, as they had to struggle to re-adjust to their home culture. In the case of this study, 61 per cent of the participants in this study (n=13) were married and had their children with them abroad and experienced the re-entry together. It would be interesting to know whether they mention anything about challenges with third culture kids.

Challenges with Cultural Norms

Previous research has demonstrated that returnees experienced some challenges with cultural norms upon re-entry. They became more critical and suspicious toward their (heritage) cultural norms. Kartoshkina (2015) explored the re-entry experiences of U.S. college students who participated in a semester or one-year in a study abroad program and then returned to U.S. This study revealed that participants missed the host country's cultural environment. They were unable to communicate or share their experiences with people who had not been abroad, and they became critical towards the U.S. cultural norms. Similarly, Walling et al. (2006) conducted a study to explore the relationship between cross-cultural re-entry and cultural identity in 20 undergraduate college students who participated in short-term

international mission trips. The findings of this study showed that participants mostly reported negative reactions to their home culture. In particular, they became critical of U.S. cultural norms, including hospitality, pace of life, sexuality, and spirituality in the U.S. culture. In addition, they experienced personal anger and desire to dis-identify with their home culture.

It is interesting to note that the above-mentioned studies (Kartoshkina, 2015; Walling et al., 2006) were conducted on a sample of the U.S. returnees. Like returnees throughout the world, they too experience challenges with cultural norms, meaning that the host culture affected them upon their re-entry. Therefore, the idea that globalization (movements across cultures here) is a two-way process, not simply from the West to the rest, and is confirmed here (Barker, 2012; Eckersley, 2007; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). However, what about Saudi returnees who have a more complicated culture in terms of norms and traditions? (AlMunajjed, 1997; Baki, 2004). Do they experience challenges with cultural norms upon re-entry? A gap was found in the literature in this regard, and this study aims to fill the gap in the literature about whether or not Saudi returnees talked about challenges with cultural norms.

METHODOLOGY

The objective of this research was to gain in-depth understanding of how Saudis returning to Saudi Arabia from studying abroad described the challenges of their re-entry. In order to achieve this objective, this study seeks to answer the following research question: *What challenges do Saudi returnees experience upon returning home?*

This study was theoretically underpinned by a constructivist paradigm (Darlaston-Jones, 2007; Flick, 2006; Miller & Glassner, 2004) employing a qualitative case study (Stake, 2005, Yin, 2014). The procedures for recruiting participants were conducted in a number of ways, such as meeting with some key people in Umm Al-Qura University, emailing, and communicating via WhatsApp messenger. The total number of participants in the study was 21 Saudi returnees, consisting 14 male and eight female participants returning from studying in the U.S., U.K., and Australia. These 21 returnees are currently at the academia at Umm Al-Qura University in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Face-to-face semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with all male participants. However, due to the gender segregation policy in Saudi Arabia (Alhazmi, 2015; Alhazmi & Nyland, 2015; Van Geel, 2016) individual interviews with the female participants occurred via video conferencing.

Approval to conduct this research was obtained from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC). Before conducting the interviews, the researcher emailed the consent form as well as the explanatory statement to each potential participant. The consent form described confidentiality and compensation information, as well as the assertion that participation is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the project at any time if they choose to, without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way. The potential participants were given time to read the form and to ask any question, either by email or phone. If the potential participants consented to participate in the study, they needed to sign the form and return it to me as the researcher. Then, the time for the interview was organized. The explanatory statement contained information about the purpose of the research, the possible benefit, the time required of the participants, expected inconvenience/discomfort concerns, and other related issues. All participants were given a numerical and gender code to protect their privacy.

I developed a good rapport by introducing myself and explaining the protocol and the statements of confidentiality, consent, options to withdraw, and the use and scope of the results. It was important to

show the participants that I was listening, attentive and interested in what they had to say, and that they could continue talking. There are several ways of putting interviewees at ease such as incorporating small talk, smiling and nodding, sharing personal stories like how long it took to drive to the site, or asking them to say a little about themselves. It is essential for the interviewees to feel comfortable, so that they were willing to cooperate with me. Moreover, I briefly explained my project and reminded the interviewees that their answers are confidential, that there are no right or wrong answers, and none of the interviewees will be identifiable from the interviews.

All interviews were recorded with participants' consent, subject to transcription to English by the researcher. The data analysis was conducted in four phases. In the first, after conducting the interviews in the Arabic language, the researcher transcribed it verbatim, word by word, into a document written in Arabic. In the second phase, the researcher translated the Arabic document into English. The third phase incorporated cross-analysis of the data, that is, the interpretation and creation of themes by the researcher. Here, I adopted a thematic content analysis approach. One common method for analysing qualitative data is to reduce the content of a large body of data to a smaller number of central themes or patterns (Patton, 2002; Stake, 2005).

Demographic Information About Participants

The following table (Table 1) summarises participants' demographic information. Note that each participant has been given a numerical and gender code to secure their privacy and make it easier for readers to recognise each participant. For example, F1 refers to a female participant number one, M1 refers to a male participant number one, and so on.

Table 1: Demographic information about participants

Participant name	Age	Marital status	Period of study abroad	Host country	Time since return	Employed/ unemployed upon return
1) F1	33	Single	4 years	Australia	4 years	Unemployed
2) F2	29	Single	2.5 years	U.S.	3 years	Unemployed
3) F3	31	Single	5 years	U.K.	3 years	Unemployed
4) F4	43	Married	7 years	Australia	2 years	Unemployed
5) F5	30	Married	10 years	U.S.	8 months	Unemployed
6) F6	29	Single	3 years	Australia	3 years	Unemployed
7) F7	40	Married	9 years	U.K.	2 years	Employed
8) F8	29	Married	5.5 years	U.K.	9 months	Employed
9) M1	39	Married	6 years	U.K.	8 months	Unemployed
10) M2	39	Married	8 years	Australia	3 years	Employed
11) M3	42	Married	7 years	Australia	4 years	Employed
12) M4	37	Married	7 years	U.K.	4 years	Employed
13) M5	44	Married	6 years	Australia	5 years	Employed
14) M6	37	Married	8 years	U.S.	8 months	Employed
15) M7	34	Married	5.5 years	Australia	2.5 years	Employed
16) M8	38	Married	6 years	Australia	4 years	Employed
17) M9	36	Married	6 years	U.K.	4 years	Employed
18) M10	30	Married	3 years	U.S.	9 months	Employed

19) M11	30	Married	2 years	U.K.	7 months	Employed
20) M12	37	Married	6 years	Australia	6 months	Unemployed
21) M13	35	Married	7 years	U.K.	4 years	Employed

FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Two main themes emerged from the interviews with the 21 participants including socio-cultural challenges and educational challenges. The first main theme is related to four socio-cultural challenges experienced by participants, which include conflicting values and obstacles between the returnees and the rest of the society in terms of time management, caring about appearances, and the value of education. It is followed by portraying challenges with issues of third culture kids. The discussion is then followed by giving detail on the specific social challenge in Saudi Arabia called "Wasta" or favouritism, appearing as a result of the participants' good status in their careers. Last, but not least, is the bureaucracy issue. Following the first sub-theme is a discussion of the educational challenges provided in the second main theme, including their workloads as faculty members, pedagogy and curricula challenges, and students' academic standards.

The Socio-cultural Challenges

In this section, the researcher grouped for sub-themes emerging from the data as socio-cultural challenges. The first two sub-themes involve the challenges of conflicting values and obstacles for the third culture kids. The other two sub-themes are closely related to the context of Saudi culture and might not have been experienced by returnees from other cultures, such as challenges of Wasta and challenges of bureaucracy. These classifications are in line with the idea that some of the challenges experienced by returnees were related to cultural issues as result of the tension between modernity versus traditionalism, and individualism versus collectivism (Pritchard, 2011).

Challenges of Conflicting Values

This section discusses a sub-theme mentioned by five participants about some of the values that they have acquired from studying abroad. However, after returning home these values conflicted with their home culture's values, such as in terms of time management (mentioned by one participant), caring about appearances (mentioned by one participant) and the value of education (mentioned by three participants).

One participant, M7, discussed a conflict he experienced concerning time management. He found it as an advantage and a challenge at the same time:

> Time management is one of the advantages of studying abroad. However, it is a challenge at the same time. I become more organised when I have a monthly and weekly timetable but unfortunately people here do not appreciate that. Sometimes they call me to attend some social events on the same day but when I say "sorry I can't come" they become angry because they think I am an arrogant man, but it is not true!

Another participant, F4, expressed another conflicting value related to a phenomenon she found after returning to Saudi Arabia where many females tend to value trivial material things, such as their bags, sunglasses, dress, and shoes. Whereas she sees that these values are different from her own values, appreciating knowledge and wisdom more than material objects. She was quite frustrated as she found that many women did not really listen to what she thought and said about these values.

M8, M11, and F2 reported that they experienced a dilemma between their attitude to value learning and education and the unfair fact that values common to the home society regarding education were merely about getting the certificate.

> What I notice is that people are not interested in education nor to be educated for the benefit of their country. They just learn to get the certificate and for the pride of their family and friends. The evidence is that when they obtained the PhD they stop learning and stop doing research (M11).

There are many points that can be learned by looking towards the values that create challenges for Saudi returnees, such as time management, education value and caring about appearances. It can be clearly seen that these three values are considered as theoretically important values in Saudi culture, based on Islamic teachings (Al-Bukhari, 1997). However, in practice, these values are not sufficiently appreciated (e.g. time management and education value) or are sometimes exaggerated and misused (e.g., caring about appearance). By re-analyzing the interview transcripts of the five participants who mentioned their conflicting values as one of the re-entry challenges, it was found that most of these conflicts were related to clashes with current practices of Saudi culture that misapplied Islamic values. For instance, M7, who suffered from bad time management in Saudi Arabia, seems to be a very well-organized person as he was the only participant preparing himself for the re-entry (M7 interview). M8, M11, and F2 seem to be deeply appreciative of the educational values they gained from the host countries (M11, F2, and M8 interviews). Thus, they suffered from their relatives not appreciating education. F4 seems to be the most serious and practical participant as she participated in most of the activities that were organized by either the university or Saudi students' association while studying abroad. However, she complained about some people who were not practical and only cared about their appearance (F4 interview). This finding supports Gary's (2014) study, which found that most of the returnees' challenges are personal and not related to the clash between cultures (See 2.8.2.1). However, this finding seems to contradict previous studies by Brown and Graham (2009) and Wielkiewicz and Turkowski (2010). These studies revealed that returnees expressed skepticism towards their own culture after returning home. A possible explanation of why Saudi returnees did not show skepticism is because they might know that these values are also important in Saudi culture. However, the real problem seems to be that these values were agreed in theory but were not demonstrated in practice. An implication for this result is that returnees should work to summon and encourage people to implement the genuine Islamic values such as time management, caring less about appearances, and the value of education. They should be patient in facing any denial or resistance from people who have not had similar experiences of living abroad and returning home.

Challenges with Third Culture Kids

As discussed in section 2.2.2, 'third culture kids' is a term used to refer to children who are raised in a culture outside their parents' culture for a significant part of their developmental years. This section discusses the sub-theme of third cultural kids as an issue mentioned by seven married participants when they talked about challenges faced by their children who grew up in different cultures and then returned to Saudi Arabia. The participants stated that their children experienced trouble with Arabic language after returning from abroad. The children used to speak the English language in the host country but after returning to Saudi, they found the reality extremely different. During their formal education at schools, everyone speaks Arabic only. English instruction is only applied in a few international schools located in certain cities such as Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam.

The following extract illustrates what M3 mentioned in this context:

> After returning to Saudi Arabia, the most significant challenge I faced was my children. My son studied from the prep to grade four in Australia. When he returned to Saudi Arabia, he did not understand Arabic.

Similar issues were expressed by F7, M1, M6, M10, and M13, who reported that their children experienced this challenge, particularly in terms of language and schools:

> After returning, we faced the barrier of language with our children. My son used to speak English only. When we were in the U.S., we were happy as our child spoke English fluently. We did not concentrate on Arabic. Upon returning, he did not speak a word of Arabic, so it was a problem. He joined an international school in Jeddah and achieved some simple improvement in his Arabic language but was still facing problems with reading and writing (M6).

To deal with this challenge, participants tried to put their children into international schools, although that particular kind of school is not available in every city in Saudi. As mentioned by M13, he could not find such an international school in Mecca. M1 also talked about the same problem, as he could not find an international school for his son. Therefore, he hired a private teacher to teach his son in his house for an afternoon class:

> The problem is that my son did not like school. He returned from Britain with the ability to speak Arabic but with difficulty in expressing certain idioms. Therefore, I had to bring in a private teacher of Arabic every afternoon.

On the other hand, M4 narrated that his daughter did not have any problems in understanding Arabic after returning home as she used to study in a Saudi school in Britain that taught students in both Arabic and English.

The findings of this sub-theme show that seven of the participants stated issues associated to third culture kids. It can be said that Saudi returnees could not pay great attention to their kids while studying abroad as they were busy with their studies. In my experience, parents were happy to see their kids speaking English fluently, perhaps better than themselves. These kids were spending years abroad without understanding Arabic. Upon their re-entry, parents and their kids were surprised about the school environment and faced difficulties in re-adjustment. This finding confirms the study results of Alandejani (2013), mentioning that returning parents expressed their sorrow as they saw their children face difficulties in their re-adjustment. Based on these findings, the researcher would suggest policy makers provide affirmative support for returnees who return with their children by helping these kids to re-adapt easily. It would be very important for the parents themselves to prepare their children before returning home by focusing on and teaching them Arabic – the official language of education in Saudi Arabia.

