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THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE CIES HIGHER EDUCATION SIG

ISSUE INTRODUCTIONS

EMPIRATICAL ARTICLES

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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.

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Introduction

Rosalind Latiner Raby

California State University, Northridge

Editor-In-Chief

Dear Readers -

I am pleased to share the Volume 14, Issue 1, 2022 of the *Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education* (JCIHE). In this current issue JCIHE is honored to publish articles of higher education in the following countries: Canada, China, New Zealand, Taiwan, United Kingdom, and United States.

JCIHE is an open access, independent, double-blinded 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). The mission of the journal is to serve as a place to share new thinking on analysis, theory, policy, and practice, and to encourage reflective and critical thinking on issues that influence comparative and international higher education. JCIHE showcases new and diverse international research that uses rigorous methodology that focuses on theory, policy, practice, critical analysis, and development analysis of issues that are influence higher education. JCIHE has as its core principles: a) comparative research; b) engagement with theory; and c) diverse voices in terms of authorship.

JCIHE is honored to publish new and emerging topics in comparative and international higher educational whose themes represent scholarship from authors from around the world. Two broad themes are represented in the articles in the 14(1) issue: Student Learning Strategies and Institutional and Programmatic Context.

Student Learning Strategies

Student learning strategies and pedagogy are explored in seven articles. International graduate students' experiences are shared in three articles with a focus on female Chinese students studying in

Canada (Ge & Durst), Chinese Graduate students studying in the United States, and Asian students studying in Taiwan (Phan & Liu). Two articles examine the merits of institutional services to international students with a focus on writing centers at a US institution (Nichols-Beset, Yu, & Jamsen) and sports participation with a focus of being a fan in the United States (Kim, Moiseichik, Han, & Stokowski). Finally, three articles explore the lived experiences of international students with a focus on everyday diplomacy of female Malaysian Muslim students studying in the United Kingdom (Ibnu), the employability of international students studying in the United States (Niu, Xub, Zhuc, & Hunter-Jonson), and the cultural perspectives of Arab and U.S. students about their US university experiences (Abid, Ibarra, and Wanger).

Institutional and Programmatic Context

One article explores programmatic effects of a pedagogy to enhance students learning from participation in a U.S. Study Abroad program offered in Cuba and Brazil (Bongila). Three articles explore institutional level changes and the effects of institutional policies and strategies. The first article explores the effects of diversity initiatives at University of Oxford (Wilson) and the second explores how COVID-19 policies at a Chinese university are influencing international students who are waiting for re-entry (Yang & Shen). The third explores how a non-traditional study abroad experience leads to the recognition of the diverse ways in which study abroad may occur in the institution and the impact student learning (Rapley & Skryme).

Articles

The Following Articles are included in this Issue

Yuanlu Niu, University of Arkansas, US, **Xu Xub**, Henderson State University, US, **Yidan Zhuc**, Lingnan University, Hong Kong, and **Yvonne Hunter-Johnson**, Southern Illinois University, USA. *Exploring Self-Perceived Employability and Its Determinants Among International Students in The United States*

This article examines employability of international students who studied in the United States. Survey data detailed demographic factors, educational factors, work-related factors, language, and U.S. experience factors, and family factors of the international students. The article examines how gender moderates the relationships between perceived employability and other factors is conducted. Results show that international students are confident in their employability, but that female international students have less advantages in the field of engineering.

Douglas J Rapley (University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates) & **Gillian Skyrme** (Massey University, New Zealand). *Studying Abroad at 'Home': Going to Japan in New Zealand*

This article examines the experiences of a group of Japanese study abroad students who attend a New Zealand based institution that aims to replicate a Japanese environment. Findings reveal that management provided specifically for the Japanese students, isolated them from other students, which is contrary to study abroad objectives. After initial resistance, students accepted practices and propagated the institution's Japaneseness as it became a familiar living and studying environment. The study contributes to the recognition of the diversity of ways in which study abroad may occur.

Lin Ge, University of Regina, Canada and **Douglas Durst**, University of Regina, Canada *The Auto-ethnographic Inquiry of a Female Chinese Graduate Student in Canada: Challenging, Accepting, and Transforming*

This article uses an auto-ethnographic inquiry to dig into the first author's experiences and stories as a Chinese female graduate student in Canada. Attention is placed on connections with the academic climate and broader communities paying attention to the gender-based, culture-based, and race-based challenges that the author faced and the coping strategies developed. The study shows that motivation, knowledge, and organizational gaps faced by the female group because of gender inequality, and cross-cultural and cross-racial differences exist, but that strategies can minimize those effects.

Gam Thi Phan (National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan) & **Wei-Yu Liu** (National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan). *Why Institutional Scholarship Policy Matters: Its Influence on Graduate International Students at a Regional University in Taiwan*

This article examples scholarship policies given to international graduate students from throughout Asia who are studying at a regional university in Taiwan. Focus is on enrollment choices based on the scholarship and decision-making upon enrollment.

J.P. Bongila University of St. Thomas, United States *Pedagogy of Global Positioning Leadership as Applied to Study Abroad*

This article examines how the pedagogy of Global Positioning Leadership (GPL) enhance global learning of graduate students who participated in three short-term study abroad programs in Cuba and Brazil. Results show that students proceeded through five stages: 1) fleshing out individual preconceptions; 2) writing up four individual goals; 3) analyzing conflicting narratives; 4) engaging in experiential learning; and 5) mapping post-conceptions. Findings reveal that student immersion in Global South social realities results in significant individual, social, educational, and professional change of worldviews.

Kibaek Kim, Korea Institute of Sport Science, Republic of Korea, **Merry Moiseichik**, University of Arkansas, USA, **Jinwook Han**, Kyung Hee University, Republic of Korea, and **Sarah Stokowski**, Clemson University, USA *Exploring the Effect of Team Identification on International Students' Adjustment to Higher Education in the United States*

This article examines the types of adjustment international students in a U.S. university make as they transition to a new environment. The focus of the article is to see the extent to which college sports and their fans can contribute to the population's adjustment process. Results show that such participation lead to social adjustment by building a sense of belonging and academic adjustment which gave a period of relaxation from their academic studies.

Ireena Nasiha Ibnu, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysia. Education, Aspiration, and Everyday Diplomacy: An Ethnographic Study of Female Malaysian Muslim Students in the UK

This article explores the educational experiences and aspirations of Female Malay Muslim students in UK higher institutions. Building on an ethnographic approach, an in-depth interview with 30 female Malay students, and the notions of aspiration, well-balanced citizenship and 'everyday diplomacy' are deployed in this research to understand the everyday experiences of these students. Hence, it is argued that the privileges in education policy for Bumiputera Malays have shaped the notion of achievement they hold and their attitude towards overseas education as well as their experiences abroad.

Kristen Nichols-Besel, Bethel University, USA, Xi Yu, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, and **Kirsten Jamsen**, University of Minnesota – Twin Cities, USA. *International Students' Perspectives on Online Interfaces, Identity, and Environment in a U.S. Writing Center*

This article examines the perspectives of international students in the United States who use writing centers to meet their writing needs and personal goals. Students share how accessibile and responsive the

writing center services are to their needs. Results show how writing centers and other student support services should take the initiative in opening up conversations with and among our students to create the conditions for their success.

Qiguang Yang (Jiangnan University) & **Jiameng Shen** (Jiangnan University). The Impact of COVID-19 Outbreak on International Student Mobility: Analysis, Response Strategies and Experience from China

This article examines the effects of COVID-19 on the international student population in China. These students are in limbo waiting for their return to China. Some are considering abandoning or change their study abroad plans as well. Results show the importance of building of a top-down government-led management system, a collaborative network of different stakeholders, and fighting the pandemic with international education cooperation.

Samar A. Abid (Oklahoma State University, USA), **Edgar Apanecatl Ibarra** (Universidad Iberoamericana Puebla, Mexico), and **Stephen P. Wanger** (Oklahoma State University, USA). Fostering Diversified Cultural Perspectives in a New Era of the Globalized Higher Education System: Comparative Analysis of Arab and American Student Perceptions

This article uses Q-methodology to compare the perspectives that one group of international students and one group of domestic students hold regarding the American model of the research university. Views from Arab students studying in the U.S. and domestic American students studying at the same institution. Results show that students from both cultural backgrounds hold unique perspectives regarding the value of the American model of the research university that show the importance of incorporating diversified cultural perspectives throughout the institution to foster innovative and needed institutional reform.

Chih-Hsin Hsu (Arkansas Tech University, United States). *Chinese Graduate Students' Narratives and Sociolinguistic Advice on Intercultural Communication at Southern U.S. Universities*

This article explores how Chinese graduate students considered advanced English speakers continuously report difficulties in engaging in "intercultural communication" with Native English Speakers (NESs) in the U.S. Using co-cultural theory, the students share that the NESs fail to understand that Chinese students' words were not literal or that their selfless words were self-centered decisions and shared that truly effective intercultural communication requires effort from both sides on their host campuses.

Jeffery L. Wilson, Virginia Commonwealth University, United States. *The Quest to Increase Diversity at the University of Oxford*

This article analyzes how an elite institution pursues diversity initiatives. Research focused on strategies adopted for recruitment and retention whereby positive results were reported after implementation. Removing barriers that may prevent marginalized populations from enrolling were critical towards these efforts. Oxford has taken steps to increase diversity, and it appears they are having modest success. New approaches to diversity will hopefully lead to more students applying and ultimately enrolling into the prestigious institution.

JCIHE Support

I want to thank several individuals who were instrumental in the publication of this issue. First, I want to thank the JCIHE Associate Editor, Hayes Tang for his support, insight, and creativity. Second, I want to thank the co-chairs of the CIES HE-SIG, Pilar Mendoza and Anatoly Oleksiyenko for their guidance. Third, the timely publication of the issue is dependent on the expert management of the journal

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Empirical Article

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Exploring Self-Perceived Employability and Its Determinants Among International Students in The United States

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceived employability and its factors (e.g. demographic factors, educational factors, work-related factors, language and U.S. experience factors, and family factors) among international students in the U.S. Also, the study examines how gender moderates the relationships between perceived employability and other factors. A survey was conducted among international students at a midwestern public university in the U.S. and 138 participants' responses were included in the data analysis. The result shows that international students are confident in their employability. Interestingly, compared to female international students, the advantages brought by being in the field of engineering or having more work experiences are mainly for males. The present study may attract more scholars' attention to research the education outcomes for international students and explore the strategies that improve the outcomes.

Keywords: Self-perceived employability, employment, international students, higher education, United States

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INTRODUCTION

International students refer to foreign students who undertake their studies in a country other than their home country (Shapiro, et al., 2014). In the United States, the top one destination for international students, international students are defined as "anyone who is enrolled at an institution of higher education in the United States who is not a U.S. citizen, an immigrant (permanent resident) or a refugee" by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (para 2, 2015). During the 2018/2019 academic year, there were 872,214 international students studying in the higher education sector in the United States, including 431,930 undergraduate students, 377,943 graduate students, 62,341 non-degree students, and 223,085 students undertaking Optional Practical Training (OPT) (Open Doors, 2019). In 2018, international students made up 5.5 percent of the total of U.S. university students and contributed $44.7 billion to the United States economy (Institute of International Education, 2019). Asian countries remained the largest source of international students in the United States in 2018/2019 (Institute of International Education, 2019). With 21.1 percent of all international students, and Engineering remained the largest academic field of study for international students (Institute of International Education, 2019).

One of the most important motivations for international students' pursuit of higher education is to promote future career and professional opportunities (Huang, 2013; Nilsson & Ripmesster, 2016; Zhou, 2015). The outcome of international education attracts increasing interests among scholars in the perceived employability and education-to-work transition (Huang, 2013; Nilsson & Ripmesster, 2016). Yet, there is still a lack of empirical studies focusing on understanding international students' perceptions of employability and the strategies to improve their employability. It is important to explore the perceived employability among international students and examine its factors for higher education institutions to make sure that international students have a satisfactory experience abroad and to prepare them for the workplace. According to Sitarz (2022), the number of female international students on campus has increased from 62,000 in 2004 to 156,000 in 2016, based on full-time students on F-1 student visas. Gender plays an important role in term of shaping employability perceptions of employed and unemployed individuals in workplaces (Jackson & Wilton, 2017; Cifre et. al., 2018). Although employability is widely studied, there is not so much attention given to gender perspectives.

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceived employability and its factors (e.g., demographic factors, educational factors, work-related factors, language and U.S. experience factors, and family factors) among international students in the U.S. Also, the study examines how gender as a moderator impacts the relationships between perceived employability and other factors. The following research questions guide the present study:

1. To what extent do international students perceive their employability?
2. What factors impact the perceived employability of international students?
3. To what extent do the relationships between perceived employability and other factors differ by gender among international students?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The employability framework and scale developed by Rothwell et al. (2008, 2009) were used to guide the study design and measure variables as they have been used to perform exploratory validation among university students. For example, Niu et al. (2022) used the perceived employability from Rothwell et al. (2008, 2009) to assess the employability of university students in human resource development

programs. Perceived employability, closely relating to individuals' capacity for obtaining and retaining a job, becomes an important predictor of an individual's ability to find employment (Rothwell, et al, 2008; 2009). According to Rothwell et al. (2008, 2009), the perceived employability is measured by four dimensions including the self-beliefs, the state of the external labor market, the field of study, and the university's reputation. The self-beliefs reflect students' perceptions of their skills and behaviors (Rothwell, et al, 2009). The state of the external labor indicates the impacts of the external labor market on employability (Bowers-Brown & Harvey, 2004; Brown & Hesketh, 2004). The field of the study refers to the status and credibility of the study field (Mason, et al., 2003). The university reputation relates to university rankings and brand image (Fearn, 2008), as well as the reputation with employers (Murray & Robinson, 2001).

LITERATUR REVIEW

Perceived Employability

Employability has been widely studied in different areas, including business and management, educational studies, economics, and psychology. Employability is defined as "having the capability to gain initial employment, maintain employment, and obtain new employment if required" (Hillage & Pollard, 1998, p.1). Based on this concept, scholars explored the notion of perceived employability by focusing on "the perceived ability to attain sustainable employment appropriate to one's qualification level" (Rothwell, et al., 2008, p. 2).