Challenges with Wasta (Favouritism)

This section discusses a sub-theme related to Wasta, another challenge faced by six participants upon returning home because of their newly acquired identity as university teaching staff. 'Wasta', or favouritism, refers to using one's connections and/or influence to get things done, including government transactions such as for managing a quick renewal of a passport, waiving of traffic fines, and being hired for or promoted in a job. M1 and M4 stated that their relatives approached them for Wasta because of their position at a university:

> My relationship with my relatives has changed greatly. They have become closer to me. I do not know whether to name it 'excessive respect' or 'hypocrisy'. I am the same person as before scholarship. Is it because of getting the Ph.D.? I find many people approach me or need me in a "Wasta" because I work at university (M1).
>
> I noticed that more people approached me to do favours for them at university or mediate for them. In addition, there are people who never called me before but now they call me regularly and ask

> for difficult services, or illegal ones. It is a challenge for me because my tribe thinks that I can do anything at university. Really, it is tiring (M4).

M5, M10, and M11 experienced a dilemma in regard to Wasta as they learned from their experiences during study abroad that this kind of practice is ethically unacceptable. They tried to avoid Wasta but then failed:

> The problem is that I have learnt in the West that the priority is towards the qualification and I should divide myself between my personal emotions and my job. However, here in Saudi it is very difficult, I tried but I failed because I feel I am alone, even with some people I know have studied abroad – they use Wasta even more than those who have not gone to study abroad because they have become more powerful, especially after getting their Ph.D. (M10).

Regarding the Wasta phenomenon, M2 argued that Wasta is becoming widespread in Saudi culture for two reasons: religious and cultural. He claimed that there might be some misconceptions in the way people interpret the verses of the Holy Quran, particularly in the case of Quran's encouragement to help relatives and friends. It is also because of Saudi culture, which puts special emphasis on the importance of family ties and tribes. Some people simply understand that we need to help our family members or relatives in any way or by any means.

The findings in this sub-theme have also not been previously described in the literature. This is mainly related to the impact of social factors in Saudi Arabia. Having the privilege of obtaining international qualifications and high positions in the university, six of the participants have been asked by their relatives, neighbours or friends for various illegitimate favours, such as helping the admission of unqualified students, employing their relatives or friends in their institutions, and other illegal services. The participants responded to this favouritism in two ways. They either accepted this view, which basically contradicted the values they gained from studying abroad (i.e. qualifications, professionalism, merit), or refused the Wasta despite being labelled by their relatives and neighbours as an unhelpful person. The finding in this sub-theme supports a previous argument presented by Ibn Sonaitan (2008) in his book *Saudi Arabia: politicians and tribe*. He argued that although returnees from studying abroad usually take high positions in the country, they failed to supplement the national culture to benefit from the West in establishing sustainable development for the country. Rather, they establish consumer behaviours and practise Wasta to employ their family members and relatives. To conclude, this finding indicates that social factors in Saudi Arabia are double-edged swords. While it helps returnees to be happy about their re-entry and to re-adapt smoothly, it has also been misused in terms of Wasta. Therefore, it would be very important to increase the awareness of the society about the dangers of breaking the rules and using Wasta. This study might encourage the Saudi government to pass some laws to criminalise Wasta practices.

Challenges with Bureaucracy

Alamri (2011) argued that bureaucracy is one of the main obstacles in higher education management in Saudi Arabia. He further adds that it is a contradictory phenomenon in many Saudi universities, where most deans have been educated internationally but they have failed to eliminate the issues of bureaucracy. In this sub-theme, six participants talked about certain practical challenges they faced upon returning home, including bureaucracy. Most of them reported that they had difficulties in dealing with bureaucracy. As M1 complained:

> Bureaucracy was another challenge in government transactions. I found it very difficult. I expected many things to change during the six-year scholarship period, but they remained the same. To be honest, there are changes but they are so slow.

Other participants, like M10 and F8, provided a further example of how slow the services provided by the bureaucracy were. They experienced a long delay for their monthly salary to be paid and a delay in their promotion as assistant professors:

> Of the problems I faced at university after starting work, the worst was salary delay. I stayed about eight months without any salary due to bureaucratic procedures, transactions, documents, etc., (M10)

F4, F7, and M8 talked about bureaucracy as a challenge. They sometimes compared this experience with what they used to experience abroad, where almost everything was completed electronically. However, they now need to use lots of paper in their dealings with the university documents. The process of managing so much paperwork takes longer to be approved.

The findings of this sub-theme have not been previously mentioned in the existing literature. Six of the participants talked about bureaucracy as a challenge. For instance, they experienced the delay of receiving their monthly salary or their promotion to be assistant professors after obtaining their PhDs. This challenge might be related to the common mindset that returnees share to compare the advanced situation in their host country to the not-so-advanced situation in their home country. During their study abroad, participants experienced quick and efficient processes for most services as the systems are electronically based (F4 and F7, interviews). However, after returning home, they found a different situation as they have to submit most administrative papers manually. One implication from the findings of this sub-theme is that the government should eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic procedures, especially in universities, that cause the delay of returnees' salaries and promotions. The returnees, however, are recommended to start applying new systems in higher education in Saudi Arabia based on their international experiences and to provide such suggestions to policymakers in order to eliminate obstacles in bureaucracy.

Educational Challenges

As all the participants of this study are returnees who are working in academia, it is not surprising that all of them talked about some educational challenges after returning home. These challenges include their workloads as faculty members (as mentioned by five participants), pedagogy and curricula challenges (as mentioned by eight participants), and students' academic standards (as mentioned by two participants).

M1, M2, M4, M7, and M9 talked about their challenges with teaching burdens. M7, for instance, reported his surprise of having to deal with the fact that he had to teach a large class consisting of more than 65 students in a classroom. He had never seen this in the university where he studied abroad. As a result, he felt that he could not really tackle his class well. Other participants, M5, M8, and F3, talked about pedagogy and curricula challenges. M8, in particular, complained about the old curriculum used at his university. He was wondering how a book written in the 1970s could still be used today:

> One of the challenges I faced is the old curricula. When I returned from Australia, I found a subject name "Geography of Topology"; this book was published in 1971. I know that the geography of topology does not change but science is developing and renewable. I called them out on the age of the curricula. Unfortunately, some professors still have old ideas although they have studied abroad.

In addition to this old reference, participants also mentioned challenges related to the mismatch between the curricula and what the society needs in the field. Mostly, participants such as M5, M12, F3, F4, and F8 considered the curricula they had as 'traditional', showing many gaps between teachers and students. The teachers are powerful in the eyes of their students. Students cannot really discuss matters with the teachers, as M5 explained.

M1 and M13 were frustrated about students' academic standards. They were frustrated that students do not have high motivation for learning and education:

> *One of the challenges I faced after returning is the weakness of the students' level. They do not care about learning. Therefore, there is a problem in reaching students and providing them with information (M13).*

Accordingly, the result of this study is expected to call policy makers to deal with these challenges, so they can improve them. The challenges included teaching workload, pedagogy and curricular challenges (e.g. outdated curricula, the mismatch of curricula to the society's needs), and students' academic standards. For returnees, despite such challenges, they are encouraged to wisely apply what they have already learnt from studying abroad.

CONCLUSION AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research aimed to answer the following research question: What challenges do Saudi returnees experience upon returning home? The research presented and discussed two main themes and four sub-themes in answering this research question.

The overall findings of this study showed that the returnees experienced some socio-cultural challenges that eventually dissipate over time and few educational challenges related to their work field. First of all, the findings showed four sub-themes classified as socio-cultural challenges. All these challenges are connected to some cultural practices in Saudi Arabia that were considered an obstacle by the participants. This included conflicting values between Saudi returnees and the rest of society, especially in time management, appearances, and the value of education. Moreover, challenges also comprised issues of third culture kids as the children could not speak and understand Arabic, the formal language of education in Saudi Arabia.

Interestingly, the last two challenges are strongly related to the Saudi cultural context. The findings did not appear in similar studies conducted in different contexts. They were challenges related to Wasta and bureaucracy. Moreover, the findings highlighted the second theme about the participants' educational challenges involving workloads as faculty members, pedagogy and curricula challenges, and students' academic standards.

The following are suggestions for future research. First, this study employed qualitative methodology with a small sample of Saudi returnees. Future studies could use quantitative methodology which could involve a larger sample of Saudi returnees to enhance the generalisation of data. Nevertheless, the findings of this study are beneficial for quantitative researchers to develop their questionnaires. Second, it would be beneficial for policy makers at the Ministry of Education to establish re-entry training for Saudi returnees before their departure from their host countries. The findings of this study can be used as a source for creating training programs. The training can be carried out online in order to ease them into attending it. Furthermore, it is recommended that policy makers can establish a league or union for scholarship returnees to communicate and exchange their experiences.

Finally, as this study was limited to returnees working in academia, particularly at Umm Al-Qura University, some research questions remain unanswered, such as 'What about the challenges of the re-entry of academics in different universities' campuses, particularly in rural campuses?', 'What about the challenges of the re-entry of returnees working in health sectors or military interfaces?'. Future studies are

expected to cover larger fields of work, such as government officials, health, military, and so forth. Covering these areas is expected to open new doors for different re-entry experiences.

REFERENCES

Adler, N. (1981). Re-entry: Managing cross-cultural transitions. *Group and Organization Management, 6*(3), 341-356.

Alhazmi, A., & Nyland, B. (2015). Contextualization of Saudi international students' experience in facing the challenge of moving to mixed gender environments. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research, 5*(2), 87-97.

Alhazmi, A. A. (2015). What it looks like to be in a mixed gender society: The essence of transitioning experience from gender segregated environment to mixed gender environment. *Journal of Foreign Languages, 3*(1), 49-57.

Alika, H., & Ohanaka, B. (2013). The role of counselling and parental encouragement on re-entry of adolescents into secondary schools in Abia state, Nigeria. *Research in Education, 89*(3), 61-69.

Allison, P., Davis-Berman, J., & Berman, D. (2012). Changes in latitude, changes in attitude: Analysis of the effects of reverse culture shock – A study of students returning from youth expeditions. *Leisure Studies, 31*(4), 487-503.

Arthur, N. (2003). Preparing international students for the re-entry transition. *Canadian Journal of Counselling, 37*(3), 173-185.

Boyatzis, R. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Brown, B. (2010). Social hostility and the "dropout" syndrome: Leadership assisting youths' re-entry into school? *Educational Review, 62*(1), 53-67.

Butcher, A. (2002). A grief observed: Grief experiences of East Asian international students returning to their countries of origin. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 6*(4), 354-368.

Casinader, N. a. (2014). *Culture, transnational education and thinking: Case studies in global schooling.* New York: Routledge

Chamove, A., & Soeterik, S. (2006). Grief in returning sojourners. *Journal of Social Sciences, 13*(3), 215-220.

Christofi, V., & Thompson, C. L. (2007). You cannot go home again: A phenomenological investigation of returning to the sojourn country after studying abroad. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 85*(1), 53-63.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Darlaston-Jones, D. (2007). Making connections: The relationship between epistemology research methods. *The Australian Community Psychologist, 19*(1), 19-26.

Dettweiler, U., Unlu, A., Lauterbach, G., Legl, A., Simon, P., & Kugelmann, C. (2015). Alien at home: Adjustment strategies of students returning from a six-month oversea's educational programme. *International. Journal of. Intercultural Relations, 44*, 72-87.

Dickey, W., & Klingele, C. (2004). *Promoting public safety: A problem-oriented approach to prisoner re-entry. Prisoner re-entry and community policing: Strategies for enhancing public safety*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.

Flick, U. (2006). *An introduction to qualitative research* (3rd Ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Gill, S. (2010). The homecoming: An investigation into the effect that studying overseas had on Chinese postgraduates' life and work on their return to China. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 40*(3), 359-376.

Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2012). *Applied thematic analysis*. London: Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications.

Gray, K. (2014). *There's no place like home: Or is there? Study abroad re-entry.* Western Oregon University. Honours Senior Theses/Projects. Paper 8.

Hadis, B. F. (2005). Why are they better students when they come back? Determinants of academic focusing gains in the study abroad experience. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 11*, 57-70.

Hattery, A., & Smith, E. (2010). *Prisoner re-entry and social capital: The long road to reintegration.* Lexington Books.

Jandova, P. (2014). *Reverse culture shock: Czech students returning home from the United States.* Place: Masarykova University, Pedagogical faculty.

Johnson, B. (2014). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches* (5th Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

Kartoshkina, Y. (2015). Bitter-sweet re-entry after studying abroad. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 44*, 35-45.

Larson, D. (2006). Here we go again: How a family's cross-cultural and repatriation adjustment relates to the employee's receptivity to future international assignments. *SAM Advanced Management Journal, 71*(2), 46-57.

La Vigne, N. (2010). *Prisoner re-entry and community policing: Strategies for enhancing public safety*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, Justice Policy Centre.

MacDonald, S., & Arthur, N. (2004). Employees' perception of repatriation. *The Canadian Journal of Career Development, 2*(1), 3-11.

Miller, J., & Glassner, B. (1997). The 'inside' and the 'outside': Finding realities in interviews. *Qualitative research*, 99-112.

Ministry of Education, S. A. (2018). The original website. Retrieved from https://www.moe.gov.sa/en/Pages/default.aspx

Musita, R., Ogange, B., & Lugendo, D. (2018). A second chance to dream: Initiating ODeL in secondary school re-entry programs for young adult secondary school dropouts the case of Mumias District, Western Kenya. *Distance Education, 39*(1), 122-133.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Pedlar, A., Arai, S., Yuen, F., & Fortune, D. (2018). *Community re-entry: Uncertain futures for women leaving prison*. London: Routledge.

Pitts, M. J. (2016). Sojourner re-entry: A grounded elaboration of the integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation. *Communication Monographs, 83*(4), 419-445.

Pritchard, R. (2011). Re-entry trauma: Asian re-integration after study in the West. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 15*(1), 93-111.

Stake, R. E. (2005). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Szkudlarek, B. (2010). Re-entry-A review of the literature. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 34*(1), 1-21.