Perceived employability comprises different elements, including an individual's assets, personal circumstances, and the labor market context (Alvarez, et. al, 2017; Hillage & Pollard, 1998; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). Individuals' assets include the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for employment as well as the way they present these assets to their employers. Personal circumstances refer to the context relating to individuals' employment and career choice. The labor market context is formed by the labor market environment, local and global circumstances.

Factors of Perceived Employability

Previous studies regarding international students focus on their second language learning and education (Herold, 2012; Sudhershan, 2012); their cultural adjustment into higher education and local society (Zhang & Zhu, 2014; Lu, et al., 2019); identity construction and formation (Batterton & Horner, 2016; Arias-Valenzuela et. al., 2016); and career choice (McFadden & Seedorff, 2017; Amuedo-Dorantes & Furtado, 2019). However, international students' employability is still understudied, and few studies explore how different variables impact international students' employability. Previous studies have examined several factors influencing the perceived employability among university students and graduates, and the results are not consistent.

Demographic Factors

Cifre et. al. (2018) explored the relationship between gender and employability. For the scholars, the concept of gender refers to "the socially constructed characteristics of women and men such as: norms, roles, and relationships of and between groups of women and men" (p. 2). According to their study, they found that women are more confident about their employment chances when unemployed, while men feel more confident about their employment chances when employed. They further pointed out that sex-gender identity interaction reveals that "being feminine associates with the highest level of perceived employability for an unemployed man and the lowest for an unemployed woman" (p. 1). Johnson (2018) studied the

impact of gender differences on the employability among male and female African American engineering students. Literature showed that 50% of females considered themselves less employable than males (Jognson, 2018). However, many scholars did not find perceived employability influenced by gender (Jackson & Wilton, 2016; Niu, et al., 2019; Rothwell, et al., 2009).

Researchers used age as control variables and found that it was negatively related to perceived employability among students and graduates (Jackson & Wilton, 2016; Purcell, et al., 2007; Rothwell et al., 2008). However, Niu, et al. (2019) conducted a study among graduates of a workforce education and development program in the U.S. and found there was no relationship between age and the perceived employability.

Educational Factors

Grade Pont Average (GPA) plays a significant role in predicting students' employability. Research shows GPA predicts a significantly higher level of confidence in individuals' perceived employability (Qenani, et al., 2014). For example, a job applicant's résumé with higher GPAs may get better evaluations and raise the chances of getting job interviews (Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017). This will further affect students'/international students' employability, motivation for learning, and desire for obtaining a good job. However, several scholars have not found a significant difference in the perceived employability based on GPA (Greer & Waight, 2017; Ng & Feldman, 2014).

Researchers found a negative relationship between the length of time in university and perceived employability. Qenani, et al. (2014) pointed out that the odds of perceived employability decreased by 36% for the fourth-year students in comparison with second-year students. Drange, et al. (2018) found that the educational level had a positive impact on employability, while Niu reported that graduates with a doctoral degree had a lower level of confidence in their employability compared to the ones with a bachelor's degree. However, Rothwell and Arnold (2007) did not find a significant relationship between educational attainment level and perceived employability. Farčnik and Domadenik (2012) conducted a study to examine the effect of the field of study on the probability of employment among university graduates in Slovenia. The results showed that graduates from engineering had a higher probability of employment than most other study fields. However, there was still a lack of studies that focused on investigating the perceived employability of students and graduates across different fields of study.

Work-Related Factors

Work experience including internships and placement was considered positively to enhance perceived employability (Jackson & Wilton, 2017; Qenani, et al., 2014). Qenani, et al. (2014) indicated that students who had internship experience felt significantly confident in terms of their employability. Jackson & Wilton (2017) indicated that having work experience was positively related to perceived employability among undergraduate students.

Family Factors

Family responsibilities have an important impact on study and work. For example, employees, who need to take care of their children, are more likely to have family-work conflicts (Behson, 2002; Carlson, 1999). Also, family responsibilities are reported as the main reason for reducing actual working hours (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2003). However, no research has investigated the impact of family responsibility on perceived employability.

Language and International Experience Factors

Language has been identified as a challenge faced by international students in previous literature (Hunter-Johnson, & Niu, 2019; Kuo, 2011; Khoshlessan & Das, 2017), most often it has been from the perception of English as a second language while pursuing higher education in the U.S. However, no research has explored the impact of language barriers on the perceived employability of international students. Previous studies show that studying abroad can improve students' career opportunities. For example, Bracht et al. (2006) conducted a comprehensive study in Europe and found that former Erasmus students were more often internationally employed than their immobile peers. However, there is a lack of studies that investigate how the length of international experience influences the perceived employability.

RESEARCH METHOD

To address the research questions, a quantitative study was conducted through the administration of an online survey to international students within a public university in the US. The survey included background questions and a Liker-scale questionnaire consisting of 14 items from Rothwell et al.'s (2008, 2009) employability scale.

Participants and Sampling

A convenience sampling was conducted for recruiting participants through the Listserv of international students at a midwestern public university in the US in 2018. We sent out around 1,500 emails and received 159 responses. The response rate was 10.6%. Table 1 shows the background information of participants based on demographic information, educational information, work-related information, family information, language and international experience information.

Data Collection

We utilized Rothwell et al.'s (2008, 2009) employability scale to measure the perceived employability of international students. Rothwell et al.'s (2008, 2009) employability scale includes four dimensions: the self-beliefs, the state of the external labor market, the field of study, and the university's reputation. According to Rothwell et al. (2008), the alpha internal reliability coefficients were 0.75 for self-perceived employability items among undergraduate students in the UK. The alpha internal reliability coefficients were 0.84 for self-perceived employability items among graduate students in the UK (Rothwell et al., 2009). Since all the participants were from the same university, we excluded the items in the dimensions of the university's reputation. Participants responded to the employability scale on a Likert scale from strongly disagree =1 to strongly agree =5. Also, participants were required to complete an informed consent form and a questionnaire on their background information. Finally, 138 participants' responses were included in the data analysis because 21 participants skipped several scale items.

Data Analysis

We conducted a descriptive analysis to address the first research question, which explores the perceived employability of international students. Then, we conducted Welch's t-test, one-way ANOVA, and hierarchical regressions to examine the factors that influence the perceived employability and the moderating effect of gender.

Table 1: Background Information of Participants (N=138)

Variables	Gender			
	Male (n=86)		Female (n=52)	
	n	%	n	%
Demographic Factors				
Age: Younger than 35	76	88.4%	38	73.1%
Age: 35+	10	11.6%	14	26.9%
Ethnicity: Non-Asian	28	32.6%	15	28.8%
Ethnicity: Asian	58	67.4%	37	71.2%
Educational Factors				
Degree level: Undergraduate	13	15.1%	9	17.3%
Degree level: Graduate	73	84.9%	43	82.7%
Academic field: Non-Engineering	46	53.5%	43	82.7%
Academic field: Engineering	40	46.5%	9	17.3%
Academic standing: 4th or less years	75	87.2%	46	88.5%
Academic standing: 5th or more years	11	12.8%	6	11.5%
GPA: 2.5 to 2.9	4	4.7%	2	3.8%
GPA: 3.0 to 3.4	11	12.8%	6	11.5%
GPA: 3.5 to 3.9	47	54.7%	27	51.9%
GPA: 4.0	24	27.9%	17	32.7%
Assistantship/Fellowship/Scholarship: No	22	25.6%	13	25%
Assistantship/Fellowship/Scholarship: Yes	64	74.4%	39	75%
Work-Related Factors				
Work experience: Less than 1 year	25	29.1%	18	34.6%
Work experience: More than 1 year	61	70.9%	34	65.4%
Plan: Other	22	25.6%	13	25%
Plan: Work in the U.S.	64	74.4%	39	75%
Family Factors				
Take care children: Yes	13	15.1%	10	19.2%
Take care children: No	73	84.9%	42	80.8%
Marital status: Married	26	30.2%	16	30.8%
Marital status: Single	60	69.8%	36	69.2%
Language and International Experience Factors				
English as the first language: Yes	10	11.6%	5	9.6%
English as the first language: No	76	88.4%	47	90.4%
U.S. experience: Less than 3 years	46	53.5%	23	44.2%
U.S. experience: 3+ years	40	46.5%	29	55.8%

RESULTS

According to the descriptive analysis, the mean score of overall perceived employability items is 3.5 (*SD*=0.62), which suggests international students are confident in their employability. Table 2 shows the results of Welch's *t*-test, which compares the two levels of variables on the perceived employability

among international students. The results indicate that the perceived employability mean score of males is significantly higher than the mean score of females at $p<0.05$ level. International students within the engineering field have a significantly higher mean score of perceived employability than ones in other fields at $p<0.01$ level. International students with assistantship/fellowship/scholarship have a significantly higher mean score of perceived employability than the ones without at $p<0.1$ level. International students with more than 1-year's work experience have a significantly higher mean score of perceived employability than the one with less than 1-year's work experience at $p<0.01$ level. International students, who plan to work in the U.S. after graduation, have a significantly higher mean score of perceived employability than the ones with other plans at $p<0.1$ level. We did not find any significant differences between the two levels of other variables on perceived employability. Since GPA has more than two levels, we performed one-way ANOVA to detect the potential difference in means of perceived employability among the groups. There is no significant difference in the mean of perceived employability among different GPAs ($F(3,134)=1.139$, $p=0.336$).

Table 2: Welch's t-test Results Comparing Different Level of Variables on Perceived Employability of International Students (N=138)

Variables	*n*	Perceived Employability (*mean*)	*df*	*t*
Demographic Factors				
Gender: Male	86	3.59	134.83	2.35**
Gender: Female	52	3.36		
Age: Younger than 35	114	3.51	37.63	0.49
Age: 35+	24	3.45		
Ethnicity: Non-Asian	43	3.47	65.55	-0.29
Ethnicity: Asian	95	3.51		
Educational Factors				
Degree level: Undergraduate	22	3.52	34.38	0.87
Degree level: Graduate	116	3.50		
Academic field: Non-Engineering	89	3.39	122.05	-3.02***
Academic field: Engineering	49	3.69		
Academic standing: 4^{th} or less years	121	3.53	17.61	0.99
Academic standing: 5^{th} or more years	17	3.29		
Assistantship/Fellowship/Scholarship: No	35	3.37	78.51	-1.67*
Assistantship/Fellowship/Scholarship: Yes	103	3.54		
Work-Related Factors				
Work experience: Less than 1 year	43	3.25	65.53	-2.94***
Work experience: More than 1 year	95	3.61		
Plan: Other	35	3.37	78.51	-1.67*
Plan: Work in the U.S.	103	3.54		
Family Factors				
Take care children: Yes	23	3.51	35.00	0.11
Take care children: No	115	3.50		
Marital status: Married	42	3.58	74.24	1.03
Marital status: Single	96	3.46		
Language and International Experience Factors				
English as the first language: Yes	15	3.46	17.74	-0.27
English as the first language: No	123	3.50		
U.S. experience: Less than 3 years	69	3.53	133.85	0.53
U.S. experience: 3+ years	69	3.47		

Note. *p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

The impact of individual factors on perceived employability is presented in Table 3 using a hierarchical multiple regression model. We grouped factors into five categories and built five regression models by adding one category to the previous model. In the first model (Table 3, Column (1)), when we

controlled only demographic factors, the results showed that female international students were significantly less confident in the perceived employability than their male peers at $p<0.05$ level. However, age and ethnicity did not have any significant impact on perceived employability. In the second model (Table 3, Column (2)), when we added the educational factors, the results showed that gender did not significantly influence the perceived employability. Also, the results showed assistantship/ fellowship/ scholarship experience and academic field had significant impacts on the perceived employability. International students with assistantship/fellowship/scholarship experience or studying in the engineering field had a higher level of perceived employability. In the third model (Table 3, Column (3)), we added work-related factors, and only academic field and work experience showed significant impacts on the perceived employability.

International students, who study in the engineering field or have more than 1-year of work experience, are more confident in the perceived employability. In the fourth and fifth model (Table 3, Column (4) and Column (5)), we added family factors and language and international experience factors, respectively. Academic field and work experience still show significant impacts, but none of the other factors showed significant impacts on the perceived employability. We also conducted a power analysis to confirm the range of the sample size to be able to identify such an impact with 90% confidence at a significance level of 0.05. In a novel situation like this, we followed Cohen's effect size benchmarks when conducting power analysis. For a linear model, the suggested guidelines (Cohen, 1988) for effect size are the following: Small- 0.02, Medium - 0.15, Large - 0.35. To detect a medium effect size of gender in our Model 5 (the model with the largest number of predictors), a required sample size was 166. To detect a large effect size, we only needed 79 observations. Therefore, our sample size (obs = 138) was sufficient to detect effect size ranges from medium to large.

Table 3: Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Predictors of Perceived Employability

Variables	Perceived Employability				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Demographic Factors					
Gender: Female	-0.23**	-0.14	-0.12	-0.11	-0.10
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Age: 35+	-0.00	0.04	-0.06	-0.03	-0.03
	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.16)
Ethnicity: Asian	0.05	-0.02	0.03	0.01	0.02
	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Educational Factors					
GPA: 3.0 to 3.4		0.28	0.20	0.196	0.18
		(0.30)	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.30)
GPA: 3.5 to 3.9		0.40	0.29	0.26	0.25
		(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.2)
GPA: 4.0		0.18	0.10	0.08	0.08
		(0.27)	(0.26)	(0.27)	(0.27)
Degree level: Graduate		-0.06	-0.13	-0.14	-0.13
		(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.17)

Assistantship/Fellowship/ Scholarship: Yes		0.23*	0.16	0.13	0.13
		(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.14)
Academic field: Engineering		0.31**	0.29**	0.31**	0.32**
		(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Academic standing: 5th or more years		-0.16	-0.14	-0.15	-0.12
		(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.17)
Work-Related Factors					
Work experience: More than 1 year			0.34***	0.34***	0.36***
			(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.13)
Plan: Work in the U.S.					
Family Factors					
Marital status: Single				-0.19	-0.20
				(0.15)	(0.15)
Take care children: No				0.19	0.17
				(0.19)	(0.19)
Language and International Experience Factors					
English as first language: No					-0.07
					(0.18)
U.S. experience: 3+ years					-0.08
					-0.08
Constant	3.56***	3.04***	3.00***	3.02***	3.12***
	(0.10)	(0.30)	(0.30)	(0.34)	(0.38)
Observations	138	138	138	138	138
R^2	0.03	0.13	0.18	0.19	0.20
Adjust R^2	0.01	0.06	0.11	0.11	0.10
Residual Std. Error	0.62(df = 134)	0.60 (df = 127)	0.59 (df = 126)	0.59 (df = 124)	0.59 (df = 122)
F Statistic	1.55 (df = 3; 134)	1.94** (df = 10; 127)	2.56*** (df = 11; 126)	2.29*** (df = 13; 124)	2.00** (df = 15; 122)

Note. *p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01. The variable "Plan" was dropped due to collinearity.