Van Geel, A. (2016). Separate or together? Women-only public spaces and participation of Saudi women in the public domain in Saudi Arabia. *Contemporary Islam, 10*(3), 357-378.

Walling, S., Eriksson, C., Meese, K., Ciovica, A., Gorton, D., & Foy, D. (2006). Cultural identity and re-entry in short-term student missionaries. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 34*(2), 153-164.

Welsh, A. (2015). Long term effects of reverse culture shock in study abroad. In C. Cartwright, M. Sobre-Denton, & M. Vande Berg (Eds.) ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Westwood, M., Lawrence, W., & Paul, D. (1986). Preparing for re-entry: A program for the sojourning student. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 9*(3), 221-230.

Wielkiewicz, R. M., & Turkowski, L. W. (2010). Re-entry issues upon returning from study abroad programs. *Journal of College Student Development, 51*(6), 649-664.

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th Ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Young, G. E. (2014). Re-entry: Supporting students in the final stage of study abroad. *New Directions for Student Services, 2014*(146), 59-67.

Dr. Naif Daifullah Alsulami, is an assistant professor in international & comparative education at Umm Al-Qura university, Saudi Arabia.

Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 13, Issue 4 (2021), pp. 118-134
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v13i4.1846 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

Teaching International Students In Western Universities: A Literature Review

Adam V. Agostinelli[a*]

[a]*Boston College, USA*

[*]Corresponding author: Email: agostiad@bc.edu.

ABSTRACT

In this systematic literature review, reports of international students, faculty members, and researchers indicate that international students have difficulty with the reading, writing, listening, and speaking demands of their English-mediated academic contexts, and that many host-institutions are not equipped to effectively accommodate their linguistic needs. A significant number of the studies reviewed also report that the difference between international students' previous educational experiences and typical Western classroom practices, dynamics, and expectations can be sources of confusion and anxiety. Additionally, salient trends indicate that linguistic and cultural difficulties may persist throughout the entire course of study, that some instructors hold deficit views of international students, and that international and domestic students have limited interactions. Host-institutions that fail to adequately meet the unique needs of this population have a moral obligation to take each of these issues into consideration if they are going to continue to take international students' tuition dollars.

Keywords: faculty and student perceptions, international students, literature review

INTRODUCTION

In the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand the increase of international students in higher education is primarily a product of globalization. Globalization has resulted in more feasible international travel, the spread of the importance of linguistic capital in the form of English language skills, and the creation of new generations of young people with parents who have the financial resources to send their children abroad (OECD, 2014). In the U.K. these migration patterns have also been enhanced by initiatives such as the

Received January 17, 2020; revised April 6, 2020, July 15, 2020, August 22, 2020; accepted August 29, 2020; electronically published September 15, 2021

European Union Bologna Process that promotes and facilitates the intake of international students to British higher education institutions (OECD, 2013).

International students are attending Western universities in record numbers. Asia, with China and India at the forefront, is by far the top sender of international students to Western universities. Currently, international students make up over 13% of the enrollment of all tertiary students in Canada and around 20% in the U.K., New Zealand, and Australia, respectively. The U.S. has the largest international student population in the world at one million, or five percent of the total enrollments (OECD, 2017). Students are drawn to the U.S. for a variety of reasons, the main ones being the prestigious reputation of the higher education system, the resources available, the diversity of academic concentrations, and the possibility of working in the U.S. after graduation. Even though international student enrollments have been spread out across other internationally attractive higher education institutions (i.e., in Canada, Australia, and China) and an anti-immigrant political sentiment emerged with the election of President Trump (Fernandes, 2019), international student numbers rose by 0.05 percent in the U.S. in 2019 (Institute of International Education, 2019). However, these numbers will likely face a downward trend in the following years due to COVID-19 and the various barriers it poses to international student mobility (Marginson, 2020), which is not discussed in this review.

This literature review explores research related to teaching international students, particularly English language learners who graduated from K-12 educational systems in countries where English is not the primary language spoken, who are enrolled in Western higher education institutions in countries where English is the primary language spoken. The main aim of the review is to answer the questions: *What do we know about teaching international students in Western higher education institutions based on existing research? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current literature?*

As will be evident from this article, many Western higher education institutions that enroll large numbers of international students are under-equipped to meet their diverse needs. Many institutions lack the academic and social support systems necessary to help with the cultural, linguistic, and institutional barriers these students face in and out of the classroom. This is a major problem for the academic development and overall quality of life of international students, and as Hartshorn et al. (2017) argued, institutions that admit such students have an "ethical obligation to understand the specific needs of these learners and to help them to succeed in their academic pursuits" (p. 52).

Finally, this literature review is chiefly concerned with teaching international students in the higher education setting. This means that the large body of research pertaining to the social, emotional, and cultural barriers international students encounter outside of classrooms is beyond the scope of this article. Such barriers are naturally complex and difficult for institutions to account for, whereas teaching and academic support for these students can be adjusted by institutions to immediately and genuinely promote academic growth. By focusing on the teaching-related literature in this context, this review identifies current trends in this field, and also points to the inadequacy of many higher education institutions to meet the diverse academic needs of this growing population. Accordingly, the major purpose of this review is to identify and bring to light areas where colleges and universities can better academically support their international students.

METHODS FOR THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Because a primary aim of this literature review is to give readers a broad understanding of the

research that exists in this field, what Cochran-Smith & Villegas (2014) call a "landscape review" format was used. They suggest that a landscape literature review provides readers with a general overview of the "landscape" of developments in the field, including how research problems have been framed, what questions have been examined, what research methods have been used, and what the trends are in the findings. The Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), an online library database funded by the U.S. Department of Education, was used to systematically obtain the articles for this review because it is the largest database for education literature (Paperpile, 2020), free to access, and widely used by educational researchers. The researcher then searched the terms "international students," "higher education," and *university* to find studies that focused on the intended participant group, international students, in the desired context, higher education institutions. The terms *Faculty* and *teach* were also searched to yield studies that were related to faculty experiences and perceptions of teaching international students. This process yielded 210 total results, of which 28 were empirical peer-reviewed articles concerning teaching international students in Western, English speaking countries published during the past two decades.

These 28 studies were then organized according to four categories of participants the researchers relied upon to collect their data: (1) studies that investigate faculty perceptions of teaching international students, (2) studies that investigate student perceptions of Western classrooms, (3) studies that incorporate both student and faculty perceptions of Western classrooms, and (4) studies that use classroom observations. The first three sections were further separated into trends pertaining to the foci of the studies. These sub-sections include language-focused studies and classroom practices and dynamics focused studies (see Table 1).

Table 1: Organizational Framework

	Study Participants	Focus
Section 1	Studies of Faculty Perceptions of International Students (13)	• Language Studies (5) • Classroom Practices & Dynamics Studies (8)
Section 2	Studies of Student Perceptions of Classrooms (5)	• Classroom Practices & Dynamics studies (5)
Section 3	Studies of Both Faculty and Student Perceptions of Classrooms (7)	• Language Studies (2) • Classroom Practices & Dynamics Studies (5)
Section 4	Studies that Use Classroom Observation (3)	• Language Studies (1) • Classroom Practices & Dynamics Studies (2)

FINDINGS

Studies of Faculty Perceptions of International Students

Studies that focus on faculty experiences and reflections regarding teaching international students have garnered the most interest in this body of research. The following 13 studies revolved around faculty perceptions of different aspects of international students' English ability and classroom practices and dynamics.

Language-focused studies. The four studies in this section focused on faculty perceptions international students' English ability. Trice's (2000 & 2002) studies regarding faculty members' perceptions of international students are the foundational work in this subfield, given that these studies were

the earliest citations in the search and were cited by seven of the other studies. Both studies utilized the same interview data from 54 university staff members, 21 of whom were instructors and the rest of whom were either deans, departmental administrators, student leaders, or other professionals across the campus who regularly worked with international students. Trice investigated how employees from four different departments accommodated international students. Trice (2000) was a more macro-level study of these adjustments at the institutional, departmental, administrative, and classroom levels while Trice (2003) exclusively analyzed interview data from faculty members; however, both studies reported teaching-related outcomes. Trice interpreted the findings using "issue-processing theory," which suggests that individuals and institutions formulate unique perceptions of issues they face (in this case, working with international students) based on their context and backgrounds. Trice found that language issues were central to cultural and academic difficulties that international students face. Additionally, Trice found that faculty members' international experience and background, in terms of living in another country or speaking another language, effectively altered how they accommodated international students on an individual basis. Trice also found that faculty members were conscious that they had different standards for international students and local students. Lastly, this study was unique in this body of literature concerning international students because it showed that their experiences were likely different across departments, and depended on faculty dispositions and departmental policies, or lack thereof.

Andrade's (2010) survey study of 93 faculty members' perceptions of international students' language abilities on a U.S. undergraduate campus found that faculty members generally thought that international students' English language abilities were sufficient for being productive students, but that it would be better for them and for faculty members if they improved their language ability. Faculty members also generally felt that international students performed better in passive tasks (reading and listening) than in active tasks (speaking and writing). Additionally, a number of instructors noted that they tend to overlook language-related errors students made in these active tasks in favor of focusing on the content, which may serve as a reason why many international students' writing and speaking skills do not improve significantly during their course of study. Lastly, instructors generally expressed that they had the only moderate interest in the possibility of participating in formal professional development related to teaching international students, cross-cultural communication, or second language acquisition practices. However, they strongly agreed that outside resources such as tutoring services, ESL and English courses, study groups, and computer-assisted language learning tools were the best ways to improve students' English abilities. Instructors' moderate interest in professional development related to teaching international students was the strongest statistical trend in the study, and showed that faculty members did not see themselves as highly responsible for helping these students with language difficulties. This finding also seemed to point to a major fundamental discrepancy with how instructors tend to accommodate their international students' linguistic needs.

In another language-focused study, Sheppard et al. (2017) sought to determine whether ESL instructors and university professors had different perceptions of international students' speech. Each group evaluated the intelligibility of the same set of recorded international students' speech. They found that there were no significant differences between the two groups' ratings. Sheppard et al. (2017) believed that this finding was encouraging for future language-focused collaboration between ESL teachers and content faculty who teach international students.

Hartshorn et al. (2017) explored the reading expectations of 141 instructors from 80 departments

at a U.S. university for international upperclassmen. To examine reading expectations, they designed a survey to account for the department-specific linguistic demands of readings (i.e., general vocabulary and specialized terminology), amount of reading, purpose of readings (i.e., understanding concepts, synthesizing, critical thinking, etc.), and challenges with readings. There were no statistically significant differences between the reading challenges and expectations across disciplines, which indicated that institutional support programs, such as English for Academic Purposes programs, should be effective for promoting the reading development of international students regardless of major. They also found that vocabulary-related difficulties were seen to be the most problematic aspect of reading for international students.

Classroom practices & dynamics focused studies. The first four studies in this section used different forms of quantitative analysis to identify trends in survey-based data, and the next four were more qualitative in nature. In the first study, Arenas (2009) used an instructor background questionnaire in conjunction with the "Approaches to Teaching Inventory" (Trigwell & Prosser, 2004), which yields quantitative data regarding how regularly faculty members employ different types of teaching strategies, in order to explore how teacher attitudes affected their teaching tendencies. The results of the analysis indicated that the 20 instructors surveyed tended to use teacher-centered approaches such as lecturing and explicit instruction, rather than student-centered approaches such as group work and discussions, to accommodate and explain concepts to international students. This was an important finding because, as Arenas (2009) noted, the social nature of student-centered teaching methods better equips students to be critical thinkers (Carnell 2007). Therefore, Arenas (2009) called for the implementation of professional development sessions for faculty members who teach international students in order to fix this pedagogical oversight.

In another quantitative analysis, Haan et al. (2017) asked 192 instructors about their beliefs about instructional practices for international students in an original online survey. Their quantitative findings suggested a significant tendency of faculty to believe that additional academic support for international students was the responsibility of the institution and not the content-area instructors. They hypothesized that this trend led to conflict between faculty members and administrators, which intensified given the growing population of international students in the university. The researchers also stated that there was no consensus amongst faculty about what constituted the most effective teaching techniques for this population, and they suggested that teacher education programs could help faculty members be in accordance with about best teaching techniques.

While Haan et al. (2017) focused on instructional practices, Jin and Schneider (2019) took a more holistic approach by examining faculty perceptions of international students in general in their mixed-methods survey study of 261 faculty members in one U.S. university. They also investigated how faculty background might influence their perceptions of international students. After analyzing the open-ended questions using grounded theory and the quantitative data using descriptive statistical analysis, they concluded that faculty members recognized that the diverse backgrounds of international students were valuable for their learning environment. However, Jin and Schneider also found that faculty members reflected a deficit view of the academic ability of such students in that they felt that faculty members were not responsible for developing these perceived insufficient abilities. The other main finding was that faculty background had a number of statistically significant relationships with how faculty members viewed international students. For example, monolingual American-born faculty members were more likely to cite

language proficiency as an issue, while instructors who had lived abroad were more excited to have international students in their classes. The significance of instructor background may be considered a trend in the literature, as others also suggested that teacher background (i.e., language learning, travel, and international living experience) plays a central role in how instructors perceive and teach international students.

Cao et al. (2014) took a unique approach compared to the other studies in this category, in that they investigated how motivating factors behind faculty members' attitudes towards international students affected their teaching practices and, in turn, their satisfaction with teaching international students. By analyzing their survey data in terms of relationships between their variables of motivators, teaching adjustments, and faculty satisfaction, they found that faculty members who viewed internationalization as a positive trend and felt responsible and prepared to help international students also supported improvements in student learning outcomes. The researchers spent significant effort highlighting the need for more research on faculty perspectives of international students.