We also interacted gender with other explanatory variables to see if gender played a moderating role. Table 4 shows the results. The interaction terms are significant for academic field and work experience. Negative estimated coefficients of interaction terms show that the advantages brought by being in the field of engineering or having more work experiences are mainly for males.

Table 4: Moderating Effect of Gender

Variables	Perceived Employability	
	(1)	(2)
Demographic Factors		
Gender: Female	0.02	0.19
	(0.13)	(0.19)
Age: 35+	-0.02	-0.0004
	(0.16)	(0.16)
Ethnicity: Asian	-0.01	0.05
	(0.12)	(0.12)
Educational Factors		
GPA: 3.0 to 3.4	0.13	0.13
	(0.29)	(0.29)
GPA: 3.5 to 3.9	0.16	0.22
	(0.27)	(0.26)
GPA: 4.0	-0.01	0.06
	(0.27)	(0.27)
Degree level: Graduate	-0.19	-0.11
	(0.17)	(0.17)
Assistantship/Fellowship/ Scholarship: Yes	0.16	0.15
	(0.14)	(0.14)
Academic field: Engineering	0.44***	0.32**
	(0.14)	(0.13)
Academic standing: 5th or more years	-0.10	-0.16
	(0.17)	(0.17)
Work-Related Factors		
Work experience: More than 1 year	0.38***	0.52***
	(0.13)	(0.15)
Family Factors		
Marital status: Single	-0.23	-0.16
	(0.15)	(0.15)
Take care children: No	0.20	0.13
	(0.19)	(0.19)
Language and International Experience Factors		
English as first language: No	-0.05	-0.06
	(0.17)	(0.17)
U.S. experience: 3+ years	-0.09	-0.05
	(0.11)	(0.11)
Moderating Effect		
Gender: Female × Academic field: Engineering	-0.48*	
	(0.27)	
Gender: Female × Work experience: More than 1 year		-0.44*

		(0.23)
Constant	3.15***	2.96***
	(0.38)	(0.39)
Observations	138	138
R^2	0.22	0.22
Adjust R^2	0.11	0.12
Residual Std. Error (df = 121)	0.59	0.58
F Statistic (df = 16; 121)	2.11**	2.14**

Note. *p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01.

DISCUSSION

The result of descriptive analysis shows that international students are confident in their employability, which is consistent with previous studies that international students believe that to pursue higher education could promote career opportunities (Bracht et al., 2006; Huang, 2013; Hunter-Johnson, & Niu, 2019; Nilsson & Ripmesster, 2016; Zhou, 2015). Compared to male international students, female international students have lower perceived employability in the results of Welch's t-test and Model 1 of hierarchical regression. This result supports Johnson's (2018) study conducted among African American engineering students. Also, our results show that male students being in the field of engineering or having more work experiences are more likely to have higher level of perceived employability, but female students do not. Therefore, gender inequality still exists in both education and workplaces.

While the amount of female international students is less than male international students' in the US, women also experience lower rates of workforce participation and a gender-based wage gap. For example, female workers constituted only 46.9% of all workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018), and women are only paid 80 cents for every dollar paid to their male peers in the US (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). To reduce gender inequality in education and workplace and prepare female international students for the workplace, higher education institutions should create a women-friendly environment and provide support based on their needs. For example, higher education institutions may build an all-for-women mentorship program for female international students. In addition, higher education institutions and workplaces should provide diversity training to increase the awareness of gender issues and increase the representation of women in STEM fields and leadership positions as well as implement family-friendly policies and supports.

Our results show that international students who received assistantship/fellowship/scholarship had higher perceived employability. Teaching or research assistantship provided international students with an opportunity to work in their field during their course of study. Fellowship and scholarship are considered academic achievements for students. All these programs could enhance the confidence of international students in their career development and reduce their final stress. Therefore, higher education institutions should provide more opportunities for international students to receive an assistantship, fellowship, or scholarship. International students could be considered as a potential international workforce, so employers could also provide funding for the programs of assistantship/fellowship/scholarship in higher education institutions.

Our study also indicates that international students, who plan to work in the US after graduation, believe they are more employable. Previous studies have focused on examining the decision among international students to stay or leave the US upon graduation. For example, Ruiz and Budiman (2018)

indicated that about 1.5 million international graduates of US colleges and universities obtained authorization to remain and work in the US through the federal government's Optional Practical Training program during 2004 to 2016, and more than half of the foreign graduates approved for employment specialized in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. The promotion of advanced education in STEM has become a key strategy for ensuring the US` advantageous position as an innovative economic leader (Han, et al., 2015). However, Han, et al. (2015) reported that the increasing global competitiveness in STEM education and the complex restrictive nature of American immigration policies are creating an environment where the US STEM system may no longer be able to comfortably remain the premier destination for the world's top international students.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The present study has explored the perceived employability and its factors among international students in the US. Many previous works of literature focused on international student experiences of transition to higher education abroad. However, very few studies examined the transition from education to workplaces among international students. Based on our findings we call for scholars to address the education outcomes for international students and explore strategies that improve international students transition from education to workplaces.

For future research, gender deserves the attention of scholars of higher education. We need more empirical studies to explore the needs of female international students and improve the strategies for promoting gender equality. Thus far studies have not explored the impact of assistantship/ fellowship/ scholarship on perceived employability. Higher education scholars should conduct more empirical studies to understand the impact of assistantship/fellowship/scholarship on international students' employability and explore the international students' needs in the US. More empirical studies are needed to explore the impact of international students' decisions on their employability. Higher education institutions may provide career consulting specific to international students to help them make decisions and improve their competitiveness in the global labor markets

Our study has several limitations. First, all the participants are from one university, so the results are not generalizable to international students in other universities. Future studies should include more universities across nations so that the results will have a larger impact. Second, future research could enlarge the sample size to detect more factors that influence the perceived employability. Third, the perceived employability scale is mindset measurement, so it might not indicate the reality of employability. In the future, longitudinal studies should be conducted after students' graduation, which would enable researchers to examine whether international students who were more confident in their employability were able to find a job in keeping with their qualification level after graduation.

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Studying Abroad at 'Home': Going to Japan in New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the experiences of a group of Japanese study abroad students in response to the purposeful replication of a Japanese environment by the New Zealand-based institution where they studied. Data were collected from 12 students via interviews spread over approximately 20 months, and revealed that management provided specifically for the Japanese students, isolating them from other groups within the college in different ways, which is contrary to frequently cited study abroad objectives. Some initial resistance by participants gave way to acceptance, demonstrated through personal activities which propagated the institution's Japaneseness and an appreciation of management's efforts to provide them with a familiar living and studying environment. The study provides insight into a specific study abroad site unusual in the overtly placed limitations on processes of integration, and subsequent participant responses to that. In doing so, it contributes to the recognition of the diversity of ways in which study abroad may occur.

Keywords: home replication, identity, Japanese international students, study abroad

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INTRODUCTION

Studying abroad has traditionally been based on an assumption of separation, where students "enter a new culture that is theoretically separate from their home culture" (Mikal & Grace, 2012, p. 288). Thus, going from somewhere like Tokyo to study in New Zealand might be expected to produce a feeling of being in a completely new environment. However, the reality can differ, often due to students seeking out the comfort of social networks composed mainly of co-nationals (Ayano, 2006). In the Japanese-owned tertiary institution where this article is set, resistance to separation from the familiar was built into the institutional infrastructure rather than emanating from student choice. Public statements from representatives of the owners indicated an intention, thus, to protect students from the discomfort of culture shock by preserving an ambiance that produced familiarity. This article reports on how a group of Japanese students studying there reacted to the measures the institution took.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Study Abroad

The term "study abroad" has often been interpreted narrowly to refer to international students studying overseas for a short period only. However, we have chosen a more encompassing interpretation aligned with Andrade (2006, p. 132), who stated that study abroad can also include "relocating to a different nation to complete a degree," because there are elements in our study context that are not entirely typical. Significant reasons for students to embark on a study abroad have often been considered to increase their proficiency in a second language (L2), gain intercultural competence, and expand cultural knowledge. Concerning the first, perhaps because of what Coleman (2015) refers to as "folk linguistics," the assumption is that the immersion which "underpins the whole notion of study abroad" (p. 34), together with formal classroom tuition, will enable students to soak up the L2 like a sponge (Tanaka, 2007). Shadowen et al. (2015) add that simply the experience of studying and living in another culture gives students opportunities for learning and development "above and beyond the acquisition of academic knowledge at the home campus" (p. 231). The 'above and beyond' has often been seen to include intercultural competence, with studies designed to tease out how it is facilitated or hampered (e.g. Kishino & Takahashi, 2019). For example, Nishioka and Akol (2019) suggest study abroad "creates unique opportunities to immerse oneself in a different society and culture and also challenges one to quickly adjust to a new environment" (p. 815). Coleman (2015) supports a broader view of potential gain, including greater confidence, flexibility, and openness to new experiences.

Study Abroad Students Settling In

A considerable weight of literature, however, indicates that this dreamed-of immersion in the new does not always occur because of a coping mechanism to the shock of the unfamiliar. When international students find themselves in foreign sociocultural environments, their sense of identity is challenged (Block, 2007; Kim, 2001). These challenges may be greater for students whose culture is most distant from the host culture (Campbell & Li, 2008). Ye (2006, p. 3) concluded that of all international students studying in the USA, Asian students need the most effort to adapt because they have the most prominent social distance from the hosts. Certainly, when Asian students move to the West, they are moving into a completely different social structure and a different teaching and learning framework while also having to overcome language issues (Thakur & Hourigan, 2007, p. 45). As Krishna (2019) asserts, the literature tends to paint a picture of institutions requiring study abroad students to adapt to the way we do things "'here' to be successful" (p. ii).

The initial period in a foreign environment, as individuals struggle to position themselves, appears to be the peak point of stress (Gündüz & Alakbarov, 2019; Mikal et al., 2013) when the psychological challenge can compromise academic learning and even general wellbeing. For example, one of Ayano's (2006, p. 16) Japanese research participants studying in the U.K. felt as if he was "living in a small cage" and used the imagery of "being held down by a muddy rice field" to describe his despair. Therefore, robust support systems can be critical for international students to transition into their new living environment away from family and friends (Ye, 2006).

An essential coping mechanism during this period is support from the familiar. On a macro level, Mok, Wu and Yu (2014, p. 144) found that some countries may be more "homelike" than others, and for that reason, they may be more popular with some students. One of their research participants claimed that Malaysia was comfortable "to every nationality" due to its weather, hospitality, and culture; the last factor was particularly pertinent to Muslim students when compared to other countries, such as China, Taiwan, or Singapore. On a micro level, Gebhard (2012) found that all the students in his extensive study coped initially by using reminders of their home culture, such as photos on the wall. Coleman (2015) indicates that initial social networks built by students often lean heavily on co-nationals. This is understandable since Kishino and Takahashi (2019) highlight the importance of developing a sense of belonging for better achievement in study abroad, and Gündüz and Alakbarov (2019) found that feeling safe was the most crucial factor for successful adaptation. However, the literature also reflects an expectation that for optimal benefits from study abroad, these networks will eventually expand to include other internationals, and in some cases, locals (e.g., Coleman, 2015). Nevertheless, positive benefits, such as psychological wellbeing, have been associated with continued co-national networks (Hafeeza & Pazil, 2019; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001).

Some institutions have promoted co-national ties amongst international students, particularly through on-campus living arrangements. Cammish (1997) warns against housing co-nationals together because these students are slower at improving their English, struggle more to integrate into the host country, and have difficulty making local friends. Ogden (2007) indicates that one institutional response to US students' wish to shy away from unfamiliar local conditions has been to reduce immersion by reconstructing aspects of the home environments, which place students on a "veranda" (p. 41), where they can see the new environment, but are protected from it. He asserts that they must be lured off this veranda to provide the intended "truly transformative experience" (p. 39).

Japanese Views of Studying Abroad and Repatriation

Perhaps Japanese students studying abroad should be considered special cases because, as mentioned previously, the literature places them within a group that struggles more than many others when studying in Western countries (Thakur & Hourigan, 2007; Ye, 2006). Sato and Hodge (2015), studying Japanese students at an American university, found that struggles to integrate with local students stemmed from factors such as perceived linguistic barriers and a lack of shared cultural understandings leading to awkwardness in interactions. They therefore, "mostly socialized with Japanese friends because they were much more comfortable with other Japanese peers and found such interactions more enjoyable" (p. 215).

A particular issue that has arisen concerning this group is the question of repatriation and how welcome indications of cultural adaptation may be when students return to Japan. Cammish (1997) posited that countries such as Japan "want their young people to learn English for instrumental reasons, they do not want them to acquire at the same time the cultural baggage which may come with it" (p. 144). And even as

recently as 2009, Sugihashi reported in her research that Japanese study abroad returnees from the U.S. still struggle to (re)fit into Japanese culture.

What the literature reveals, then, is a strong assumption that immersion in the host community and connections with other internationals who have joined it are a strong predictor of an optimal experience of study abroad. Shadowing this, though, is an awareness that these connections are not always easy to make and that they may come at the expense of struggles. However, what we see as interesting in the current study is that it provides a detailed account of study abroad in an ambiance that resists this view, not attempting to create a New Zealand immersion experience but maintaining considerable elements of the home community.

INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH

This article reports on aspects of doctoral research carried out by the first author in a Japanese-owned private tertiary institution in New Zealand, which we have called Global Family College (GFC). Early observation revealed many elements that gave an overtly Japanese stamp to the experience, which became an object of interest in the semi-structured interviews that formed the basis of the study. Research questions pertaining to this aspect of the study were developed to gain an understanding of the effects of replicating a home environment for study abroad students in a tertiary institution:

1. What were the main elements within the college that made it feel Japanese?
2. What was the attitude of the Japanese students towards the college's Japaneseness?
3. Was the Japaneseness of the college an affordance or a limitation in the students' evaluation of their experience?

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Setting

The everyday living experiences of 12 Japanese students, six males, and six females, aged 17 to 21, provide the foundation of this paper. They were part of a group of approximately 40 who came to New Zealand to study for an undergraduate degree at GFC. The student body of GFC was made up of a minority of local students, generally there due to their interest in Japan and international students from a wide range of countries. Many students, including nine of the cohort here, were recent graduates from a group of associated private Japanese high schools. It is worth highlighting that these high schools were not in the top academic tier in the competitive Japanese system. In many cases, they catered to socially withdrawn and sensitive students, which may have influenced GFC's rather essentialist measures for supporting them. That said, there were no noticeable differences in experiences found in this study vis-à-vis the participants who attended Japanese public schools. The general motivation of the cohort was to get both life experience and, as their pre-arrival questionnaires indicated, an education that was not available to them in Japan (due to their secondary school results and the competitive nature of tertiary education in Japan).

Study at GFC was in three stages, foundation, diploma, and degree. All students in this study entered the foundation for the first six months or year and graduated to degree level on achieving a satisfactory English score during this research. Although they remained for a relatively long period (approximately three years), we have used the term 'study abroad' in discussing these students, as mentioned in the literature review. The participants here were not part of a discernible minority within a

mainstream domestic educational institution, as is often the case with international students, but were part of the majority cohort in GFC.

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of a pre-arrival questionnaire to understand the students' attitude toward studying abroad, followed by six post-arrival interviews with each student over a period of approximately 20 months. This longitudinal interview-based approach allowed the participants' stories to build upon themselves over time, filling information gaps as they became evident, and creating a strong basis of understanding of each participant's experiences, interpretations, adjustments, while also breathing life and humanity into the text. The rationale behind such a high number of interviews over this time was to closely observe the evolution of each student's life in what was expected to be a rich period of change. Although information on the students' academic and L2 achievements were gathered, they are not the focus of this article.

Ethics applications were accepted by the university's human ethics committee where the doctoral study was undertaken and GFC, where the first author was both teacher and researcher. Selection of participants from nearly 40 who responded to the call for volunteers was based on students not being in the first author's classes during the research period, and having the highest English-speaking abilities (according to GFC's entry tests) because this research relied heavily on communication in spoken English due to the researcher's low Japanese proficiency. Nevertheless, the information provided to the students before their commitment to participate was in Japanese.

Interviews began in the students' initial days at GFC and were held at three- or four-month intervals. The longitudinal perspective allowed the researcher to monitor each student's trajectory and identify key points that emerged over time using Charmaz's (2006) Constructivist Grounded Theory, where analysis runs in tandem with data collection (Clarke, 2007; Seidman, 2006).

Interviews usually took 60-90 minutes. All were audio-recorded and transcribed by the first author and sent to relevant participants for member checking. The transcripts were coded, and memos were written between collection rounds. Rather than using predetermined categories for data analysis, themes emerged from a careful reading of the data and were grounded in the participants' words. Early themes included contact with Japan, new friendships, impressions of GFC, and the environment beyond. Ensuing interviews took up these themes, exploring further developments, as well as continuing an open approach which allowed new themes to present themselves, including: GFC as a Japanese island in New Zealand, the officially-promoted separation of Japanese students from non-Japanese students, management's promotion of Japanese ideology and the special treatment of Japanese students. From Interview Three onward, interviews were individualized to track each participant's unique trajectory.

After the fourth interview round, the researcher drew up participant-specific posters graphically representing individual trajectories (see Figure 1) and reviewed the posters with each participant in their fifth interview, checking interpretations and digging deeper into selected areas.

Figure 1

Member Checking Poster

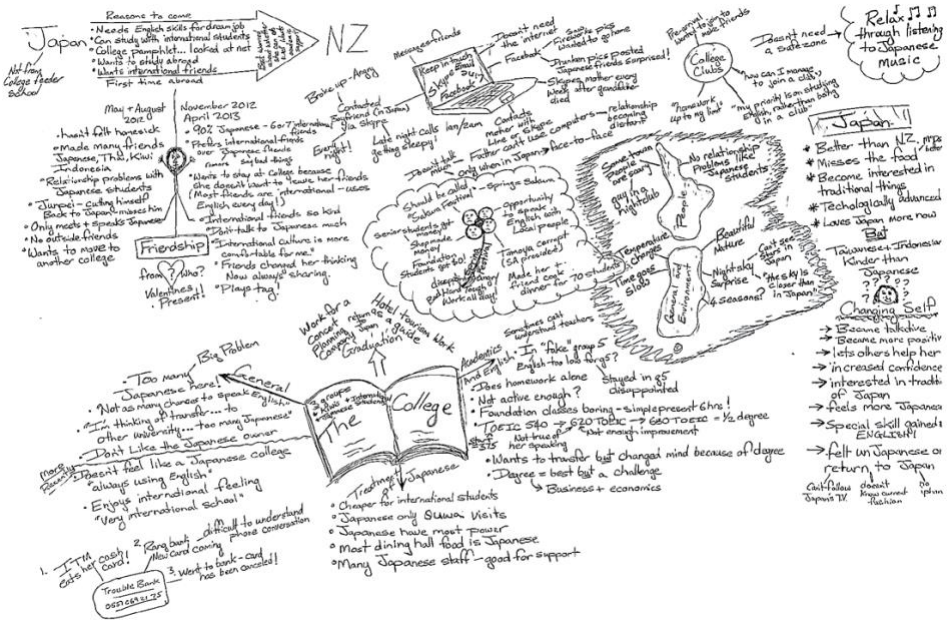

Table 1 shows the timing of the interviews, and the numbers attached to quotes below indicate which interview they came from. The interview times are significant because they can reveal the students' attitudes over time. All names are pseudonyms.

Table 1

Interviews Relative to the Arrival

Interview	Date after arrival at GFC
1	1 month
2	4 months
3	7 months
4	12 months
5	16 months
6	20 months

FINDINGS

Studying at GFC: A Japanese Enclave in New Zealand

In most study abroad programs, students go into an institution that has emerged from the local community – meaning their educational experience will be different from what they would experience at home. However, although GFC's webpage stated that the student body included people from twenty-four different countries during the research period, a distinctive element was that GFC was so heavily influenced by concepts linked to Japanese culture that locals commonly referred to it as 'the Japanese College.' For

instance, it followed the Japanese university calendar, not the New Zealand one; there was a considerable amount of Japanese language media found in the library, including New Zealand's largest manga collection; and the dining hall menu was heavily Japanese.

The college also physically resembled Japan in numerous ways. The cherry blossom trees that lined the campus access road conjured up a vision of Japan and these trees, when in full bloom, served as the centerpiece of the college's annual festival. The campus was also known for its beautiful and meticulous gardens, reminiscent of manicured park grounds in Japan. The recreation center was called the *dojo,* another reminder of GFC's Japanese connection.

At the time of the study, management appeared to be promoting the human side of GFC's Japaneseness even more than the pervasive physical aspects. There were many Japanese teachers and administrators and numerous Western staff with Japanese connections and language abilities working at the college. The primary position of the Japanese students in the college was highlighted by the fact that the student support manager was monolingual in Japanese.

Living arrangements and study context furthered the Japaneseness of the experience. Japanese students were accommodated in two designated dormitories (male/female) on campus separated from those of other international students. Their initial months were spent in the English-language focused foundation program, where classes consisted almost exclusively of Japanese students. Proficiency for progressing to other programs was measured through the TOIEC test, administered compulsorily at regular intervals. Preparation classes were held exclusively for the Japanese students. On the other hand, after progressing to a degree, the participants were sometimes the only Japanese student in the class.

The Japanese focus of the college was evident from the early days of the student experience at a ceremonial level. At the college's 2014 commencement ceremony, only three cultures were explicitly acknowledged: New Zealand Māori, New Zealand European and Japanese. Speeches in Māori, English, and Japanese were made by special guests, GFC management, and students. Mrs. Suwa, GFC's owner's wife, closed the ceremony by paying special attention to the theme of a 'GFC family', and conjured up images of living and studying in an enclave-like environment separated from the world outside the college gates.

The pre-arrival questionnaire revealed some interesting points. Predictably, popular aspirations were to become international, make non-co-national friends, and be treated like an adult. However, many of the students who answered the questionnaire had talked to ex-GFC students in Japan and were aware of the Japanese focus. They, therefore, had an expectation of Japanese events and Japanese food at the college, and one even commented that Japanese could live comfortably at GFC without using English.

GFC was situated on the edge of a New Zealand provincial city and the Japanese students could leave the campus for short periods. However, most rarely did, and it was usually in the company of Japanese peers – resulting in little interaction with the outside community. So, while the Japanese students were technically in New Zealand, they were seemingly removed from its society, able to stay within a Japanese cultural bubble and operate in ways similar to their home experience. GFC acted, in a sense, as a Japanese institution, and awareness of this, along with a sense of frustration, emerged in participant interviews. For example, Harumi noted in her second interview that: "[GFC] was made for Japanese, so there are Japanese staff, Japanese food, a lot of Japanese students" (2). Kayo observed that the library provided evidence: "In the library we can find Japanese books. If this is not a Japanese school, finding Japanese books is a little bit difficult, but this school has lots of Japanese [books]" (3). According to one student, GFC was like a Japanese island in New Zealand:

> I never thought that here is like international college. Global Family College, no! Japanese College of Education I think. Japanese island exactly I think. It's like small Japan, we shouldn't have an opportunity to speak Japanese in here! (Taka 3)

Shihoko noted that these isolationist, and perhaps essentialist, intentions were built into management communications:

> Japanese are not international students…everything is divided into three groups, like Japanese, International students and Kiwis. We have a questionnaire during the semester

> and it says, "Japanese, Kiwis or International". If you are Japanese tick Japanese, or Kiwis or International. Cos GFC is doing that means it is official. (Shihoko 6)

This distinction entered the participants' discourse, and they inevitably used 'international students' to refer to those who were neither New Zealanders nor Japanese.

Beyond management's intentional influence on the environment, the sheer weight of numbers of Japanese relative to other groups on campus created a Japan-like social environment and this was a major factor in making some of the focal students feel as if they had not left home. This was dramatically highlighted by Hiro, who claimed in Interview Five that the "mother-tongue" of GFC was Japanese.

In early interviews, there was occasional resistance from students who felt that it devalued the study abroad experience, as can be read into Taka's comment above about talking Japanese on campus. Shihoko, too, in her first interview, questioned her wisdom of choosing GFC because she could get the same level of internationalism in Japan:

> Oh, many Japanese people!... it's not a good thing. In Japan also have foreigner, so like Kansai foreign language college looks the same with Japanese people and other country's people. If I go to in Japan college it's the same, so I was disappointed. (Shihoko 1)

The sections below will expand on how aspects of Japaneseness played out for this cohort.

Japanese Food

Food was a vital element of the experience. The campus dining hall with its Japanese-influenced menu promoted the illusion of being in Japan:

> Dining hall food is, I think, for Japanese. Breakfast, we can eat rice and miso soup and at lunch we always can eat noodles, udon or soba. (Yui 3)

Displaying a strong sense of frustration, Taka made a direct connection between the menu and his ability to become international:

> We should reject the Japanese culture if someone wanna study English. We don't need to have rice every day because international people doesn't have rice every day… the food is like Japanese style, it's not international…here is not international. (Taka 3)

Interestingly, the Japanese-themed menu in the GFC dining hall faced material-level issues: there was a discrepancy between the intention and the execution. From the second round of interviews, participants frequently described the food as 'tasteless' and 'disgusting,' and it certainly did not fit their interpretation of Japanese food.

In spite of Taka's resistance above, students took their own measures to maintain a (better quality) Japanese menu. They brought back ingredients from Japan after holidays and family members posted Japanese food items to mix with food smuggled out of the dining hall to cook in the dormitories.

> My mother sent me some ingredients, like soup or easy to cook main dish. I cook nikujaga and fried rice and stir fried, Japanese food. I wanna eat Japanese food because I think it's good for my health. (Shihoko 2)

Cooking Japanese food in the dormitories extended beyond taste and health-consciousness, however, it was about sharing traditional time together, echoing Hafeeza and Pazil's (2019) finding that such activities provide study abroad students with a sense of family and comfort.

Conational Connections

It was not just that the Japanese students shared classes or even lunch with each other, they actually had no choice but to live together. The only non-Japanese students accommodated in the participants' dormitories were a handful of local students, perhaps hoping that they might provide the Japanese students with English practice without watering down their Japaneseness. Kami explained the accommodation arrangements (note her use of the term 'international students' to exclude the Japanese students):

> Most of international student is living in Hall Seven, Eight, Nine, Ten. The opposite side, across the road and most of Japanese people are living in this side. We don't have connection with other nationalities. (Kami 6)

In this living environment students perceived English as non-essential:

> Lots of Japanese student live in hall, so if we don't try to speak English we can live without English. So, feels like Japan. (Ken 3)

The physical closeness to other Japanese students also meant that development of co-national relationships was unavoidable, and according to Hiro a "Japanese society" (5) formed in the dormitory. The extent to which GFC management pursued their ethnically-oriented accommodation policies was clear when Riki's request to live in a shared dormitory room to save money was refused: only 'international students' were accommodated in shared rooms, so Riki was effectively asking to share a room with a non-Japanese student. Betraying a tendency to stereotype, GFC's accommodation manager told Riki that Japanese students desired cleanliness and privacy more than other nationalities and thus could only live in individual rooms (4). Yuka, who atypically had made some Thai friends, wanted to shift to their dormitory building because "if I move to Hall Ten I can stay with the people who come from another country, so I use English the whole day" (Yuka 6). However, management again turned down the request, thus stifling conditions that would have supported a situation generally assumed to be an essential part of studying abroad.