The last four interview-based studies in this section are more conceptual or qualitative in nature than the previous ones. In a study that used semi-structured interview data of 10 professors at a Canadian university, Heringer (2019) applied Ladson-Billings' (1995) theory of *culturally relevant pedagogy* to determine the extent to which faculty members facilitated the development and affirmation of international students' identity while helping them recognize and challenge inequality in the host university context. Heringer (2019) structured the interviews around the three tenets of Ladson-Billings' theory--conceptions of "self and others, social relations, and conceptions of knowledge," and identified the most relevant data and trends that fell under each construct. In this way, Heringer (2019) found that faculty members professed an admiration of diverse classrooms, but implicitly contradicted themselves by holding a deficit view of international students' academic ability. She also found that international students faced institutional marginalization because their cultural and linguistic backgrounds were admired on a surface level but pushed to the side and not used to inform instructor pedagogy, usually in the name of departmental curriculum requirements. Heringer also argued that Ladson-Billings' (1995) *culturally relevant pedagogy* framework is perfectly suited for evaluating the perceptions that faculty members have of this group of students.

In another study, Coryell et al. (2015) compared 11 experienced Italian professors' perceptions of what they learned by teaching international students with those of seven experienced American professors who had international students in their classes. The researchers analyzed their data through the lens of the theory of *communities of practice* (Lave & Wenger 1991) in order to understand how professors responded to interacting with international students at the academic and personal levels. The semi-structured interviews revealed that the most salient difference between American and Italian professors was that American professors were inclined to seek professional development opportunities to helped them internationalize their curriculum and teaching, whereas Italian professors sought professional development related to using English more effectively as a medium of instruction. The most significant similarity between groups was that professor background, in terms of travel and language learning experiences, accounted for greater enthusiasm for teaching international students. Professors with such experiences were also more likely to seek or participate in informal professional development opportunities to help inform their teaching practices in diverse classrooms.

Skyrme and McGee (2016) analyzed semi-structured interview data using grounded theory from

12 teachers from three different New Zealand colleges in order to assess their knowledge of institutional academic support systems for international students, their perceptions of the academic ability of international students, and their beliefs about how to improve the quality of education for these students. They found that instructors generally struggled with adapting their previous teaching techniques to suit an international classroom, and felt that this dynamic fundamentally challenges their traditional beliefs of what a tertiary education should entail. That said, they also recognized the cultural benefits this group brings to the classroom and campus community.

In the only study of international students in Ireland, O'Reilly et al. (2013) also made the claim that there was a paucity of research related to faculty and staff perceptions of international students. The researchers gauged how staff members felt about working with international students by conducting semi-structured interviews with 11 staff members, two of whom were instructors and the rest of whom were international student service staff, chaplains, and health care workers. The researchers found that employees perceived that international students had difficulties adjusting to Irish culture and religious practices, and that there was a notable lack of interaction between Irish students and international students. They also reported that some international students felt homesick because of financial issues as well as the stress caused by cultural, religious, and social differences between the host community and their home countries. Furthermore, this study represented one part of a larger project that also encompasses international students' perceptions. Therefore, even though this study is categorized in the *Faculty Perceptions* section of this review, the authors recognized that solely focusing on this perspective offers a limited vantage point, which is a limitation of all of the studies in this section.

Studies of Student Perceptions of Western Classrooms

In contrast to the studies in the previous section, the researchers here relied upon data collected exclusively from international students. The first two studies in this section focused on the outcomes of two different pedagogical strategies, whereas the next three studies drew upon data from graduate students with culturally-similar backgrounds to explore student perceptions of teaching.

Classroom practices & dynamics studies. Simpson (2017) examined intercultural conversation in a mixed-nationality classroom, but with particular focus on how Chinese business students participated in collaborative activities. This study focused on the use of active learning pedagogies to create more student-centered classrooms and found through student interviews that students generally viewed these activities as positive because they allowed them to apply theories to practice and improve their teamwork skills. Simpson (2017) noted that students were able to develop intercultural communication skills through these types of structured active learning strategies. However, Simpson (017) also showed that students had great difficulty participating in group activities and often felt ignored during discussions. The main takeaway that Simpson (2017) highlighted was that these students' difficulties with participation might not be a "language problem," but a "conversational problem" that is likely derived from their previous experiences with a Confucian style of education.

In a related study of active and collaborative learning techniques and their effect on student anxiety in the classroom, Khoshlessan (2013) used quantitative survey data from 85 international students. The researcher found that the use of active learning classroom practices, such as the group activities described in the previous study, lowers student anxiety. On the surface, it seemed like this study provided yet another reason for instructors to incorporate active learning techniques into their curriculum; however, one must consider that there was a "weak inverse relationship" between active learning techniques and less study

anxiety.

Furthermore, the following three studies in this section focused exclusively on graduate students with culturally similar backgrounds. Ai (2017) interviewed seven Chinese students to explore the communication patterns between them and their Australian instructors from the view of the students. The data collection methods Ai (2017) used in this case study were interesting because interview data was supplemented with four years of informal field observations of the researcher, who was a doctoral student in the same university as the participants. He found that the students were happy with their interactional patterns with their instructors, but that the accents of the Australian instructors and their own English language abilities were reasons for students to avoid speaking with their lecturers. Ai (2017) also noted that the Chinese students communicated with their lecturers according to the Confucian traditional etiquette they were used to from their previous educational experiences in China. This style of interaction was marked by the hierarchical relationship between teacher and student where the student is perceived as a passive learner and the instructor an unquestionable authority on the subject. Ai (2017) found that this dynamic was the root of many missed interactional experiences between instructors and Chinese students.

Lyken-Segosebe (2017) used in-depth interviews to investigate the acculturative stress and disengagement of seven East Asian graduate students both in and out of the classroom. The researcher found that language difficulties, more active teaching styles than the students were used to in their home countries, ambiguity of professors' grading process, and professors' Western-centric interests were all contributors to acculturative stress. The researcher also found that faculty development programs and the academic services at the university were inadequate to sufficiently support these students in their academic endeavors, and the researcher called for the intensification of faculty training and programing because voluntary writing centers and tutoring services are inadequate and offer only quick fixes. Lyken-Segosebe (2017) concluded that higher education institutions should implement robust conversation and writing supports that are easily accessible to this population. Finally, and importantly, the international students in this study were at different points in their graduate studies, and Lyken-Segosebe (2017) found that the acculturative stress these students face was not limited to a brief transition period after arrival to the host country and institution. Rather it was something that persisted throughout the entire course of their graduate studies. This was a concerning finding, especially since acculturative stress may be an indicator of an overall lower quality of life. Although there were only seven participants in this study, this finding may also indicate that this is a trend specific to East Asian students, which, if found to be conclusive, could be used by institutions to better accommodate the unique needs of this group. On the whole, this finding provided additional validation for the aforementioned steps higher education institutions need to take in order to improve the lives of these individuals.

While a significant amount of research focuses on international students in general or on Chinese international students, the following study offered a valuable and rare contemporary look at an understudied population that is widely represented in Western higher education institutions – Saudis. In fact, this group represented the fourth largest group of international students in the U.S. in 2014 (Institute of International Education). Yakaboski et al. (2018) described the interactions of Saudi graduate students on campus by using an interpretivist exploratory mixed methods approach that included interviews and a survey and yielded both qualitative and quantitative data. Yakaboski and colleagues found that these students generally had positive interactions with faculty members, but negative or limited interactions with American classmates. There was also a general consensus that faculty members played the most important role in

facilitating interactions between Saudi and American students, but they consistently failed to capitalize on this role and hence perpetuated the barrier between these two groups. Students also felt that all members of the host community needed to be educated about their unique culture, religion, and language abilities in order to better facilitate social and academic interactions between Saudi and American students. Finally, this study and Lyken-Segosebe's (2017) study, along with Sloan and Porter's (2010) study in the following section, are of interest because they use only graduate students as their participants. Studies like these or studies that differentiate between undergraduates and graduate students are important because failing to recognize the difference between these groups may lead to false conclusions. The fundamental limitation of the studies in this section is that they take only student perceptions into account and do not draw upon instructor perceptions to inform their conclusions.

Studies of Both Faculty and Student Perceptions of Western Classrooms

This section of the review is comprised of studies that address the aforementioned limitation in their designs. They do so by using both faculty members and international students as participants. The first two studies are focused on the English language needs and proficiencies of international students, respectively, while the following five are concerned with classroom practices and dynamics.

Language-focused studies. Zhu and Flaitz (2005) investigated the language needs of undergraduate and graduate international students by creating three focus groups consisting of graduate international students, undergraduate international students, and faculty and administrators, respectively. Each group participated in observed semi-structured discussions focusing on the linguistic needs of international students. Interestingly, the findings indicated that students and instructors had both overlapping and differing thoughts about what they considered to be the primary areas of difficulty for international students. Both groups considered writing an area of difficulty that persisted regardless of the amount of time spent at the university. The discussions in each group also differed in focus, in that the students' conversations revolved around their initial difficulties with passive skills (listening and reading), that gradually disappeared over time, and faculty members' conversations focused on student difficulties with active skills (writing papers and giving presentations) and difficulties with international graduate assistants. While these findings are all interesting in their own rights, the most important takeaway was that the triangulation method of different perspectives used in this study provided a more holistic picture of language difficulties faced by international students, which illustrated the importance of accounting for multiple perspectives when evaluating international students' needs. Zhu and Flaitz (2005) also called for English for Academic English programs to base their curriculum around authentic experiences that international students will face in their content classes, such as presentations, group work, listening to lectures, and writing papers.

More recently, Neumann et al. (2019) compared international students' English language proficiency, as determined by language exams such as the IELTS and the TOEFL, with their first-year performance evaluations to see if there were any relationships between scores. Language test scores, course grades, and first semester GPAs of 110 first-year business international students were collected and compared with a student background questionnaire, student self-evaluation, and the data gathered from semi-structured business instructor interviews. Their results indicated that there was a statistically significant correlation between language test scores and GPA during the first semester of study. They also found that faculty members viewed writing skills as the most significant indicator of student success. However, while these statistical outcomes were convincing, it must be considered that the researchers did

not account for the potential impact that university academic resource services and individual study strategies may have on first-year academic success.

Classroom practices & dynamics focused studies. The following five studies used data from faculty and international students to investigate the effectiveness of pedagogical strategies, classroom interactions, curriculum, and perceptions of teaching and learning, respectively. Robbins, et al.'s (2002) exploratory study of the effects of computer-mediated communication on the teaching and learning of international students used structured interviews of three faculty members and surveys and structured interviews of seven international students to gather qualitative and quantitative data. Summary and content analysis revealed that computer-mediated communication was effective for increasing the quality and volume of communication between instructors and students, improving international student writing and communication skills, allowing for a more diverse set of instructor teaching and learning techniques, and improving international student communication confidence. This study was the only one in the review that explored technology-related phenomena in this context. Thus, a strength of this study was its propensity to facilitate language development and teaching methodologies that could be used to support the specific needs of international students.

Nieto and Booth (2010) used a mixed methods approach, which consisted of quantitative and qualitative survey data as well as qualitative interview data, to explore how the cultural competence and intercultural sensitivity of students and instructors affected the teaching and learning outcomes of international students. They defined cultural competence in the educational context as the ability to effectively teach students from different cultures (Diller & Moule 2005) and intercultural sensitivity as, "the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences" (Hammer et al. 2003, p. 422). This was an important distinction because these terms recur in this literature, but can often seem like concepts with no clear accepted constructs. The researchers compared these concepts between ESL instructors, non-ESL instructors, and international students using a survey called the "Intercultural Sensitivity Scale" (needs cite). Their most significant findings were that: ESL instructors had greater cross-cultural competence in terms of interaction and engagement than non-ESL instructors; females were more interculturally sensitive than males; and, instructors were more interculturally sensitive than students. These data can be interpreted in a variety of ways; however, the main takeaway from the study is that instructors benefitted from inter-cultural experiences, and the main indicator for higher cultural competence was spending time interacting with and learning about people from different cultures.

Sloan and Porter's (2010) longitudinal study at a British university was unique in this review because it was a formal evaluation of an "English for Academic Purposes" program. After noticing that their program sessions were suffering from low attendance and curriculum issues, the researchers conducted a four-year study using questionnaires, focus groups, and in-depth semi-structured interviews of 150 business graduate international students and seven business program directors. Using quantitatively analysis of the questionnaire data and grounded theory to identify trends in the interview data, they found that the existing program was insufficient for meeting the specialized business-related needs of the students. They also used their collected data to create a new program model that better prepared instructors to teach business related English skills.

In one of the oldest studies in this review, Robertson et al. (2000) used a coding technique called the Delphi method to examine written open-ended question responses from 408 undergraduate international students and 121 instructors at an Australian university, making it the largest participant group in this

review. They noticed that international students faced a variety of challenges, such as participating and interacting with classmates and faculty, which likely originated from language proficiency issues. They also found that instructors recognized this difficulty and adjusted to international students' needs by slowing their speaking speed. However, they also noticed a trend in faculty responses that indicated that they felt that international students did not take enough initiative when it came to improving their English skills. This finding starkly contrasted with a trend in the international students' responses – they felt instructors should be more empathetic to their specific needs.

The final study in this section focused on one specific nationality of international students – Vietnamese students. By using focus groups and in-depth semi-structured interviews, Huong et al. (2017) found significantly different perceptions about teaching and learning between 24 Vietnamese students and four staff members, one of whom was a lecturer. The students were generally dissatisfied with culturally and linguistically diverse instructors, meaning non-white Australian instructors, because they did not align with their preconceived notion or perception of what a Western educator looked or sounded like. Students also reported anxiety resulting from language proficiency issues and cultural differences. Lastly, these international students viewed lectures, with the instructor frontally positioned in relation to students, as the most important part of their education, which was likely derived from the Confucian education they experienced in Vietnam.

Studies that Use Classroom Observation.