Yoichi and Shihoko both talked of their desire to live off campus but knew that was unacceptable to management. Yoichi stated about living in town:

> I think there's more opportunities to touching Kiwi cultures, which is really casual. Maybe I can find them in daily life, but in GFC I have to try to touch in the culture. (Yoichi 1)

Without a concerted effort by the Japanese students at GFC, experiencing 'true' New Zealand might not occur.

College Clubs

Another element of GFC supported by management was the existence of clubs which reflected Japanese culture, such as *taiko* (Japanese drums), which had been going for over 25 years and had even performed at an international *taiko* gathering. Japanese students dominated these GFC clubs and their culture permeated. Yoichi, for example, described *taiko* as: "Very Japanese! Strict training and practicing and some customs are really Japanese" (6).

Safe Zones

As other literature has touched upon (e.g., Gebhard, 2012) regarding study abroad students, many of the students in this study seemed to promote their isolation by decorating their dormitory rooms in overt displays of Japanese culture. Harumi, for instance, tried to recreate a home environment by hanging Japanese posters on her dormitory walls, stocking her shelves with books from Japan, and playing Japanese music (1). These environments, which we have termed 'safe zones,' developed through the Japanese students' agency and promoted the Japanese enclave feeling. Safe zones were environments where speaking Japanese was a central element, and participants could escape from relationship stress, homesickness, loneliness, and English language stress when feeling overloaded. However, the perceived need for a safe zone never vanished entirely. Shihoko, for instance, spoke of it in Interview Five:

> I use English all the time, read, write, read, write, then I feel I have to speak Japanese. So, speak Japanese, Japanese friends and I escape. Kami in her room and we talked about Japanese food or Japanese things. (Shihoko 5)

Shifting Towards Acceptance

One of the main advantages of longitudinal studies is that situational or environmental evolutions can be recognized as they occur. This was the case here. In the initial interviews, many participants complained about the Japaneseness of GFC and discounted the support it provided. Some questioned the college's international claim, and perceived management's policies that promoted the overt Japaneseness as restricting their opportunities to speak English, become more global, and get a true sense of being abroad. Harumi stated, "if I don't use English outside of class, I can live here" (2). Yuka felt that GFC was "like I am in Japanese college and then the student who come from another country came to our university" (5). Yuka's Thai friendships had resulted from a concentrated effort to negate this feeling, and for her initial 18 months at GFC, this was her predominant circle of friends. However, as time progressed, the cohort's trajectory moved towards accepting GFC's Japan-like environment.

In fact, for most students, their own choice of social networks (supported by the prevailing conditions as indicated above) worked to maintain or promote Japaneseness. Some students in later interviews asserted that initial complaints about GFC's Japaneseness were based on imagined selves who

could embrace the assumed conditions of study abroad, but hindsight allowed a re-assessment. A quote from Riki, for example, appeared to advocate the status quo:

> The foreigners, person who speak English, maybe if I talked with they guys and played with they guys it's improve second language, but Japanese and Japanese relationship is really good for make a adult personality. Some Japanese say, "Japanese is really bad" or "Japan is shit" and they don't like Japan. Maybe I think they guys too much thinking about improve English and forget about improve own self. If some student go to America or something, and almost student is only American, the student gonna be like don't like Japan, become like Americans. It's really important to remember the Japanese spirit. I think many Japanese is really important for us Japanese student. (Riki 2)

Riki here identified outcomes of study abroad beyond language learning and intercultural communicative competence, ones that he had learned to value and which would allow him to slip readily back into Japanese society as a mature adult. They seemed to embody the role that GFC's owner, Mr. Suwa, wanted the college to play in the lives of the Japanese students: A safe place from which to view elements of a foreign environment with minimal effect on their cultural identity.

Towards the end of the research, even Yuka, who had worked so hard at becoming international, began embracing the Japan-like environment. In Interview Five, she hinted that her membership in her Thai-dominated friendship circle was ending because she began feeling uncomfortable surrounded by non-Japanese students:

> I think for me sometimes I feel tired of hearing Thai language because their personality is of course different to me. Sometimes feel so hard to stay with them whole day. So, I think others as well maybe it is difficult to stay with foreign students. So, they prefer to stay with same nationality. (Yuka 5)

Her comment suggests that language and culture were essential factors in feeling comfortable while studying abroad. Yuka transitioned back to her co-national group and made no further effort to extend her contact with elements beyond the Japanese enclave of GFC during the remaining research period.

Other research participants indicated an increasing sense of what being Japanese meant through their comments on other elements of life at GFC. In Interview Five, Ai described a misunderstanding between Japanese and New Zealand students in a dance group that she was a member of that stemmed from different ideologies towards clubs:

> They said that the practice was too strict or hard. Momo-chan always say when we are dancing we need…sensibility. Some Kiwi students couldn't understand it and "with the same choreography why do we need to sensibility?". And we discussed for some time and then they left. (Ai 5)

Through describing the behaviour of local students in her dormitory, Shihoko showed what can happen when two groups are brought together in regard to personal responsibility and respect for others. 'They' here refers to the small number of local New Zealand students who shared the dormitory:

> I found heaps of bins of beer or alcohol in the common room, but I don't know who did it so I had to clean up all cos cleaners don't take those bins….They think loud music is fine, "why I can't hear music? Why can't I listen to music?". They think music is alright, they think "why you complain about music?". (Shihoko 6)

The conditions which at the outset had seemed to curtail promised opportunities of life in New Zealand were being re-interpreted as protective of a shared Japanese ideology.

DISCUSSION

GFC's Dejima: An Affordance or Limitation?

GFC's attempt to replicate a Japanese environment brings to mind an episode in Japan's history where the *Tokugawa shogunate* closed Japan to the world to prevent outside ideologies influencing the Japanese people and threatening the *shogun's* national hegemony. During this time, the Dutch were the only Europeans permitted contact with Japan, and they were provided with a small artificial island called

Dejima, situated in Nagasaki Harbor, to live in and trade with Japanese people. This enclave was linked to the Japanese mainland by a narrow footbridge, which meant that although the Dutch merchants were technically in Japan, they were forever outside looking in. From a Japanese perspective, although contact with the Dutch was very limited, the Dutch presence in *Dejima* also provided a small window to catch a glimpse of the world beyond, albeit without allowing integration.

In many ways, *Dejima* is an excellent metaphor for GFC. In the case of the original *Dejima*, Japan was the wide background, and the Japanese were observing the island enclave and gaining bits and pieces of knowledge from the Dutch visitors. We can see GFC as a mirror image, representative of the overarching Japanese culture peeking out at the Other. And GFC's Japanese students also received bits and pieces of knowledge from the Other, but the powers-that-be consciously limited their ability to gain greater insights.

Analysis of the pre-arrival questionnaire, with which the study had begun, indicated that this was not what GFC's students had in mind, but it was the extent of interaction with New Zealand that GFC's management facilitated. It is evident that they considered the Japanese student body as a special group to be kept separate from other nationalities at the college, categorizing them differently in official communications and isolating them physically in accommodation, not simply for the settling-in period, but for their entire period at the college.

GFC's *Dejima*-like policies presented numerous limitations to intercultural contact for the students, such as inhibiting opportunities to interact with others in English. It thus greatly reduced their ability to make non-Japanese friends, adopt an international attitude and become proficient in using English. It also limited the independence they were able to enjoy in New Zealand, and likely impeded some aspects of personal growth, such as independent living arrangements. It probably also negatively impacted off-campus opportunities because they had no local friends to guide them.

Given that many of these measures seem in direct contravention of the conditions supposed to optimize the results of study abroad (Cammish, 1997; Coleman, 2015), it is important to consider the motivation for constructing the context in this way. In doing so, we are mindful of research indicating the intense struggle often associated with study abroad (Gündüz & Alakbarov, 2019; Nilsson, 2019; Mikal et al., 2013), which may have influenced GFC. Mr. Suwa openly stated in a GFC staff meeting that while he welcomed non-Japanese students, the college was built for Japanese, and his priority was allowing Japanese to study abroad while protecting them from the trauma of doing so. He may have believed that the comfortable nature of the Japan-like environment was particularly attuned to the needs of this group because, by their own admission, many of them were lower academic, socially struggling young adults in search of direction. By reducing the lifestyle changes, he perhaps intended to leave students free to study in English classes and build their confidence. Rai (2020) asserts that student safety is "the most fundamental priority" facing study abroad providers (p. 10). Sin and Tavares (2019) identify that providers must address the combined forces of coping with the stress of study abroad while concentrating on a study "to ensure their global attractiveness" (p. 59).

On the other hand, the process of coping with new experiences and eventually finding them interesting, mind-opening and challenging, rather than overwhelming, is part of the trajectory towards intercultural learning and the excitement that potentially rewards the study abroad experience. It is important to consider whether a too comfortable context with diminished international aspects based on essentialist notions of the nature and needs of Japanese students removed the potential for personal growth. The words of the students interviewed here suggest that they were nevertheless able to identify important areas of personal growth from the experience.

One of the most important things that they gained from what contact they had with non-Japanese people at GFC was self-realization about who they were and where they came from. In GFC's *Dejima*-like environment, many participants appeared to embrace their culture, as indicated by the pride in the Japanese culturally based clubs, such as *taiko*. Others have noted the importance of *taiko* in study abroad "as an emblem – and performance – of Japanese identity" (Creighton, 2008, p. 61) and as a response to "cultural nostalgia" (Johnson, 2011, p. 330). The college's annual festival also brought the Japanese culture sharply into focus for many students. During the festival many of the participants took on cliché cultural roles, wearing *kimonos*, playing Japanese music and doing Japanese cultural dances.

However protective the context, a significant element of this period was, of course, the physical distance from family, friends and their immediate environment. Although the effects were mitigated by the tools of technology allowing for frequent contact (Rapley, 2019), as well as the Japaneseness of GFC, many of them were living independently of their families for the first time, and this contributed to a sense of greater maturity. It was perhaps this sense of personal growth that led them to a growing acceptance of their situation at GFC in spite of its curtailment of many of the promises of study abroad which initially some of them aspired to.

Embracing Dejima

Indeed, although there were moments of protest, as a group, these participants seem never to have been truly at odds with GFC's *Dejima*-like environment. It made life easier and the students increasingly accepted the comforting elements it afforded.

The pre-arrival questionnaire revelation that many students expected GFC to provide Japanese food and organize Japanese events indicates that living in a truly foreign environment was not necessarily important to them, although comments indicating a desire to have "a strong mind", "to flourish in the world", "to become independent", and "to create a new piece of myself" indicated that some were motivated by opportunities to mature and experience something new. Other expectations, like "even if I can't speak English I can be comfortable" and "there is Japanese support", point to the importance of GFC's 'life raft' that protected the students from outside influences while still allowing them to enjoy some new experiences. Since the college was known to be Japanese-owned and operated, they may have expected that while they would be physically situated in New Zealand, the lifestyle change from Japan could be limited. Therefore, we might suppose that rather than making a bold move in studying abroad, those who chose to attend GFC sought something between an adventure and a safe pathway.

Many students reinforced or even propagated the image of *Dejima* at the college through safe zones resembling Japanese environments and cooking traditional food together, a central dimension to culture and ethnic identity (Brown et al., 2010; Fonseca, 2008). Yuka provides a strong indication of a diminishing resistance. It appears that she never achieved ease in the company of her Thai friends and decided to return to the Japanese group and accept the *Dejima*-like enclave. It is fair to say that by the end of the study none of the students were demonstrating a growing acceptance, interest or willingness to increase connections with 'the Other' beyond surface level, which is one of the fervent hopes of study abroad. This would suggest that the personal gains that they undoubtedly made could not fully compensate for opportunities lost of a wider experience of the world outside Japan.

CONCLUSION

From analysing GFC's physical and social design, and their own explanatory statements, it is evident that the founders made conscious efforts to establish a metaphorical *Dejima* to allow Japanese students to step from one Japan to another. Any initial resistance from the participants appeared to dissipate over the course of the study, and they were, in fact, to some degree complicit throughout in their adoption of Japanese lifestyle elements and friendship circles.

GFC certainly could have provided more opportunities to make international connections, but it chose instead to offer students a safe environment and a steady road to travel, enabling them to achieve some of the affordances of study abroad that Coleman (2015) identified, such as greater confidence, while others such as intercultural openness were limited. It was an experience that allowed these students to dip their toes in an ocean in which they could see glimpses of life beyond, but always with the life raft of Japanese support to rescue them if they ventured too far. As Ballo, et al. (2019) point out, international students are not all the same and have "specific needs and require targeted services" (p. 18). The management decisions at GFC can be seen in this light. A *Dejima*-like environment was not necessarily what the students initially expected, and it may have removed other opportunities for greater growth, but the metaphorical *Dejima* of GFC might be seen as an affordance for the safe adventure and the opportunities for assuming maturity that seem to have been important motivations for these particular students.

As indicated above, Ogden (2007) has also identified an impulse among institutions to replicate aspects of home environments, drawing an analogy between colonialism and study abroad. While

acknowledging the limitation imposed by its small number of participants, what this article offers, through its extended time in the field and repeated interviews with the cohort, is a close investigation of how this can operate in a specific situation and how its impact may be felt and described by those involved. It can therefore help enrich the understanding of the diversity encompassed by study abroad, given the transgression of some of the assumed fundamental premises of that notion alongside these students' acknowledgment of the opportunities their time in New Zealand gave them for developing maturity and for understanding themselves as Japanese.