It is reasonable to assume that research about teaching at the higher education level would include studies featuring classroom observations; however, in this review there are only three studies wherein the researchers actually stepped into classrooms to observe. Additionally, two of these studies actually utilized other data sources in addition to observations, but to emphasize the observational aspect of their research designs, they are discussed below.

Language-focused Study. In the only study that exclusively used observations from the classroom as its data source, Sheppard et al. (2015) conducted 40 hours of class observations at a U.S. university and used inductive analysis to investigate what kinds of speaking and listening demands international students encounter. They found that international students most commonly encountered language-related difficulties when listening to lectures, descriptions of data, and class announcements. They also proposed that the content instructors' pronunciation, use of idiomatic expressions, American-centric cultural references, and informal speech and tangential comments were sources of misunderstandings. They believed that this form of observational data collection was useful to inform teaching practices and that the institution's Intensive English Program needs to adapt to meet these needs.

Classroom practices & dynamics studies. Yefanova et al.'s (2017) study explored how instructors facilitated "cross-national interactions," which can be described as any in-class interaction between domestic students and international students. To examine these interactions, the researchers conducted classroom observations and interviewed faculty members, local students, and East Asian international students enrolled in specific economics, public speaking, and biology courses at a U.S. university. They found that the instructor played the most important role in facilitating cross-national interactions, as students tended not to engage in conversation if the instructor did not facilitate it. They also found that cross-national interactions facilitated both the understanding of course content and intercultural communication skills, although only the faculty members recognized this. This study demonstrated that if instructors carefully incorporated cross-cultural interactions into their lessons, students engaged in intercultural communication that they would not have done previously.

Finally, Kraal's (2017) international comparative study investigated teaching methods in tax law courses with both international students and domestic students in four U.S. universities, one U.K. university, two Australian universities, and one New Zealand university by using semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. She found that instructors across contexts felt pressure to adapt their pedagogical strategies to accommodate international students because their traditional methods seemed ineffective. She saw this as a positive outcome because it showed that instructors were aware of international students' specific academic needs and responded by experimenting with new educational technology and informal teacher training. However, Kraal (2017) also found that instructors saw English-language entry tests, such as the TOEFL, as unreliable measures of a student's English ability that often created discrepancies in expectations of international students. She encouraged the widespread implementation and continuation of self-reflective practice as a way for instructors to adapt to more diverse university classrooms. The unique international and comparative aspects of this study make it valuable to this body of literature, especially considering that well-funded studies on teaching in higher education are rare. It also provided a solid methodological model for researchers who are interested in the classroom dynamic of comparative international education research.

CONCLUSION: STRENGTHS, LIMITATIONS, AND NEEDED DIRECTIONS

It is surprising that more studies in this review did not utilize a design that included data sources that represent students' perspectives and experiences, especially since they are central to this body of research. Studies that focus solely on faculty perceptions are useful in that they account for one fundamental aspect of classrooms with international students, but the overall omission of student voices inherently paints an incomplete picture of the context. A few of the researchers in this review, including Andrade (2010), O'Reilly et al. (2013), and Zhu & Flaitz (2005), rightly argue that stakeholders perspectives need to be accounted for when evaluating the needs of international students in order to gain a truly holistic perspective of their experiences in Western classrooms.

Furthermore, it is imperative for studies to differentiate between graduate and undergraduate students. Certain studies failed to present a fair depiction of their participants because researchers did not distinguish between these two distinct populations in their findings. This was largely the case in Arenas' (2012) and Skyrme and McGee's (2016) studies of faculty perceptions, and is admitted as a limitation of Jin and Schneider's (2019) faculty-view based study. Alternatively, three studies (Lyken-Segosebe, 2017; Sloan & Porter, 2010; Yakaboski et al., 2018) used only graduate students as their participants. This was notable because most of the research in this field is concerned with undergraduate international students because they represent a comparatively larger overall population in Western higher education institutions. However, studies that specifically focus on graduate students are important because they are fundamentally different from undergraduate international students in terms of age, demographics, status within the institution, and motivation for pursuing education. As can be seen by the small number of studies that at least partly focused on international graduate students in this review (10 total), this group is a relatively understudied population whose voice often gets overlooked or mixed together with undergraduates. This is an issue because, based on the literature, many graduate students also clearly face difficulties in higher education institutions, especially during their initial transition period, and their experiences necessitate further investigation to ensure their success and ethical treatment in their new context. If both undergraduate and graduate international students are indeed participants in a study, differences between these populations

must be taken into account. Such studies should make a clear distinction between each group when analyzing data and interpreting findings, as demonstrated by Zhu and Flaitz (2005), Kraal (2017), and Khoshlessan (2013).

Focusing on, or differentiating between, particular cultural groups of international students has the potential to offer a more accurate picture of how international students experience Western classrooms. There were notably only five studies that intentionally focused on specific cultural groups of international students (Ai, 2017; Huong et al., 2017; Lyken-Segosebe, 2017; Simpson;, 2017; Yakaboski et al., 2018). For instance, Ai (2017) evaluated the communication patterns between lecturers and Chinese students, Huong et al. (2017), drew upon multiple perspectives to explore Vietnamese undergraduate international students' experiences, Lyken-Segosebe (2017) studied the adjustment challenges of East Asian international students, Simpson (2017) researched Chinese students' perceptions of active learning strategies, and Yakaboski et al. (2018) explored the classroom interactions of Saudi graduate students. All five of these studies provide specialized insights into the experiences of culturally and linguistically similar groups of international students. While individual factors such as personality and learning style should not be ignored, this category of research is invaluable for identifying salient trends or shared experiences of a group that may be derived from differences between the international students' native language and culture and the English language and the dominant culture of the host institution. For example, within the scope of this review, there was a trend that indicated that the role of Confucianism in East Asian society and education played an integral role in how international students from these countries adjusted to Western academic culture (Ai, 2017; Huong et al., 2017; Simpson, 2017). Without such culturally-specified focused studies, trends like this will continue to be overlooked in this field.

Another recurring theme in the literature was the call for more structured support for international students. The studies indicated that English for Academic Purposes programs and tutoring services should be more robust (Lyken-Segosebe, 2017) and should collaborate with other departments to better understand the skills international students need to succeed in their respective majors (Andrade, 2010; Sloan & Porter, 2010; Zhu & Flaitz, 2005). Ideally, opening up these new conduits of communication would allow academic support program coordinators to tailor their services to the varying discipline-specific needs of international students.

In a somewhat similar vein, multiple research reports indicated that professors did not see supporting international students' linguistic needs as their responsibility (Haan et al., 2017), assuming that their main strategy used for developing English language skills was to refer international students to other sources of English instruction, such as the university tutoring program (Andrade, 2010). Some researchers have also hypothesized that the ineffectiveness of instructors to adequately teach international students or accommodate their linguistic needs is exacerbated by the fact that it is not necessary for most faculty members to have any sort of formal teacher education in order to obtain a teaching post at the higher education level. This is related to the call from many researchers for the implementation of faculty professional development programs and formal policies related to international students as opposed to word-of-mouth informal department-specific policies that focus on teaching and support practices for international students (Arenas, 2009; Coryell, et al. 2015; Haan, et al. 2017 Trice, 2003).

Despite their long-time presence on Western campuses, such as in U.S. since the mid 1800s, many issues faced by international students have remained largely overlooked or avoided by higher education institutions' administrations, often resulting in students' isolation, low academic performance, or even

discrimination (Yeo et al., 2019). This is a situation that may be amplified by recent anti-Asian sentiments prompted by responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is encouraging to see that researchers are investigating the effectiveness of existing academic support systems and practices, as well as employing a variety of different research approaches to investigate teaching this population. Additionally, it is noteworthy that book-length publications have sprung up in response to the linguistic and pedagogical difficulties that instructors of international students are experiencing (Carroll & Ryan 2005; Ryan 2012; Hayes, 2019).

As can be seen in the literature reviewed here, language-related barriers and cultural challenges are central to the issues international students face in Western classrooms. Reports of international students, faculty members, and researchers indicated that international students have difficulty with the reading, writing, listening, and speaking demands of their English-mediated academic contexts. A significant number of the studies also reported that the difference between international students' previous educational experiences and typical Western classroom practices, dynamics, and expectations could be sources of confusion and anxiety, which was found to be especially true for international students from traditionally Confucian cultures. Additionally, the research overall indicates that: linguistic and cultural difficulties persist throughout the entire time international students are at their institutions, not just at the beginning; some instructors hold deficit views of international students; and, international students and local students have limited interactions unless specifically supported by instructors. Each of these fundamental widespread issues needs to be taken into serious consideration by researchers and by host institutions at the institutional, departmental, and instructor levels.

Colleges and universities that enroll international students have the responsibility to help them in every way possible. In the implications or conclusion sections of much of the research I have reviewed here, researchers call for more robust institutional, departmental, and instructor level support for international students. Some of these suggestions included the implementation of language learning technology in the curriculum, more collaboration between English for Academic Purposes programs and specific departments, and hiring faculty members with international and language learning experience because these may be indicators of an effective instructor of international students. The two most salient trends among these proposals were that higher education institutions should provide professional development opportunities for faculty members to more effectively teach international students, and that higher education institutions need to provide strong English for Academic Purposes programs, writing centers, and tutoring services that adequately support international student's diverse linguistic and academic needs. Accordingly, it would be advisable for colleges and universities to rely heavily on high-quality English for Academic Purposes programs that are staffed with qualified instructors with the specialized knowledge necessary to effectively help this student group, while simultaneously providing formal professional development opportunities and collaboration opportunities with language specialists for instructors.

In light of this review and the trends noted in the discussion, there are some powerful research designs that should be utilized by future researchers in this field. First, there were very few studies that used comparative designs to compare and contrast different institutions, different departments, or different groups of international students. Comparative designs are useful for identifying both large scale and context-specific trends. Second, a major limitation of much of this research is that international students are lumped together into one homogenous group, and their diverse national, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and individual backgrounds are not differentiated in the analysis or interpretation of results. Furthermore, much

of this research does not distinguish between students' majors or between students who are undergraduate and graduate students. Failing to recognize the difference between groups leads to incomplete and inaccurate findings and conclusions. Ultimately, research that focuses on one nationality of international students, or differentiates between specific groups will provide a clearer picture of trends in this field. Lastly, more research needs to take on a holistic approach in order to understand teaching of international students in Western universities by using classroom observations in conjunction with both faculty and student reports. Depending on the scope of the study, drawing upon just one or two of these sources may be acceptable; however, using all three of these sources, although more difficult, will give researchers and readers a better understanding of the situation.

REFERENCES

Ai, B. (2017). The communication patterns of Chinese students with their lecturers in an Australian university. *Educational Studies*, *43*(4), 484-496. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2017.1293507

Andrade, M. S. (2010). Increasing accountability: Faculty perspectives on the English language competence of nonnative English speakers. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 14*(3), 221-239. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315308331295

Arenas, E. (2009). How teachers' attitudes affect their approaches to teaching international students. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *28*(6), 615-628. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360903208096

Bevis, T. & Lucas, C. (2007). *International students in American colleges and universities: A history*. Springer.

Cao, Y., Li, X., Jiang, A., & Bai, K. (2014). Motivators and outcomes of faculty actions towards international students: Under the influence of internationalization. *International Journal of Higher Education, 3*(4), 49-63. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1067587

Carnell, E. (2007). Conceptions of effective teaching in higher education: Extending the boundaries. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 12(1), 25-40. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/13562510601102081

Carroll, J., & Ryan, J. (Eds.). (2007). *Teaching international students: Improving learning for all*. Routledge.

Coryell, J. E., Fedeli, M., Tyner, J., & Frison, D. (2015). *Faculty development and teaching international students: A cross-national study of faculty perspectives in a global era*. Commission for International Adult Education. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED570507

Diller, J., & Moule, J. (2005). *Cultural competence*. Book News.

Haan, J. E., Gallagher, C. E., & Varandani, L. (2017). Working with linguistically diverse classes across the disciplines: Faculty beliefs. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 17*(1), 37-51. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1136409

Hammer, M. R., Bennett, M. J., & Wiseman, R. (2003). Measuring intercultural sensitivity: The intercultural development inventory. *International journal of intercultural relations*, *27*(4), 421-443. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(03)00032-4

Hartshorn, K. J., Evans, N. W., Egbert, J., & Johnson, A. (2017). Discipline-specific reading expectation and challenges for ESL learners in US universities. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 29*(1), 36-60. http://hdl.handle.net/10125/66727

Heringer, R. (2019). The pertinence of a culturally relevant pedagogy in internationalized higher education. *International Education Studies, 12*(1), 1-9. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1201527

Huong, L., Koo, F. K., Arambewela, R., & Zutshi, A. (2017). Voices of dissent: Unpacking Vietnamese international student experience. *International Journal of Educational Management, 31*(3), 280-292. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-07-2015-0099

Institute of International Education. (2014). *Open Doors fact sheet*. https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors

Institute of International Education. (2019). "International Student Enrollments by Institutional Type, 2014/15-2015/16." Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange. https://www.iie.org

Jin, L., & Schneider, J. (2019). Faculty views on international students: A survey study. *Journal of International Students, 9*(1), 84-99. DOI:10.32674/jis.v9i1.268

Khoshlessan, R. (2013). Is there a relationship between the usage of active and collaborative learning techniques and international students' study anxiety? *International Research and Review, 3*(1), 55-80. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1149915

Kraal, D. (2017). Legal teaching methods to diverse student cohorts: A comparison between the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 47*(3), 389-411. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2016.1190315

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. American Educational Research Journal, 32(3), 465-491. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003465

Lyken-Segosebe, D. (2017). Acculturative stress and disengagement: Learning from the adjustment challenges faced by east Asian international graduate students. *International Journal of Higher Education, 6*(6), 66-77. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v6n6p66

Marginson, S. (2020). Statement. Center for Global Higher Education, University of Oxford.