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The Auto-ethnographic Inquiry of a Female Chinese Graduate Student in Canada: Challenging, Accepting, and Transforming

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ABSTRACT

China remains the top country of citizenship for international students and female students (married and single) comprise part of Chinese international students. However, female international students as a marginalized group face multiple challenges and parental, marital, personal, and cross-cultural situational barriers. Relying on an auto-ethnographic inquiry, this study digs into my experiences and stories as a Chinese female graduate student in Canada to examine and connect with the academic climate and broader communities. Specifically, the gender-based, culture-based, and race-based challenges that I faced during my studies at a Canadian university including my coping strategies are explored. The constructivist paradigm as a theoretical framework is used to delve into my perceptions and understanding of my lived experiences. Data was collected from my journals, memories, and emails written during my study in Canada. Based on my experience, this study unveils motivation, knowledge, and organizational gaps faced by the female group because of gender inequality, and cross-cultural and cross-racial differences.

Keywords: Accepting, auto-ethnography, challenging, Chinese female graduate student, transforming

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the number of international students has tripled from 101,304 in 2018 to reach 318,153 in 2019 in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2020). Chinese students represent the largest percentage of international students attending universities (Chao, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2020). Chinese women (married and single) have been the significant component of these international students. Gender stereotypes are ingrained in China. For thousands of years, due to the restriction of traditional ethics, Chinese women have been restricted from developing their independent personalities, social statuses, and gaining access to education. That is, they have been marginalized within their own society. In 1978, the policy entitled Domestic Reforms and Opening Up to the World was implemented, serving as the main driving force behind the rapid development of the economy in China. Accompanying policy change, the Chinese government has attached significant importance to the legal protection of female right to education. The 1982 Constitution established the principle of equal right to education for both men and women (Li, n.d.). Moreover, with the expansion of higher education, opportunities for women enrolled in universities have steadily increased. By 2010, the proportion of women attending universities had risen to 45.6% (Zhang, 2017). Historically, men were more likely to go abroad for studies, which is viewed as more culturally appropriate for men. This afforded men greater access to higher education offerings (Ogbonaya, 2010). This practice was not extended to women thereby affording women disparate access to higher education. However, this trend has dramatically changed in recent years.

Although Chinese women received opportunities to pursue higher education and expand academic research fields abroad, they have faced multiple challenges and barriers from gender stereotyping in China. In addition, cross-cultural factors and racial stereotyping in host countries have also contributed to challenges faced by Chinese women. Specifically, Chinese women unconsciously have been socialized by strong gender codes and parental roles in Chinese society. Married female students have had to face stressors related to marital and parental status. Likewise, in Canada, gender-based inequalities were also evident before the mid-1980s. More men were enrolled in post-secondary programs than women. At present, there are no obvious gender differentiations in enrollment patterns, but gender segmentation is still embodied within educational processes (Wotherspoon, 2014). Moreover, Canada recognizes and cherishes its rich cultural and racial diversity but in Canadian higher educational institutions, cross-cultural and cross-racial understandings usually are stressed in the informal curriculum such as the various support services and additional activities and options (online workshops or webinars) organized by universities that are not assessed. In terms of the formal curriculum, the university's curriculum mainly focuses on domestic programs with some cross-cultural and cross-racial contents. Racial and cultural diversity does not receive attention in the formal curriculum (Ge et al., 2019). Female students unavoidably face culture-based and race-based challenges during their academic life.

I am female, Chinese, married, mother of an 11-year-old son and Ph.D. Candidate at a Canadian university. I began my studies towards a Ph.D. in 2016. As a Chinese female graduate student, I ineluctably have been classified into the minority and disadvantaged group in Canada. I have had to face the resistance from social stereotyping due to traditional gender identities for women, seeking to further my education abroad. For example, the "breadwinning men and homemaking women" point of view has become the unalterable truth (Sun, 2005). Married Chinese women attempting to study abroad often suffer resistance from their husbands or parents as they are accused of ignoring family responsibilities. As hooks mentioned (2000), the logic of male domination is intact, whether men are present in the home or not. More importantly, I needed to adjust to a Western educational system, and wrestle with Western cultures (Yang, 2010; Zhao & McDougall, 2008) such as language acquisition, academic research, and cultural and social facets (Ge et al., 2019). Racial stereotyping refers to the judgments of another person based on who he/she is, where he/she is from, or the language he/she speaks without getting to know the individual (Gates, 2017). When these judgments are made, the endeavors and contributions of stereotyped individuals are ignored (Gates, 2017). This racial stereotyping in the academic community caused me personal stress. In addition, since 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak has disrupted people's studies, jobs, and lives. In Canada, the number of COVID-19 positive cases increased sharply in March (Government of Canada, 2020), and the timing of the infection peak remained uncertain. During the pandemic, irrational racist remarks, and attacks against

Asians (Kandil, 2020; Schwartz, 2020) and restricted research environment have contributed to more serious challenges to my study and my experience abroad.

Based on a retroactive inquiry of my personal experiences, stories, and self-reflection, I aim to visualize myself and unpack the challenges that I have been facing in Canada and share the coping strategies I have used. My experiences and stories can be viewed as a snapshot in the lives of female Chinese graduate students, to give voice to this female group and to lend the group more attention within the existing social structure. I am hopeful that my findings might impact educational and social policies and practices, as well as university protocols in considering the complexities of female group identities (while avoiding the impingement of minority groups).

Research Questions

The research questions to be answered by this study are:

1. How do I perceive and interpret my lived experience as a Chinese female graduate student?
2. What are the gender-based, culture-based, and race-based challenges and adjustment barriers experienced by me during my study from academic research, socializing, life, and employment aspects?
3. What coping strategies do I use to handle my challenges for the persistence and sustainability of my study in Canada?
4. What implications does this auto-ethnography have for the higher education institutions of Canada and relevant authorities?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is located in studies addressing international female students' social and academic experiences in U.S. higher education and at Canadian universities. I aimed to provide a holistic view of the present study and identify gaps and deficits in the existing literature in the field. Numerous studies have focused on Chinese female international students in the higher education sector in the United States, but few of them discuss the female group in Canadian universities (Li, 2018). The existing research focusing on Chinese female students in Canadian universities displays the similarities with the situation of Chinese international students in the U.S.

Challenges faced by Female International Students in North America

In the existing literature, many researchers specifically identified and examined challenges confronting female international students in North America (e.g., identity positions involving academics, gender, religion, race, culture, socialization, and housing and finances). For instance, Dutta (2012) presented what was called the “liminal” status, as faced by female international students in an engineering program, (p.xi). The scholar stressed that for international women, the “liminal” period permanently manifested itself. That is, female international students enrolled in an engineering program suffer from invisibility and vulnerability. Studies focus on how female international students must meet challenging conditions (e.g., inherent perceptions of family and social roles) in sustaining workable public identities (Le et al., 2016; Aguirre & Gonzalez, 2017). Aidoo (2012), claimed gender factors impacted the relationship formed between international and local students. Arguably, female international students tend to be more discouraged, anxious, and stressed than their male counterparts (Hodgson & Simoni, 1995; Beaver & Tuck, 1998). Specifically, female students enrolled in doctoral programs were apt to feel marginalized due to a lack of peer support and struggles with study-family balance in Canada (Ge et al., 2019; Nwokedi, 2020).

Popadink (2008) explored the difficulties that heterosexual female international students encountered in their personal relationships. Bonazzo and Wong (2007) examined four Japanese female students who suffered from discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes. Some studies focus on how female international students retain and change their native cultures as values, norms, and language in Canada (Alqudayri & Gounko, 2018; Davis et al., 1993). Galloway and Jenkins (2005) identified English

proficiency, marital status, and country of origin as barriers for international female students in the adaptation to study in private and religious-affiliated universities. Hsieh (2006) pointed out that female international students had difficulty shaping a positive social identity because the dominant society was intended to view them as submissive and incompetent. Moreover, Chinese female students were inclined to submit to the passive and yielding female role of the Confucian philosophy. Besides, (Calder et al., 2016) reported international students no matter gender and the programs enrolled had difficulty in finding affordable, adequate, and suitable housing due to limited financial support, the dearth of employment opportunities, and currency fluctuations. During the COVID 19 pandemic, international female graduate students were especially vulnerable financially because many of them do not meet the criteria for federal benefits (Jenei et al., 2020).

Strategies Employed by Female International Students in North America

A series of studies focused on the exploration of successful coping strategies for female international students. These strategies include adjustment strategies based on social support, family support, and mentorship (Ogbonaya, 2011). Other coping and adaptive measures include positive supervisory relationships (Chapman & Sork, 2001). This refers to team-based support groups such as counseling and psychological guidance (Ku et al., 2008) and institutional support systems such as curriculum design and faculty members' cultural training (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006).

Research on Female Chinese International Graduate Students in North America

Few studies focused specifically on female Chinese international graduate students as research subjects in North America. Ge et al. (2019) examined the challenges that female Chinese graduate students faced in a Canadian university. In their study, female participants reported that they were deeply affected by traditional patriarchal viewpoints. Married female scholars had to balance their studies with the needs of their children and husbands. In addition, female participants felt that gender discrimination was an issue. Kutting (2012) explored the advising experiences of mainland female Chinese students and the negative effect upon doctoral programs. Included are the barriers and challenges that influence everyday existence, as well as concerns and individual perceptions carried through programs. Ogbonaya (2010) researched female international graduate students' experiences at an American university. One of the participants selected was from China. The scholar reported the challenges faced by these participants in academic intention, knowledge, and organization.

In the aforementioned research, the researchers were attempting to be passive observers reporting and analyzing the participants' experiences. They took the approach that the researchers' views, reflections, and voices should be minimal or diametrically bracketed out. With the present study, I use my own experiences to examine and anatomize the interactions among self, the academic environment, and the wider community. From the angle of an insider, I dig into the cultural experience of this female group to understand how the experience is linked closely to social context. Therefore, this research can play a role in extending the research field specifying female Chinese international students.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The researcher's theoretical formulation as developed offers a focus that drives the research methods and determine the data collection process (Egbert & Sanden, 2014). In this study, constructivism is utilized to guide and influence my research design, data statistics, and making sense of findings. Constructivism stresses that people construct their own realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). That is, their reality is based on the experiences of the participant (Raskin, 2002). Therefore, instead of developing research around a theory, constructivists find meanings from the personal experiences of the participants. In the present study, I attempted to analyze my experiences, social location, and identities to help improve the experiences of female Chinese women in academia.

RESEARCH METHOD

The methodological choice is specifically directed to an auto-ethnographic inquiry. Auto-ethnographic approaches combine the writing style of autobiography and the research method of

ethnography. Auto-ethnographic researchers generally link their experiences to their social and cultural contexts to unveil social and cultural issues. By the nature of auto-ethnography, these researchers usually have a unique story to tell. Therefore, they belong to a marginalized group or disadvantaged class. They aim to influence power and practice through narrating their own stories and experiences through such methods as dialogue, personal thoughts, reflections, and emotions (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). That is, this approach is subversive to conventional ways of doing research representing others. As a female Chinese graduate student in Canada, I have been facing triple pressures: cross-cultural adjustments, gender-based stereotypes from China and Canada, and racial stereotyping. Auto-ethnography allows me to explore my experiences and to unravel the underlying and hidden meanings of my cultural experience.

Reliability and Credibility in Auto-ethnographic Inquiries

In a qualitative inquiry, reliability refers to the consistency of the research processes and results. Silverman (2009) identified five approaches to enhance reliability: "Refutational analysis, constant data comparison, comprehensive data use, inclusive of the deviant case and use of tables" (Leung, 2015, p.326). Credibility can be measured by considering if the research findings interpret accurately the participants' meaning (Wittemore et al., 2011). Auto-ethnography as an innovative qualitative approach follows the primary criteria of reliability and credibility. However, as stated, auto-ethnographic researchers rely upon their own experiences as the only source of data and interpret their narratives and stories as a member of a culture (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Consequently, the academic rigor of auto-ethnographic has been questioned. As known, sometimes, memory is not accurate. Recalling memory in the language would not represent how those events were lived (Owen et al., 2009). Therefore, in an auto-ethnographic study, reliability also refers to the auto-ethnographic researchers' credibility. Auto-ethnographers should ask themselves if they have had the experiences described with factual evidence available and if this is authentically what happened to them (Bochner, 2002, p.86). For example, an adoptive mother used auto-ethnography as a methodology to add her voice to the various bodies of literature on international adoption to extend social understanding (Wall, 2008). She employed her headnotes and her memories as she said, "I remember many things . . . [and] I am certain that they are correct and not a fantasy" (Ottenberg, 1990, p.144).

In the present study, I reinforced reliability and credibility by: (a) constantly verifying the authenticity of my journals, dialogues on WeChat, emails, and my informal essays, (b) reading the relevant literature and comparing the experiences, concepts, and research findings to my own experiences, (c) and frequently asking myself if I was representing myself in it and presenting an authentic self and if my narratives were contributing to social life. That is, did this text embody a real sense of my lived experience?

Data Collection

Savin-Baden and Major (2013) stated that data collection in auto-ethnography involved "chronicling the past, undertaking the inventory of the self, using approaches that enable visualizing the self, undertaking self-observation, and collecting self-reflective data." (p.201). During my study abroad, I have faithfully kept a diary and written essays to express my feelings and experiences. Therefore, I undertook self-inventory, reviewed my journals, dialogues on WeChat, emails, and my essays as my primary source of data. I listed significant self-inventory questions relating to my studying abroad since 2016 from my value, gender identity, standpoints, strengths, weaknesses, barriers, challenges, gains, losses, interpersonal relationships, and socializing. I responded to each one by going through my past journals, relevant WeChat dialogues, emails, and papers written in graduate classes. This process allowed my memories to surface.

Data Analysis

As prescribed by Lichtman (2008), I carefully read self-inventory questions and answers several times for initial coding. The second step involved revisiting the initial coding. In this step, I identified what words and/or phrases were related to my lived experience. This also included the culling of some off-topic aspects (Cohen, 1987). In Step three and four, I continued to organize the text within relational graphs helping identify patterns that arose from my narratives. This process carried on until I identified and labelled

the substantial themes relating to my lived experience. By reading the data, I went on to find emergent categories until no new categories unfolded. For Step six, I re-read the data to corroborate the identified themes.

FINDINGS

Gender-based Challenges

Challenges emerging during my overseas study experience, the resistances of studying abroad, and the challenges in the host country caused by my gender are persistent.

Early resistances to studying abroad. A strong gender divide between the cultural treatment of men and women exists in China. Men are valued more than women, and women traditionally play the role of reproducing and nurturing a stable family environment (He, 2001). Consequently, I inescapably met gender-based resistance from my parents, husband, and friends before going abroad. I met a lot of resistance from my family members before leaving for Canada. My parents and husband complained that as a woman, I should have derived my joy from my husband and family instead of striving for a difficult advancement. Against this resistance, I persevered and faced an unknown future. I thought I held the power to achieve anything if I worked hard although I held the reality that I was just a woman.

Before studying for my doctorate and undertaking social research, I was a government worker with a stable income. However, I yearned to try something new and innovative. I thought studying abroad could make me enter a new and life-changing phase and I did not want to lock into a path too early. I strongly believed that I would find new surprises and unique opportunities. As a mother, I felt more obligated to the education and growth of my child. My son's healthy growth and development are my priority. Therefore, I hoped that the international experiences would enrich the development of my son as well. Through my study in Canada, he accessed a new and different educational environment and avoided being subjected to a highly competitive rote-based academic culture in China.

With the advancement of Chinese women, female intellectuals kept with their emancipatory inclination and longed for broadening their horizons, instead of merely stepping into their expected traditional roles, and I am no exception. In general, compared with men, it is harder for women to get a promotion in the workplace even when women work harder and have superior abilities. Therefore, I was forced to strive to elevate myself by seeking to study abroad. However, you can't have your cake and eat it too! That is, if choosing to study overseas, I would have to give up my current employment position. Hence, when I decided to pursue my degree, I had to resign from my excellent government position and lost significant financial resources.

Along the way, I met a lot of resistance from my family members before leaving for Canada. My parents and husband complained that as a woman, I should have derived my joy from my husband and family instead of striving for a difficult advancement. Against this resistance, I persevered and faced an unknown future. I thought I held the power to achieve anything if I worked hard although I held the realty that I was just a woman.

Barriers Based on Gender during Studying Abroad

During my academic life, I felt that systemic gender discrimination existed buried in the standard curriculum and was evident in general school discourses. For example, as mentioned in my previous research (Ge et al., 2019), the textbooks, course content/readings, and journal articles were primarily written from a male perspective. That is, instructors were imperceptibly encouraging sexism in discursive practices. This became a hindrance for me when arguing from feminist and critical perspectives. Moreover, my social status (a married Chinese woman) affected my academic skills and performance. As a mother, I am concerned first about my child, which means I would suspend my studies when he was sick or during other emergencies. I am exhausted after balancing my studies and family. I missed opportunities to participate in academic conferences that involved travel because I could not leave my son behind. Such a situation has remarkably impacted on extending my research experiences and peer networking.

Socializing is difficult for me due to gender commitments. I have few friends because I must attend my courses in the evening and then rush back to take care of my son. This includes checking his homework

while completing housework for the next day. Sometimes, I must spend extra money hiring a babysitter when the demands of studying become intensive. Therefore, I must bear overwhelming psychological pressure. I have had very few opportunities to talk about and share my emotional experiences with others. The free counseling services at the university did not effectively help me to ease my tension. (Most counselors did not have a cross-cultural experience and training sessions yet). Besides, it is more than professional help but the interpersonal connections through close friends and family that I miss so dearly. Quite simply, I am lonely.

Cultural-based Challenges (Language Barriers and Adjustment Gaps)

As the existing literature identified, English proficiency was an unquestionably overarching barrier for me, particularly at the early stages of my studies in Canada. From my early journal entries, I felt so frustrated and depressed in English learning on speech, writing, reading, accents, critical thinking, and pronunciation. Moreover, it seemed to be harder for me to meet the criteria of English proficiency than single female students due to my age and family responsibilities. Often, women at my age suffer from sleep difficulties and memory lapses. Therefore, I had to spend more time learning English. Even so, sometimes, I was unable to speak out and participate in class discussions; I experienced a hard time understanding the instructors' lessons and was not clear on the assignments.

I am willing to actively socialize and integrate into the local communities. I have strived to find an effective way to participate and make cultural adjustments to reduce stress from "cultural shock." For example, I encouraged my son to communicate and make friends with local students. I volunteered in some public activities to immerse myself in the local culture. However, when my attempts were underway to adapt to local communities, my son experienced cultural shock or even racial discrimination in many aspects of Canadian and school life. This upset me and led to mild depression.

A few years ago, a phone call from my son's elementary school focused on my son's so-called "violent language." I did not believe them and attempted to explain that he was joking, or it was a misunderstanding. But the school authorities did not listen to what I was saying. They said subjectively and opinionatedly: "Your son is very smart, so he knew what he was doing." When the event occurred, the school authorities did not phone me and just called the security office. They bossily said "…we already gave a phone call to the police, and they are going to your place for an investigation tomorrow…" At that time, they did not have written transcripts and dependent upon the teacher's accusations. As it turned out, my son was just playing in the yard with some friends and picked up a special rock. I felt that the teacher overreacted at that time. Now, I am willing to view this experience as cultural shock instead of outright racial discrimination; however, this experience was traumatizing for me and my son.

Race-based Challenges

As a graduate student in the discipline of education, it will be beneficial for me to study and participate in direct teaching practices. This knowledge and experience will advance my educational research and future employment opportunities. However, as a Chinese woman, I am disadvantaged to get a teaching position in Canada. I found that many part-time or full-time jobs were targeted at local people. As employers, they were not interested in the experiences of international employees. Moreover, the university's curriculum has focussed on domestic programs instead of international and intercultural content. Currently, my research scope has to be constrained to Chinese issues and cannot be expanded to a more global perspective. That is, the breadth and depth of my understanding cannot be expanded to the global community. Since winter 2020, COVID-19 has swept across the world. As all nations, Canada has to face the pandemic and its implications. However, it has been accompanied by an outbreak of racism and discrimination against Asians (viral diseases are often associated with the region or place where the outbreak first occurred). In these tough times, I have had negative emotions and a tendency towards slight depression because I worry about latent racial discrimination and persistent loneliness and anxiety. In Canada, in response to the aggravation of the COVID-19 pandemic, the travel ban has been implemented for non-citizens and non-permanent residents since March 18 (Government of Canada, 2020). In consequence, my research focusing on Chinese issues has had to be postponed and changed to remote research methods, which undoubtedly makes my social research much harder and complicated than before.

Coping Strategies

Despite the aforementioned challenges and adversity, these experiences triggered my resilience process. I tried to use diverse coping strategies including cultivating internal coping skills, self-efficacy, emotional control, self-acceptance, and external support such as mentoring, parental support, and peer support. I strived to obtain positive outcomes notwithstanding adversity (gender, culture, and race barriers). I accepted these challenges and resolved to work through them. Every day, I ensure healthy eating and sleeping, and participate in meditation and yoga. I have a video call with my parents every day to share my life and feelings to release the daily pressures. My friends in China often chat with me via WeChat and care about me, offering advice on mental wellbeing. Their friendships help me to relieve my loneliness and worries to some extent. Moreover, my mentor gave me enormous encouragement and support academically and personally. When I get stuck to go forward in my research studies, he always offers ideas and guides me on the various options. His words always come to my mind, "no worries! Please never let few setbacks get to you. Keep going!" and I become much stronger and braver to move through adversity.

DISCUSSION

I am a female Chinese international graduate student. By anatomizing my experience and stories as an epitome, it is clear that Chinese female international students are being placed in paradoxical gender identity. We are trapped in traditionally female identity and feminist standpoints in a changing social context. Therefore, when striving to balance the two sides, we have to face multiple barriers from gender stereotyping, cross-cultural adjustment, and racial stereotyping. However, as Rutter (1987) identified, stressors can play a role in activating the resilience process to overcome the disruptions in the homeostasis of individuals, families, groups, or communities. The gender-based, cultural-based, and race-based barriers as stressors can facilitate our resilience processes through interaction with the special external environment context.

Paradoxical Gender Identities

From the obstacles of studying abroad and the gender-based challenges faced by me in the host country, I feel that there has been an improvement in the female student's experience. As more Chinese females seek to further their education abroad in diverse fields, they are breaking down some of these barriers and bringing change to the institution. Already, more women enter male-dominated fields such as engineering and applied science (Frenette & Coulombe, 2007). For me, I tried to step outside my comfort zone and joined a new and challenging field to realize my dream of becoming a successful social researcher.

On the other hand, Confucianism is the root of the development of China's patriarchal society, emphasizing gender differences and the different roles women and men play in family life (Tamney & Chiang, 2002). Most of the Chinese women have been socialized by parents and society to accept sexist norms (Wotherspoon, 2014). Hence, they have to overcome significant resistance from families and society before studying abroad. Meanwhile, married women think automatically that they must be the primary caregiver to their children. Accordingly, I chose to take my children with me to Canada. As such, I often struggle with balancing study and family.

Furthermore, patriarchy seems to be present in most cultures and is associated with a set of ideas and discursive practices contributing to the differences between men and women (Henslin, 2001). Hence, it is inevitable that more emphasis is placed on male perspectives in higher education. In addition, with a study conducted by the American Psychological Association (2011), about 25% of women feel that they are not doing enough in managing stress; only 17 % of men feel so. One can conclude that women are at greater risk of mental health issues. Therefore, unavoidably, I suffered from persistent psychological pressures due to my gender identity.

Cultural Shock

Culture shock can be defined as an experience when one moves to an alien cultural environment and reacts with stress to the differences in the new culture. I believe that all international students, no matter men or women, have to experience some degree of culture shock. Macionis et al. (2010) described four transitioning phases, i.e., enjoyment, entanglement, adjustment, and transformation. Language acquisition is the top concern in cultural shock (Galloway & Jenkins, 2005). For example, traditional educational

philosophy contributes to cultural adaptation in Chinese international students and scholars. Chinese traditional education is teacher-based and centralized lecture and rote memorization (Gu, 2006). We often have trouble in speaking out and pushing our ideas in the classroom and conference settings (Yang, 2010; Zhao & McDougall, 2008). Chinese culture emphasizes humility and pushing one's ideas, especially in front of an elder (professor), is deemed abhorrent and disrespectful. This cultural expectation also places us at a disadvantage in the competitive self-promoting Western society.

In addition, married international students simultaneously have to be more concerned with their children's cultural adaptation including public school protocols and school cultural environment. Conflict is unavoidable and solutions are only found if both the education system and the family find ways to adapt and accept one another with all its limitations. If actions are not taken to address the child's cultural shock, its accompanying pain as what happened to me, and my child will be more deeply felt and will take longer to alleviate (Akarowhe, 2018).

Racial Barriers

As I stated earlier, racial stereotyping can be explained when an individual forms opinions and judgments on other persons based on how they look or speak (Gates, 2017). As a result, their endeavors and contributions of stereotyped individuals are ignored or neglected (Gates, 2017). In my experiences, stereotyping has restricted employment opportunities in both on-campus and off-campus settings.

The internationalization of higher education is a vital step in the response to globalization. Universities need to enrich their international connections that offer new insights and perspectives (Leask, 2015). Therefore, there is a need to respect and bridge cultural perspectives in curriculum design. Researchers and students can broaden their horizons and become global citizens. Besides, during the pandemic, anti-Asian racist incidents have been taking place in Canada, including some examples of physical violence and verbal harassment (Moir, 2020; Gill, 2020). Chinese international students are inescapably involved in this situation. Moreover, the research environment has been restricted during the pandemic and has resulted in delayed graduations. We ineluctably have a sense of fear and anxiety to continue our studies abroad (Moir, 2020).

Resilience Process

Rutter (1987) concluded that there are six significant predictors of an individual's resilience:

1. Stressors (Challenges) – serve to activate the resilience process.
2. The external environmental context – balances risk and protective factors in a specific environment.
3. Person-environment interactional processes – those in adversity would either passively or positively attempt to understand and overcome demanding environments to make a more protective condition.
4. Internal characteristics – the spiritual, cognitive, behavioral, physical, and emotional strengths.
5. Resilience processes – the short or long-term resilience processes mobilized by individuals through exposure to increasing challenges and stressors.
6. Positive outcomes – successful life adaptations regardless of stresses or trauma.

Based on my snapshot experience, female students have been facing triple barriers in gender, culture, and race. The outbreak of the pandemic has made our situation even more difficult. The intertwinement of these stressors has been pushing us into unprecedented adversity. According to Rutter's (1987) resilient predictors, these stressors can work to activate the resilience process. It can motivate our resilience processes by the interaction between ourselves and the special external environmental context.

Overall, as mentioned, an auto-ethnographic approach permits researchers to write first-person accounts and transit them from being an outsider to an insider in a study (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). Moreover, as Richards (2008) promoted, "…those being emancipated are representing themselves, instead of being colonized by others and subjected to their agendas or relegated to the role of second-class citizens." (p. 1724) Auto-ethnography enables marginalized groups to narrate their truth as experienced and sensitize to their status quo rather than waiting for others to help them speak out their needs and perceptions to facilitate a change.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Auto-ethnography is strongly personalized. In the present study, research data depended heavily on my view, reflection, and voice. Thereby, it was unavoidable to embed my biases into data analysis. This auto-ethnographic study included the description of periods of my life containing sensitive issues and issues of privacy regarding me and my family members. Due to this situation, special ethical considerations had to be given more attention (Wall, 2008). These included how revealing my experiences might impact my son or my parents.

Based on a constructive paradigm, I attempted to construct knowledge by exploring my personal experience. The data sources included my stories, self-narrative, emails, and causal literacy notes during my study abroad. The data was analyzed and coded, and the organized information was classified into relevant themes. Through constant comparisons, the complete dataset was confirmed, and the findings were corroborated according to the research questions.