Neumann, H., Padden, N., & McDonough, K. (2019). Beyond English language proficiency scores: understanding the academic performance of international undergraduate students during the first year of study. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *38*(2), 324-338. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2018.1522621

Nieto, C., & Booth, M. Z. (2010). Cultural competence: Its influence on the teaching and learning of international students. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 14*(4), 406-425. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315309337929

O'Reilly, A., Hickey, T., & Ryan, D. (2013). Higher education professionals' perspectives on international student experiences of life and learning in Ireland: A qualitative study. *Irish Educational Studies, 32*(3), 355-375. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2013.826334

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2013). World migration in figures. https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/World-Migration-in-Figures

OECD. (2014). Education at a glance: OECD indicators. https://www.oecd.org/education/Education-at-a-Glance-2014

Paperpile, LLC (2020) *Academic Databases*: *ERIC Research Database*. paperpile.com/g/eric-research-database/

Robbins, N., Lo, Y., Hou, F., Chou, T., & Chen, C. (2002). Computer mediated communication and university international students. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems, 30*(3), 323-331. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2190/A3DJ-D7PM-D208-PN8H

Robertson, M., Line, M., Jones, S., & Thomas, S. (2000). International students, learning environments and perceptions: A case study using the Delphi technique. *Higher Education Research & Development, 19*(1), 89-102. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360050020499

Ryan, J. (Ed.). (2012). *Cross-cultural teaching and learning for home and international students: Internationalisation of pedagogy and curriculum in higher education*. Routledge.

Sheppard, B., Elliott, N., & Baese-Berk, M. (2017). Perceptions of university instructors when listening to international student speech. *ORTESOL Journal, 34*, 4-16. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1152391

Sheppard, B., Rice, J., Rice, K., DeCoster, B., Drummond-Sardell, R., & Soelberg, N. (2015). Re-evaluating the speaking and listening demands of university classes for novice international students. *ORTESOL Journal, 32*, 1-12. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1152428

Simpson, C. (2017). Language, relationships and skills in mixed-nationality active learning classrooms. *Studies in Higher Education, 42*(4), 611-622. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2015.1049141

Skyrme, G., & McGee, A. (2016). Pulled in many directions: Tensions and complexity for academic staff responding

to international students. *Teaching in Higher Education, 21*(7), 759-772. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2016.1183614

Sloan, D., & Porter, E. (2010). Changing international student and business staff perceptions of in-sessional EAP: Using the CEM model. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 9*(3), 198-210. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2010.03.001

Trice, A. G. (2000). *Navigating in a global learning community: Academic departments' response to graduate international students.* AIR 2000 annual forum.

Trice, A. G. (2003). Faculty perceptions of graduate international students: The benefits and challenges. *Journal of studies in International Education*, *7*(4), 379-403. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315303257120

Trigwell, K., & Prosser, M. (2004). Development and use of the approaches to teaching inventory. *Educational Psychology Review*, 16(4), 409-424. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007%2Fs10648-004-0007-9

Yakaboski, T., Perez-Velez, K., & Almutairi, Y. (2018). Breaking the silence: Saudi graduate student experiences on a U.S. campus. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 11*(2), 221-238. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000059

Yeo, H. T., Mendenhall, R., Harwood, S. A., & Huntt, M. B. (2019). Asian International Student and Asian American Student: Mistaken Identity and Racial Microaggressions. *Journal of International Students*, *9*(1), 39-65. DOI: https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v9i1.278

Yefanova, D. N., Montgomery, M. L., Woodruff, G. A., Johnstone, C. J., & Kappler, B. (2017). Instructional practices facilitating cross-national interactions in the undergraduate classroom. *Journal of International Students, 7*(3), 786-805. DOI: https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v7i3.301

Zhu, W., & Flaitz, J. (2005). Using focus group methodology to understand international students' academic language needs: A comparison of perspectives. *TESL-EJ, 8*(4), 1-9. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1068108

Adam V. Agostinelli, spent the past decade teaching English in the U.S. and Korea in both K-12 and higher education settings. His passion for teaching has led to an interest in researching and writing about language acquisition and international student mobility. He is currently pursuing his PhD in Teaching, Curriculum, and Society from Boston College.

Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 13, Issue 4 (2021), pp. 135-148
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: http://www.doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v13i4.2868 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

White U.S. College Students' Perceptions Of Prospective International Students Differ By Race And Stereotypical Attributes

Jennifer Katz[a*], Claire R. Gravelin[a] and Elizabeth McCabe[a]

[a]*State University of New York Geneseo, USA*

[*]Corresponding author: Email: katz@geneseo.edu.

ABSTRACT

Because many international students of color report feeling devalued by host peers, host peers' responses to students from different racial/ethnic groups warrant empirical study. Participants were White, non-Latinx undergraduates (N = 228) who were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. Specifically, participants read about a prospective student from either Asia or Europe who was described as exhibiting either model minority stereotypical or counter-stereotypical attributes. Participants evaluated how likely the student was to be admitted to college and the student's academic and social competence. Despite identical qualifications, participants perceived the Asian student as more likely to be admitted but less academically competent than the European student. Regardless of race, international students with stereotypical attributes were perceived as less socially competent than those with counter-stereotypical attributes. Results suggest that racial dissimilarity reduces host peers' receptivity towards international students of color. Targeted multicultural education for host peers may be necessary to promote international students' effective integration.

Keywords: Asian, college students, international students, race, stereotyping

INTRODUCTION

International students leave their country of origin and travel to another country on a temporary basis to pursue academic study. Since 2017, fewer new international students have enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities. Explanations for this decrease include visa difficulties, the costs of higher education in the

Received August 23, 2020; revised January 23, 2021, February 21, 2021; accepted May 26, 2021; electronically published September 15, 2021

U.S., and changes in the country's political and social climate (Sanger & Baer, 2019). Compared to the prior academic year, international student enrollment in 2019 decreased by 1.8% (Institute for International Education, 2020). Furthermore, federal policy changes initially banning international college students from enrolling at U.S. institutions during Fall 2020 amidst the COVID-19 pandemic led to further declines (Israel & Batalova, 2021).

Enrollment rates may also be affected by the hospitality of campus climates. Many international students report difficulties acclimating to campus and perceptions of an unwelcoming environment (e.g., Yao et al., 2020). For instance, in one study involving nine research universities in the U.S., international students perceived a less favorable climate for diversity and respect when compared to domestic students (Van Horne et al., 2018). Perhaps relatedly, many international students describe having experienced both covert and overt forms of exclusion and rejection by host peers (Houshamand et al., 2014; Spencer-Oatley et al., 2017).

Importantly, international students who are also members of racial/ethnic minority groups report particularly high rates of perceived discrimination. In contrast, at predominantly White institutions (PWIs), compared to students of color, White European students report being more welcomed and feeling more of a sense of belonging (Lee & Rice, 2007; Poyrazli et al., 2004). These findings could suggest that host peers are less hospitable towards international students of color than international students who are White. This possibility is supported by research showing that racial/ethnic minority group members report hearing disrespectful comments upon being misperceived as international students. For example, in one study of Asian American students, participants were told to "go back to China and stop taking all the jobs here and ruining the curve" (Yeo et al., 2019, p. 51). However, given the many challenges of transcultural mobility, multiple factors may affect international students' perceptions of their experiences of campus climate, including language barriers and varying cultural interpretations of social interactions. Additional research is needed to more definitively test whether international students of color, when compared to White international students, are devalued by host peers.

Social categorization theory (SCT) might help explain White host peers' responses to international students of color (Turner et al., 1987). SCT posits that people feel and act more favorably toward others who are perceived to be part of a shared social category (ingroup) while feeling and acting less favorably toward others who are perceived as excluded from that shared category (outgroup). Furthermore, following the 'cognitive miser' argument proposed by Fiske and Taylor (2017), outgroup members are viewed as prototypes, with individual-level features of the outgroup member largely ignored. Race/ethnicity is a prominent social category that can affect peer interactions, regardless of whether a peer is an international student. A growing literature suggests that students of color perceive the campus climate as less hospitable than their White counterparts (e.g., Lo et al., 2017; Schuster, 2020). Accordingly, U.S. college students of color report facing challenges related to their racial/ethnic status (e.g., Mwangi et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2018).

The current research compared White, non-Latinx U.S. students' perceptions of prospective international students from Asia (a racial outgroup member) versus Europe (a racial ingroup member). We focused on students of color, specifically from Asia, because many countries host college-aged youth from Asia, most commonly from South Asia. For example, in 2019-2020, over a third of all international students in the U.S. came from the People's Republic of China (Institute for International Education, 2020).

In the U.S. and similar contexts, people who are Asian tend to be stereotyped as having both positive and negative attributes. Positive stereotypical attributes include being intelligent, educated, and studious, whereas negative stereotypical attributes include being shy, nerdy, and socially inept (Ghami & Peplau, 2013). Based on Fiske's Stereotype Content Model (SCM; Fiske et al., 2002; Fiske et al., 2007), these stereotyped attributes reflect high competence and low warmth (Lin et al., 2005). That is, people who are Asian tend to be perceived as academically capable and worthy of respect but also as socially deficient and unlikeable.

These types of stereotypes seem to affect Asian international students' interactions with host peers. For example, Asian international students studying in Canada described being seen as intelligent in math and science but not in other areas, teased for their accents and pronunciation of English, and generally socially rejected and excluded by peers (Houshmand et al., 2014). These authors concluded that North American students appear to subscribe to the myth of the model minority, leading to resentment towards the perceived success of Asian students. Similarly, at a university in the U.K., students from China reported greater difficulties with social than academic adjustment, and compared to other international students, students from China had more difficulties making friends in their host country (Spencer-Oatley et al., 2017). Although these studies were conducted in Canada and the U.K., Asian international students may have similar experiences in the U.S., where many White students report infrequent social contact with people who are Asian and also endorse prejudicial attitudes about them **(**Lowinger et al., 2018). Regardless of where they were born and raised, Asian college students in the U.S. reported high levels of perceived discrimination by White peers (Wang et al., 2019), suggesting that visible racial differences mark even Asian Americans as "forever foreigners" (p. 23). As a result, they are seen as Asian rather than as also American, conflating Whiteness with national identity (Devos & Banaji, 2005).

White host peers may also devalue Asian international students of color because their presumed stereotypical attributes are seen as threatening. Regardless of their country of origin, Asian students may be inaccurately viewed in terms of the stereotype of the hardworking model minority who is apt to outperform others (Yoo et al., 2010, 2015). In the U.S., Asian students are stereotyped as interested in orchestral music and individual rather than team-based athletic pursuits. People with such interests are seen as less socially competent (Chai & Weseley, 2010). Research suggests that U.S. college students perceive Asian students to be intelligent and hardworking, posing a threat to their status and success (Maddux et al., 2008). Yet college students in the U.S. had negative evaluations of even racially ambiguous peers characterized as having model minority attributes (Maddux et al., 2008). These authors concluded that stereotypical model minority attributes feel threatening, regardless of the race/ethnicity of the individual who displays them. These findings suggest that host peers may have more negative responses to an Asian international student who conforms to model minority stereotypes rather than to Asian international students generally.

A competing possibility, however, is that regardless of their attributes, Asian students generally will be devalued due to concerns about "reverse discrimination." As many institutions in the U.S. have worked to increase ethnic and cultural diversity, often via affirmative action, some White, non-Latinx U.S. student citizens have felt unfairly disadvantaged and threatened (e.g., Lowinger et al., 2018). Feelings of threat may lead people to shore up the boundaries of acceptance/admittance to their group and distance themselves from people who pose a threat (e.g., Tajfel & Tuner, 1986). When people who are White feel threatened by demographic shifts in minority representation, they react more angrily toward ethnic

minorities, demonstrate increased racial bias (Craig & Richeson, 2014; Outten et al., 2012), and show decreased support for cultural diversity (Danbold & Huo, 2014).

The current study investigated U.S. college students' responses to prospective international students based on their race/continent of origin (Asian or European) and the presence or absence of model minority stereotypical attributes. Drawing on SCT (Turner et al., 1987), we expected White, non-Latinx students to perceive that, compared to a student from Europe, that a student from Asia would be more likely to be admitted to their selective college (Hypothesis 1a), more academically competent (Hypothesis 2a), and more socially incompetent (Hypothesis 3a). However, whether or not the prospective students described themselves in terms of model minority stereotypical attributes was expected to moderate these effects. Specifically, an Asian student with stereotypical attributes was expected to be perceived as more likely to be admitted to their selective college (Hypothesis 1b), as more academically competent (Hypothesis 2b), and more socially incompetent (Hypothesis 3b) than a counter-stereotypical Asian student.

RESEARCH METHOD

Participants

Participants were 228 undergraduate students enrolled at a public liberal arts college in the Northeastern U.S. All identified as White, non-Latinx citizens of the U.S. The majority were women (76.1%, n = 175). The average age was 19.18 (SD = 1.12, range 17-23).

Manipulation

We randomly assigned each participant to read part of a prospective international students' college application with identical grades and standardized test scores (see below). There were four conditions. Concerning race, the applicant self-identified as either "Wen-Yong" from Guanzhou, China, or "Wendy" from Glasgow, Scotland. Participants also read the short paragraph below ostensibly written by the prospective student describing her goals and interests. Based on Chai and Weseley (2017), the interests were either stereotypical of the Asian model minority (e.g., playing violin and competing on the school's math team) or counter-stereotypical (e.g., drumming and being in the school's yearbook club).

Please read this brief statement by a high school senior and prospective international student:

Student: **Wen-Yong/Wendy** Sex: Female

Location: **Guangzhou/Glasgow**

High School Average: 90 ACT score: n/a SAT Score: 1360/1600

On my first tour of the college, I realized [name of college] was the perfect school for me. Walking on the campus, exploring the buildings, and interacting with current students made it feel so much like home. I could continue to participate in activities that I currently enjoy, all while getting an outstanding education experience. My current schedule involves playing the ***violin in chamber orchestra***/**drums in a rock band** for ten hours per week, running cross country, and organizing activities for the ***Math Team***/**Yearbook Club** for an hour per week. It is important to be a well-rounded student to achieve success in the classroom and in one's field of choice. SUNY Geneseo prepares students to be successful for the rest of their lives and it would be an honor to be accepted as a Geneseo Knight. (*Note:* Manipulated aspects in bold. Model minority stereotypical attributes are also italicized, whereas counter-stereotypical attributes are not.)

Design

A 2 (race/continent of origin of the prospective student; Asia or Europe) x 2 (model minority attributes; Asian stereotypical or counter-stereotypical) between-subjects design was used. The dependent

variables were perceptions of the prospective international student's likelihood of admission to college, academic competence, and social incompetence.

Measures

Likelihood of admission was assessed with a single item adapted from Chai and Weseley (2017): "How likely is she to be admitted to a selective college like [name of college]?" (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *extremely likely*).

Perceived competence of the international student was assessed with subscales adapted from the *Scale of Anti-Asian American Stereotypes* (SAAAS; Lin, Kwan, Cheung, & Fiske, 2005). This scale was developed based on Fiske's Stereotype Content Model (SCM; Fiske et al., 2002; Fiske et al., 2007), a theoretical framework positing that anti-Asian prejudice stems from perceptions of high intellectual competence paired with low social warmth/likeability. The 12 item academic competence subscale assesses the degree to which respondents believe that people who are Asian are driven to achieve and compete with others to outperform them and reach high levels of success. Specific key phrases from subscale items include "working all the time," "obsessed with competition," and "acting too smart." (p. 37). The 13 item social competence subscale assesses the degree to which respondents believe that people who are Asian are socially awkward and isolated due to poor interpersonal skills. Specific key phrases from subscale items include "shy and quiet," "have less fun," and "rarely initiate social events or gatherings" (p. 37). Items are rated on a 6 point scale (0 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). In the current study, items were adapted to refer specifically to the prospective student from the Manipulation. For example, "Asian Americans seem to be striving to become number one" was changed to "[student name] seems to be striving to become number one" and "Asian Americans are less committed to socializing than others" was changed to "[student name] is less committed to socializing than others." Responses to each item reflect a conscious endorsement of stereotypical expectations that underlie envious anti-Asian prejudice. The scale authors report evidence for the scale's reliability and convergent validity as well as the underlying two factor structure reflecting related but distinct dimensions of competence and sociability. The internal consistency indices were good in the current sample (Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$ for academic competence, $\alpha = .87$ for social incompetence).

Procedure

The campus Institutional Review Board approved all study procedures. We recruited undergraduate students from a voluntary psychology department pool for a study of "Assessing Prospective Students." Data collection sessions were conducted on campus in classrooms where participants sat in alternating rows to ensure privacy. After providing informed consent, each participant was randomly assigned to read and respond to one of four partial college applications. Participants completed paper and pencil self-report measures and submitted their responses to a slotted box so that their responses would remain anonymous. We provided a full written debriefing and compensated participants with course credit. No sessions lasted more than one hour.

RESULTS

Almost half of the sample (49.1%, $n = 112$) was assigned to the Asian student condition, whereas 50.9% ($n = 116$) was assigned to the European student condition. About 52.2% ($n = 119$) read a description about a student with model minority stereotypical attributes whereas 47.8% ($n = 109$) read about a student with counter-stereotypical attributes.

To test whether stereotypical interests moderated participants' responses to a prospective student based on her race/continent of origin, a 2 (race; Asian or European) x 2 (model minority attributes; stereotypical or counter-stereotypical) multivariate analysis of variance MANOVA was conducted. There were three dependent measures: perceived likelihood of admission, perceived academic competence, and perceived social incompetence. Results showed an overall effect of race, $F(3, 222) = 4.34$, $p = .005$, $\eta^2 = .06$, and an overall effect for model minority attributes, $F(2, 222) = 9.20$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .11$, but no interaction, $F(2, 222) = 0.25$, $p = .18$, $\eta^2 = .003$.

Table 1 lists univariate follow up analyses. As can be seen, there was a main effect of race. Participants perceived that the Asian student was more likely to be admitted ($M = 6.23$, $SD = 0.89$) than the European student ($M = 5.87$, $SD = 1.04$), $F(1, 224) = 7.55$, $p = .006$, $\eta^2 = .03$. This finding supported Hypothesis 1a. Because there was no main or interactive effect of stereotypical attributes, this racial difference was independent of whether the student was described as similar to the model minority stereotype. Thus, Hypothesis 2a was not supported.

There was also a main effect of race on perceptions of the student's academic competence. Unexpectedly, participants perceived that the Asian student was *less* academically competent ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 0.85$) than the European student ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 0.74$), $F(1, 224) = 5.14$, $p = .023$, $\eta^2 = .02$. This finding did not support Hypothesis 1b. In addition, race did not interact with stereotypical attributes, which did not support Hypothesis 2b. However, there was a main effect of stereotypical attributes. Students with model minority stereotypical attributes were seen as more academically competent ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 0.71$) than those with counter stereotypical attributes ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 0.87$), $F(1, 224) = 6.37$, $p = .012$, $\eta^2 = .03$.

Table 1: Effects of Race and Model Minority Stereotypical or Counter-Stereotypical Attributes on White, non-Latinx College Students' Perceptions of Prospective International Students

	International Student Race		Race $F(1, 224)$	Model Minority $F(1, 224)$	Race x Model Minority $F(1,224)$
	Asian	European			
Likely to be admitted			4.55**	1.67	< 1
Stereotypical	6.34 (0.65)	5.91 (1.13)			
Counter-stereotypical	6.10 (1.11)	5.82 (0.97)			
Academic competence			5.14*	6.37*	<1
Stereotypical	2.38 (0.74)	2.59 (0.67)			
Counter-stereotypical	2.09 (0.94)	2.35 (0.78)			
Social incompetence			2.27	24.32***	<1
Stereotypical	2.37 (0.71)	2.46 (0.68)			
Counter-stereotypical	1.85 (0.81)	2.04 (0.66)			

Note. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

Cell sizes were as follows: Asian/model minority stereotypical attributes ($n = 64$), Asian/model minority counter-stereotypical attributes ($n = 52$), European/model minority stereotypical attributes ($n = 55$), European/model-minority counter-stereotypical attributes ($n = 57$).

Social competence did not vary as a function of race, either alone or in interaction with model minority stereotypical attributes. Therefore, neither Hypotheses 1c nor 2c were supported. However, there was a main effect of stereotypical attributes on perceptions of the prospective student's social competence. Participants assigned to read about a student with stereotypical attributes reported that this student was more socially incompetent ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 0.67$) than one with counter-stereotypical attributes ($M = 2.06$, $SD = 0.82$), $F(1, 224) = 24.32$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .10$. That is, regardless of whether the prospective student was Asian or European, a student described in terms of model minority stereotypical attributes was perceived as less socially competent.

DISCUSSION

The current study compared White, non-Latinx students' responses to prospective international students from Asia versus Europe. We found that an Asian student was perceived as more likely to be admitted yet less academically competent than an identically qualified European student. In contrast, international students from Asia versus Europe were not perceived to differ in social competence. Instead, judgments of social competence were negatively related to having attributes consistent with the model minority stereotype. Overall, these findings provided partial support for the general hypothesis that social categorization based on race/ethnicity affects majority host students' responses to international students of color.

We found that White, non-Latinx students perceived that an Asian student was more likely to be admitted to the college than an equally qualified European student. This finding suggests that international students of color may be perceived as unfairly advantaged in the college admission process. This finding matches research on U.S. students' negative attitudes about college admission for Asian Americans, including a lack of support for affirmative action (Lowinger et al., 2018). Importantly, affirmative action considers many different factors, including race, to achieve student diversity by defining merit in ways that can benefit people from all racial/ethnic backgrounds. In contrast, many Asian students in the U.S. are affected by "negative action," defined as a preference for White over other races in admissions and hiring decisions (Kang, 1996 as cited by Kim, 2018). Similar concerns are reflected in recent legal efforts by a group, Students for Fair Admissions, which sued Harvard on behalf of Asian American applicants who perceived that they were unfairly denied admission (Jaschik, 2020). Although negative action is sometimes confused with affirmative action, some scholars argue that negative action discriminates against Asian students who must academically outperform White students to be considered equally qualified (Liu, 2008).

The current results showed that, despite identical academic qualifications, a prospective international student was perceived as less academically competent if she was described as being from Asia than from Europe. Given past research suggesting that Asian students are stereotyped as academically competent (Lin et al., 2005), this result was unexpected. However, this unexpected result may reflect the concept of negative action. Perhaps because Asian students are expected to be academically capable, an Asian student may need to outperform a White student to be perceived as equally successful by host peers. In addition, this unexpected result may be explained by ingroup/outgroup biases. Consistent with social categorization theory (SCT; Turner et al., 1987), White participants perceived the White international student (a racial ingroup member) to be more academically competent than the Asian international student (a racial outgroup member).

Importantly, we found that an international student's race was not the only factor that affected perceptions of the student's academic competence, suggesting that predictions based on SCT may vary, depending on co-existing social categories. Independent of whether they were from Asia or Europe, students described in terms of model minority attributes were perceived as more academically competent. This finding is consistent with past research with U.S. college student suggesting that peers with model minority attributes induce feelings of threat, independent of their race/ethnicity (Maddux et al., 2008). Yet importantly, we found that race and stereotypical attributes each exerted independent effects on perceptions of academic competence. Although an Asian student was perceived as less academically competent than a European student, being described in terms of model minority attributes, which is typically expected for Asian but not European students, led to perceptions of greater academic competence. Overall, our results suggest that Asian international students are academically devalued by White host peers specifically due to their race. This devaluation occurs regardless of whether Asian international students are also described in model minority stereotypical attributes.

A different pattern of results emerged for perceptions of social competence. An international student's race did not affect perceptions of her social competence. Instead, regardless of race, international students described as having stereotypical model minority attributes were perceived as less socially competent than those described in counter-stereotypical ways. This finding matches with past research on perceptions of Asian American and White prospective college students in which admissions counselors saw stereotypical Asian attributes, instead of race, as strongly related to perceived social incompetence (Chai & Weseley, 2017). The current study extends this past finding by showing that White, non-Latinx peers' judgments of international students' social competency are affected by stereotypical attributes, not by race.

Understanding biases related to judgments of social competence is important given that Asian international students studying abroad at a PWI reported substantially greater difficulties with social than with academic adjustment (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2017). The current study may help explain why host peers seemed generally disinterested in developing friendships with Asian international students in past research. Barriers to social interaction cited by Spencer-Oatey et al. (2017) included having different social interests and having different personalities. We speculate that perceptions of social interests and personality qualities are linked. That is, to the degree that the Asian students showed a lack of interest in social activities such as drinking alcohol and dancing, they may have been seen in terms of model minority attributes such as being serious and introverted. In turn, such perceptions may have reduced Asian students' social attractiveness as potential friends.

The current findings supplement past studies documenting challenges to adjustment faced by international students of color. Because a prospective student's race affected perceptions of how likely she was to be admitted to the college as well as evaluations of her academic competence, the current findings provide evidence for resentment towards students of color by host peers. This apparent resentment matches with past research documenting challenges faced by international students of color at PWIs (e.g., Houshmand et al., 2014). Unlike White international students from Europe, international students from Africa, Asia, and Latin America studying in the U.S. described feeling ignored and disrespected by covert and overt forms of hostility, verbal insults, and confrontation (Lee & Rice, 2007). Taken together with these past studies, the current study suggests that racial dissimilarity affects how welcoming or resentful host peers are towards international students. Therefore, institutions of higher education seeking to promote the

adjustment of international students of color should consider ways to provide students with the necessary support, including social support, from peers.

Unfortunately, many higher education institutions provide limited support services to foster adaption among international students studying in the U.S., and these interventions target the international students themselves (Madden et al., 2019). The current findings suggest the need for multicultural education for host peers to help promote a climate in which international students of color feel a sense of belonging. The goal of promoting multiculturalism is to acknowledge and affirm group differences while fostering positive attitudes towards those who are different (Rattan & Ambady, 2013). A general strategy to promote multiculturalism could be to highlight the positive effects of heterogeneous groups on instrumental outcomes such as problem-solving. For example, students might learn about the difficulties that emerge when racially homogenous groups work towards developing technology purportedly designed for universal use; they may also learn about the benefits of incorporating diverse voices, including those of people of color, to promote more useful applications (e.g., Wachter-Boettcher, 2018).

More specific strategies to promote multiculturalism might involve interventions designed to help host students' welcome diverse international students, perhaps by promoting awareness and empathy and reducing perceived threat. To promote awareness, educators might explain that it is common for people to feel more positively toward and more responsible for the well-being of others who appear similar to the self. Educators could ask host students to reflect on or discuss the potential adaptive benefits of such tendencies, the potential negative consequences, and the degree to which such tendencies match with their personal values. To promote empathy, host students might engage in situations that international students might encounter, such as taking a quiz in a different language or be eating culturally unfamiliar foods. Finally, interventions could be aimed at reducing perceptions of threat related to apparent competition for resources. For example, White students might be educated about the myth of the model minority and the pressures that such stereotypes place on Asian students. They might also learn about affirmative action and negative action debates, challenging the idea that students of color receive unfair advantages and preferential treatment. Helping host students identify the ways in which international students benefit them, and the campus more generally might help promote feelings of gratitude and compassion rather than competition and resentment.

Providing opportunities for meaningful, ongoing, high-quality intergroup contact between international and host students might also both increase empathy and reduce threat/anxiety. One specific suggestion might be to pair international students with a peer mentor. Facilitating ongoing, constructive interactions with host peers could be a useful supplement to existing programs that seek to promote international student integration. For example, a first-year seminar class for mostly Asian international students assessed whether the class helped students to learn about cultural norms for social interaction (Andrade, 2008). Although students reported being comfortable with diverse cultures, they also reported being less comfortable interacting with American peers than other peers, suggesting a need to foster international student comfort with host peer interactions. Providing structured opportunities such as peer mentoring might simultaneously benefit host peers as well as international students.

Future research is needed to test whether and under what conditions the adjustment of international students is directly affected by the receptivity of host peers. In past research, Asian international students reported significantly greater acculturative stress than European students (Poyrazli et al., 2004). Possibly, these differences in acculturative stress could be at least partly explained by host peer behaviors, including

a lack of social support, the presence of discrimination, or both. This is an important question for future research. In addition, in past research, compared to European international students, Asian international students reported significantly more anxiety as well as difficulty making new friends (Fritz et al., 2008). We strongly suspect that anxiety may be associated with facing social difficulties, although research is needed to specifically test whether and when these experiences are linked. Another area for future research involves the potential detrimental impact of strategies that international students of color use to be socially accepted in their host countries. For example, Zhao and Biernat (2018) found that Chinese students who adopt an Anglo name have lower self-esteem and this lower self-esteem also mediates a host of other psychological outcomes (e.g., overall well-being, mental and physical health).

The current research focused on host peers' receptivity to international students. However, future research is needed to study receptivity by faculty and staff to international students. For instance, prior work found White professors were less likely to respond to a student inquiry regarding graduate training when signed by a Chinese student using a stereotypically Chinese (compared to an Anglo) name (Zhao & Biernat, 2018). Similarly, Milkman and colleagues (2012) found evidence that faculty members favored requests to meet by White male students compared to minority and female students, even among faculty who received emails from students of their own race. Like the dominant host peers studied in the current research, these past studies suggest that many faculty members are less receptive than they might be to international students of color, and perhaps unintentionally so. Additional research on factors that affect faculty and staff responsiveness is needed given that these professionals are tasked with providing opportunities for academic and social integration and growth. Culturally competent faculty and staff who respond with greater receptivity might help offset the lack of receptivity offered by host peers.

Finally, future research also is needed to address the methodological limitations of the current study. Data were collected from a convenience sample of White, non-Latinx undergraduates, which may limit the external validity of the current findings. Students of color who are U.S. citizens also may show biases towards international students of color, although it is notable that most PWIs, by definition, enroll relatively few students of color, which limits the impact of their responses on the broader campus climate. In addition, U.S. students of color may themselves be negatively stereotyped in ways that create stress (McGree & Martin, 2011; Torres et al., 2010). That may adversely affect their own feelings of belonging on campus well as their receptivity towards international others. Studies of receptivity within different geographic regions are also needed. The current data were collected from a single PWI in a fairly rural, largely White county in upstate NY. It's unclear whether White participants in more racially and ethnically diverse regions would respond similarly to prospective international students of color. Given that the majority of international students enroll in schools in NY, TX, and CA (Israel & Batalova, 2021), studies of host receptivity across these different states, including within urban, rural, and suburban regions, should be conducted.

Other limitations warrant mention as well. Participants in the current study did not actually interact with a prospective international student. Naturalistic studies are needed, given that perceptions based on actual interactions may differ from self-reported perceptions. Also, data for the current project were collected prior to the start of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Future research is also needed to investigate the ways in which the pandemic has affected the receptivity of host students to international students of color, and in particular, students from Asia. After the first reports of the virus were reported from the Chinese city of Wuhan, the illness was often referred to as the "Chinese flu" or "Wuhan virus."

Subsequently, many people of Asian descent reported being targets of both explicit hate crimes and less explicit acts of racism and xenophobia, both in general (e.g., Tessler, Choi, & Kao, 2020) and on college campuses (e.g., Haft & Zhou, 2021).

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Overall, the current findings provide evidence that the racially dominant peer group responds to international students of color in ways that may create additional challenges for them in adjusting to college. Perceiving an Asian student as unfairly advantaged compared to a European student matches with past descriptions of U.S. college students' feelings of "envious anti-Asian prejudice" (Lin et al., 2005, p. 34). In contrast, we found that a student's model minority characteristics, rather than her race, were more strongly associated with her perceived lack of social competence. Programs that foster the academic and social integration of individual international students are likely to have limited success if institutions fail to consider how receptive host peers are to international students, particularly students of color who are at risk of being devalued.

REFERENCES

Andrade, M. S. (2008). The value of a first-year seminar: International students' insights in retrospect. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice, 10*, 483-506. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.2190/CS.10.4.e

Chai, D., & Weseley, A. J. (2017). Is STEM running out of steam for Asian Americans? College admissions officers' perceptions of applicants. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology, 20,* 45-53. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/ajsp.12165

Craig, M. A., & Richeson, J. A. (2014). More diverse yet less tolerant? How the increasingly diverse racial landscape affects White American's racial attitudes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 40*, 750-761. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0146167214524993

Danbold, F., & Huo, Y. J. (2014). No longer "all American"?: Whites' defensive reactions to their numerical decline. *Social Psychological and Personality Science,* 1-9. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1948550614546355

Devos, T., & Banaji, M. R. (2005). American = White? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 88,* 447-466. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.88.3.447

Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J. C., & Glick, P. (2007). Universal dimensions of social cognition: Warmth and competence. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 11,* 77-83. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2006.11.005

Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J. C., Glick, P., & Xu, J. (2002). A model of (often mixed) stereotype content: Competence and warmth respectively follow from perceived status and competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 82, 878-902. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.82.6.878

Fiske, S. T., & Taylor, S. E. (2017). *Social cognition: From brains to culture* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Fritz, M. V., Chin, D., & DeMarinis, V. (2008). Stressors, anxiety, acculturation and adjustment among international and North American students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 32,* 244-259. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2008.01.001

Haft, S. L., & Zhou. Q. (2021). An outbreak of xenophobia: Perceived discrimination and anxiety in Chinese American college students before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Psychology*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/ijop.12740

Houshmand, S., Spanierman, L. B., & Tafarodi, R. W. (2014). Excluded and avoided: Racial microaggressions targeting Asian international students in Canada. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 20*, 377-388. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0035404

Institute for International Education. (2020). Fast Facts 2020. https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Fact-Sheets-and-Infographics/Fast-Facts

Israel, E., & Batalova, J. (January 14, 2021). International students in the U.S. Migration Information Source. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/ international-students-united-states-2020.

Jaschik, S (November 16, 2020). Appeals court backs Harvard on affirmative action. Inside Higher Education. https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2020/11/16/appeals-court-backs-harvard-affirmative-action

Kang, J. (1996). Negative action against Asian Americans: The internal instability of Dworkin's defense of affirmative action. *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review (CR-CL), 31,* 1-48. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=707624

Kim, C. J. (2018). Are Asians the new blacks? Affirmative action, anti-blackness, and the sociometry of race. *Du Bois Review, 15*, 217-244. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X18000243

Lee, J. J., & Rice, C. (2007). Welcome to America? International student perceptions of discrimination. *Higher Education, 53,* 381-409. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10734-005-4508-3

Lin, M. H., Kwan, V. S. Y., Cheung, A., & Fiske, S. T. (2005). Stereotype content mode explains prejudice for an envied outgroup: Scale of Anti-Asian American stereotypes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 31*, 34-47. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0146167204271320

Liu, A. (2008). Affirmative action and negative action: How Jian Li's case can benefit Asian Americans. *Michigan Journal of Race & Law, 13*(2), 391-431. https://repository.law.umich.edu/mjrl/vol13/iss2/2

Lo, C. C., McCallum, D. M., Hughes, M., Smith, G. P. A., & McKnight, U. (2017). Racial differences in college students' assessments of campus race relations. *Journal of College Student Development, 58*, 247-263. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/csd.2017.0018

Lowinger, R. J., Sheng, Z., & Hyun, H. (2018). College students' attitudes toward affirmative action policies for Asian Americans. *North American Journal of Psychology, 20*, 619-636.

Madden-Dent, T., Wood, D., & Roskina, K. (2019). An inventory of international student services at 200 U.S. universities and colleges: Descriptive data of pre-departure and post-arrival supports. *Journal of International Students, 9,* 993-1008. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.32674/jis.v9i4.346

Maddux, W. W., Galinski, A. D., Cuddy, A. J. C., & Polifroni, M. (2008). When being a model minority is good…and bad: Realistic threat explains negativity toward Asian Americans. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 34,* 74-89. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/ 10.1177/0146167207309195

McGree, E. O., & Martin, D. B. (2011). "You would not believe what I have to go through to prove my intellectual value!" Stereotype management among academically successful Black mathematics and engineering students. *American Educational Research Journal, 48*, 1347-1389. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0002831211423972

Mwangi, C A G., Thelamour, B., Ezeofor, I., Carpenter, A. (2018). "Black elephant in the room": Black students contextualizing campus racial climate within U.S. racial climate. *Journal of College Student Development, 59,* 456-474. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2018.0042

Nguyen, M. H., Chan, J., Nguyen, B., & Teranishi, R. T. (2018). Beyond compositional diversity: Examining the campus climate experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander students. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 11*, 484-201. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000071

Milkman, K. L., Akinola, M., & Chugh, D. (2012). Temporal distance and discrimination: An audit study in academia. *Psychological Science, 23*, 710-717. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0956797611434539

Outten, R. H., Schmitt, M. T., Miller, D. A., & Garcia, A. L. (2012). Feeling threatened about the future: White's emotional reactions to anticipated ethnic demographic changes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 38,* 14-25. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0146167211418531

Poyrazli, S., Kavanaugh, P. R., Baker, A., & Al-Timimi, N. (2004). Social support and demographic correlates of acculturative stress in international students. *Journal of College Counseling, 7,* 73-82. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1882.2004.tb00261.x

Rattan, A., & Ambady, N. (2013). Diversity ideologies and intergroup relations: An examination of colorblindness and multiculturalism. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 43, 12-21.* http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.1892

Sanger, J., & Baer, J. (November 2019). *Fall 2019 international student enrollment snapshot survey.* Report of the Institute of International Education. https://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Insights/Publications/Fall-2019-International-Student-Enrollment-Survey

Schuster, M. T. (2020). "An experience unlike any other": The experiences of first-year students with minoritized identities with campus climate during the 2016 presidential election. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. Online First. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000252

Spencer-Oatey, H., Dauber, D., Jing, J., & Lifei, W. (2017). Chinese students' social integration into the university community: hearing the students' voices. *Higher Education* 74, 739-756. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10734-016-0074-0

Tajfel, H., & Turner, C. J. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel, & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations*. Nelson-Hall.

Tessler, H., Choi, M. & Kao, G. (2020) The anxiety of being Asian American: Hate crimes and negative biases during the COVID-19 pandemic. *American Journal of Criminal Justice, 45***,** 636–646. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-020-09541-5

Torres, L., Driscoll, M. W., & Burrow, A. L. (2010). Racial microaggressions and psychological functioning among highly achieving African-Americans: A mixed-methods approach. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 29,* 1074-1099. DOI: https://doi.org/ 10.1521/jscp.2010.29.10.1074

Turner, H. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. C. (1987). *Rediscovering the social self: A self-categorization theory.* Basil Blackwell.

Van Horne, S., Lin, S., Anson, M., & Jacobson, W. (2018). Engagement, satisfaction, and belonging: International undergraduates at U.S. research universities. *Journal of International Students, 8,* 351-374. http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1134313

Wachter-Boettcher, S. (2018). *Technically wrong: Sexist apps, biased algorithms and the threats of toxic tech*. WW. Norton.

Wang, L., Bordon, J. J., Wang, K. T., & Yeung, J. G. (2019). Acculturation, enculturation, perceived discrimination, and well-being: A comparison between U.S.-raised and non–U.S.-raised Asian students. *Asian American Journal of Psychology, 10*, 22-32. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/aap0000117

Yao, C. W., Briscoe, K. L., & Rutt, J. N. (2020). In the aftermath of a racialized incident: Exploring international students of color's perceptions of campus racial climate. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. Online First. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000179

Yeo, H. J. T., Mendenhall, R., Harwood, S. A., & Huntt, M. B. (2019). Asian international student and Asian American student: Mistaken identity and racial microaggressions. *Journal of International Students, 9*, 39-65. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.32674/jis.v911.278

Yoo, H. C., Burrola, K. S., & Steger, M. F. (2010). A preliminary report on a new measure: Internalization of the model minority myth measure (IM-4) and its psychological correlates among Asian American college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 57*, 114-127. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0017871

Yoo, H. C., Miller, M. J., & Yip, P. (2015). Validation of the internalization of the model minority myth measure (IM-4) and its link to academic performance and psychological adjustment among Asian American adolescents. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 21,* 237-246. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0037648

Zhao, X., & Biernat, M. (2017). "Welcome to the U.S." but "change your name"? Adopting Anglo names and discrimination. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 70*, 59-68. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2016.12.008

Zhao, X., & Biernat, M. (2018). “I have two names, Xian and Alex”: Psychological correlates of adopting Anglo names. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 49,* 587-601. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177%2F00220221187631

Jennifer Katz, PhD, is a Professor of Psychology at SUNY Geneseo, USA. Her research focuses on the social context of individual well-being. Email: katz@geneseo.edu

Claire R. Gravelin, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at SUNY Geneseo, USA. Her research focuses on the social cues that affect feelings of belongingness. Email: gravelin@geneseo.edu

Elizabeth McCabe, BA, completed her undergraduate degree in psychology at SUNY Geneseo, USA. She’s now pursuing graduate work in clinical psychology from Hostra, USA. Email: elizabethmccabe427@gmail.com