Considering my auto-ethnographic inquiry, I recommend that relevant stakeholders promote choices and changes in the formal curriculum to incorporate intercultural dimensions in the learning outcomes, assessment, and teaching methods) (Leask, 2015). They should critically examine their curriculum and seek gender equality. Underlying activist pedagogies should be discussed to show how faculty relates to these students; how the university at large accommodates diversity (e.g., race and gender); and how academic staff can imagine new possibilities regarding the internationalization of curriculum to handle the challenges of these students and bridge divides. They need to examine support services such as counseling to ensure it is culturally sensitive and relevant to the international student. For example, this can include cross-cultural training and developing cross-racial empathy (considering gender and cultural differences). Faculty, staff members, and support workers such as counselors and faculty members can boost a deeper appreciation of the others' experiences and their perspectives (Ogden, 2007). The university has the opportunity to offer these female students a more flexible schedule for learning and create a more inclusive and supportive environment.

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Why Institutional Scholarship Policy Matters: Its Influence on Graduate International Students at a Regional University in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the importance of scholarship policies toward international graduate students during their studies at a regional university in Taiwan from the "push-pull" framework. Ten participants representing Indonesia, Vietnam, and India, the University's three largest international student groups, were interviewed. The analysis of the 10 semi-structured interviews investigates international students' choices to attend a regional university, and whether scholarship policy impacts their decision-making. Findings revealed the different influences of scholarship policy on international graduate students from majors and departments in their academic and financial adjustment. Key advantages and disadvantages of current scholarship policies are discussed with regards to students' experiences. Moreover, the study provides suggestions about recruitment and retention policies in terms of English-taught degree programs and institutional scholarship programs, particularly for Taiwanese regional universities seeking to expand their international student enrollment.

Keywords: academic performance, financial adjustment, international students, institutional scholarship policy, regional university, Taiwan

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INTRODUCTION

Educational opportunities in foreign countries is a factor in students' mobility from low-income to high-income countries in the Asia-Pacific region (Ziguras & McBurnie, 2011). In the case of Taiwan, its rapid industrialization has helped it become an attractive host country for cross-border education (Takaya, 2016). Since 2008, the number of international students seeking a study abroad experience in Taiwan has multiplied approximately four times (Taiwan Ministry of Education (TMOE), 2019). This increase signifies an effort from Taiwan's international education department to focus on increasing international student enrollment and enhancing the quality and quantity of international academic programs (Chou & Ching, 2012). Taiwan's government endorsed the plan to promote Taiwan to be a bilingual country in 2030 (Financial Supervisory Commission, 2019). This plan urged the expansion of English-taught degree programs in Taiwan. There were 92 English-taught degree programs, offered by 29 universities in 2013 (Macaro et al., 2018). By 2021, TMOE subsidized 4 key institutions and 41 colleges for expanding English-taught degree programs (Chiang, 2021). Moreover, although more than half of foreign students are "Chinese overseas students", those students from Hong Kong, Macao, and Mainland China, students from Indonesia, Vietnam, and Malaysia are the most populous "international students" (TMOE, 2019). Indian students are also steadily rising and exceeded 1,000 in 2019 (TMOE, 2019).

International students bring positive contributions to host countries and institutions. These include creating a multicultural environment (Mellors-Bourne et al., 2013), improving the reputation of the local institution (Chou et al., 2012), and promoting the diplomatic alliance between home and host countries (Tran, 2019). However, for many students, financial considerations remain a strong factor in choosing to study abroad. Students tend to seek financial aid from governmental, organizational, and institutional sources as well as funding from their family. Family is willing to invest in their children's foreign education with expectations for future career development abroad and immigration opportunities (Bashir, 2007). Students generally try to find the best financial package for their program of study, thus they are willing to attend institutions that can provide them with sufficient aid (Avery & Hoxby, 2004). Some studies state that most international students studying in Taiwan hold scholarships (Roberts et al., 2010; Chou et al., 2012). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2021), a scholarship is "… free money, which is sometimes based on academic merit, talent, or a particular area of study" (Scholarships section, para. 1). Scholarships are an essential element contributing to international students' mobility to Taiwan (Tsai et al., 2017)

Numerous studies generalize the flow of international students' mobility and their adaptation in a foreign country. Some studies in Taiwan have focused on metropolitan universities (Chen & Chen, 2009; Chou et al., 2012; Pare & Tsay, 2014), yet mistakenly generalize their findings for the whole country. Thus, there is still lacking research on regional universities in Taiwan. As the researchers of this study are either teaching or studying in a regional university in Taiwan, this study aims to enhance existing research on this type of institution with regard to international student's enrollment decisions, as influenced by scholarship policy and financial and academic adjustment support. This paper provides policy recommendations for other universities seeking to attract international students, especially regional universities in Taiwan. The following research questions guided this study:

1. Why do international students choose to study abroad at a Taiwanese regional university?
2. How does the semesterly scholarship review policy influence international students' financial and academic adjustment to living in Taiwan and studying at a regional university?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

One of the dominant conceptual frameworks explaining international students' mobility is the "push-pull model" from macro perspectives, developed by McMahon (1992). The early model of international students' flow from developing countries to developed countries proposed two sets of factors with three key bases – education, politics, and economics (McMahon, 1992). The "push" factors, identified as the influential elements from home countries, consist of the home country's economic strength, its level of involvement in the international economy, its investment on domestic education, and its domestic educational opportunities. The "pull" factors are associated with elements that attract students to the host countries. Those are described as the political and economic linkages between the host and home countries, the home country's economic capacity in relation to the host country, and the host country's ability to incentivize international students to study there via financial aid packages. This model is presented in distinctive policies of host countries' institutions to recruit globally mobile students to thus expand their economic and political benefits regarding educational outlook (UNESCO, 2018). The competitiveness created by world rankings has changed the concept of internationalization, driving institutions to attract more international students (UNESCO, 2018). These "push-pull" factors, which can be varied depending on differing contexts and relations between host and home countries, can influence an individual's decisions.

Many empirical studies were conducted using the push-pull model to specifically explore international students' motivation to study abroad. For instance, Indonesian and Indian students emphasized host countries' quality of education (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) as the "push" factors. Immigration opportunities and avoidance of educational examinations are two typical "push" factors for Vietnamese students (Tran, 2019). On the contrary, "pull" factors include students' prior knowledge of host countries, recommendations from friends and families, affordability, geographic proximity (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), and host countries' languages and cultural experiences (Elder at el., 2010; Tran, 2019).

Few international students are fully funded by scholarship awards. According to Dassin et al. (2018), only five percent of international students from developing countries receive scholarship awards from their home countries. While real numbers are unknown due to limited reliable data shared publicly, our literature review suggests that scholarships remain a strong incentive for international student mobility because it allows for greater financial freedom while studying abroad. Moreover, Taiwan has established a popular scholarship policy aimed at expanding international student retention (Roberts et al., 2010). This study will investigate the individual drivers of international students from developing countries relative to scholarship programs. International students achieving scholarship for their abroad study are the often-neglected minority in academic literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Influences of Financial Aid on Destination Choices

Numerous studies previously conducted emphasize multiple factors influencing students' mobility such as home and host countries' education quality, immigration opportunities, and future career prospects. However, this review focuses specifically on financial aid as an influential factor for international students' decision to study abroad in Taiwan.

Around the globe, there are a variety of scholarships sponsored by both home and host country governments. For instance, the Taiwanese government has enacted the New Southbound Talent Development Program that promotes and funds diplomatic relationship-building with 19 countries from the

Southeast Asia and South Asia regions as well as New Zealand and Australia (TMOE, 2015). The Vietnamese government encouraged young people to pursue higher education in foreign partner universities through the 911 Project, and expected to achieve the goal of 10,000 doctoral lecturers for universities nationwide from 2010-2020 (Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training, 2010). However, the ministry failed to achieve this goal due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Indonesian government provides students with various types of funding, such as the BUDI-DN Scholarship, to finance higher education study in foreign countries (Indonesia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020).

Scholarships are presented as a prominent rationale contributing to international students' mobility through host and home country policies. The Taiwan Scholarship and Huayu Enrichment Scholarship Program łaunched by the Ministry of Education in 2004 provided more than 100,000 scholarships for students from one hundred countries through 2017 (Spencer, 2017). Some empirical studies strongly support the influence of scholarships on international students' mobility. Roberts et al. (2010) surveyed 88 international students from 17 countries at National Cheng Chi University and found that the two most crucial pull factors for international students were the opportunity to achieve Chinese language proficiency and the government-sponsored scholarships they were provided. The research of Chou et al. (2012) highlighted scholarships as contributing greatly to the mobility of international students to study in Taiwan when 64 percent of 684 international students surveyed reported receiving organization or government scholarships.

Jiani's (2016) research showed scholarships exerted a strong influence on international students' destination of choice at universities of mainland China stating, "A scholarship provided financial support and was particularly important for those whose families did not have adequate financial resources" (Jiani, 2016, p. 570). Although international students from developed countries did not consider scholarships a necessity for their study abroad, financial assistance still partially contributed to their decision to pursue education in China (Jiani, 2016).

However, some universities have impacted students' enrollment decisions by decreasing scholarships and grants (Heller, 1997). Fiscal policy has proved to be difficult to manage inside higher education institutions. Heller (1997) noted that the financial policies related to "cost of college" had varying influence on the cross-cultural students' persistence, where different cultures have different perceptions of fiscal implications. Hu (2011) found aid packages and well-structured financial aid programs enable students' engagement in the university's environment, including social activities and extracurricular clubs. Smart et al. (2002) explained an institution's financial practices, such as investing in more opportunities for co-curricular and extracurricular engagement, has a significant correlation with increased student success. Students who do not have the financial burden of paying for college on their own can focus more on integrating socially and academically. In this way, financial aid policies can directly impact university students' integration and development processes.

There is still limited research that has been conducted on scholarships as the primary pull factor for prospective students and how this financial support influences them after the first year. These topics will be the focus of this study.

International Students' Financial and Academic Adjustment

Many studies have addressed international students' adjustment and adaptation in host countries. For example, Schartner and Young's Model of International Student Adjustment and Adaption presented that international students' adjustment can produce behavioral outcomes in their psychological,

sociocultural, and academic adaption while undergoing cross-cultural adaptions in their lives (Schartner & Young, 2016). Financial support has also been identified as a factor influencing social and academic integration for international students from developing countries (Rienties et al., 2012). Some research has found that international students must deal with financial obstacles due to less financial support (Özoğlu et al., 2015; Jiani, 2016). However, these financial obstacles are the focus of few studies.

With respect to international students' transition to studying at a foreign university, research was conducted in Taiwan capturing three dimensions: social, cultural, and academic adjustment (Chen & Chen, 2009; Pare & Tsay, 2014). Recently, Nadi et al (2019) elaborated on this framework to include six key areas: commitment to goals, social, personal, academic, lifestyle, and financial adjustment. Although they found a relationship between academic and financial adjustment, overall, their findings reflect each dimension individually. Thomas (2002) found that financial constraints can negatively impact academic progress in higher education, particularly for students of low-income backgrounds, which aligns with later findings on this topic by Rienties et al. (2012) and Mobley et al. (2009). These studies inferred a correlation between financial and academic adjustment, which was presented in the students' behavioral tendencies. For example, students tend to adjust their class schedule by utilizing withdrawal and course instructor selection options in order to achieve a high GPA, which can help them to maintain their scholarship(s) (Mobley et al., 2009). Harman (2003) also found 53.6 percent of 166 full-time Ph.D. international students in Australia held part-time jobs and 4.2 percent of this group were engaged in full-time employment because of financial necessity. The study revealed they received a small portion of financial aid which was not enough for their living expenses.

Therefore, this study will explore the interrelationship between academic and financial adjustment as impacted by university scholarship policy in Taiwan, a developed country attracting international students from developing countries. The authors adopted definitions of two dimensions for this study taken from cited literature: *academic adjustment*, which describes a student's ability to deal with various educational requirements such as motivation, performance, and satisfaction with academic settings (Rienties et al., 2012), and *financial adjustment* defined as "The student's ability to manage financial support, such as scholarships, arrange a part-time job, and manage tuition fees and/or installments" (Nadi at el., 2019, p.619).

METHODOLOGY

Participants

This study's research method is qualitative, using semi-structured interviews to collect data from participants. The number of international students in a regional Taiwanese university, as the research setting, had increased steadily since the late 2000's from 10 international students in 2008 up to 388 in the 2019-2020 academic year when the interviews were completed (TMOE, 2019). The three largest groups in the research setting successively come from Indonesia with 92 students, Vietnam with 47 students and India with 40 students (TMOE, 2019). From this population, the authors selected five Master's students and five Ph.D. students in different departments representing Indonesia, Vietnam and India; they all voluntarily participated in this study. Additionally, the participants were either institutional scholarship or government-sponsored scholarship recipients. The authors wanted to interview those who were (1) eligible to receive institutional or government-sponsored scholarships and (2) Master's students under year three and Ph.D. students under year four in their degree program because (1) students under those years remain eligible for institutional scholarships and (2) government-sponsored scholarships expire after those respective study

years. The institutional scholarship recipients need to reapply every semester. Their applications are reviewed and scholarships are awarded using a merit-based policy. There are three variations: “A-type” (100 percent tuition waiver and monthly stipends), “B-type” (100 percent tuition waiver only), and “C-type” (50 percent tuition waiver only). Students apply for government-sponsored scholarships before matriculating to the university and they must maintain at least a 3.5 out of 4.5 GPA to continue to receive this academic merit-based financial aid.

Data Collection

Participants were contacted and given the necessary information to be able to consent to participating in the study. Anonymity was guaranteed and participants’ real names were changed. The interviews were audio recorded with interviewee permission and conducted in public and private locations based on the participants’ preferences. The lead author of this study, a Vietnamese national, interviewed Vietnamese participants in Vietnamese. These interviews were transcribed and then translated into English after they were completed. All other interviews were conducted in English. If the interviewee was a non-native English speaker, a dictionary was used accordingly to enable precise answers.

The lead author is a Ph.D. student in the research setting. Therefore, the interviews were conducted by the lead author, which created a comfortable atmosphere for the participants. The researcher conducted an in-depth and semi-structured interview with each participant, asking the following questions:

1. Which universities did you apply to for your overseas study?
2. Why did you choose this university?
3. What is the scholarship policy of this university?
4. How does this scholarship policy influence your studying and living at this university?
5. What strategies do you use to maintain your scholarship?

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Name	Country	Level	Major	Scholarship	Gender	Interview Date
Domani	Indonesia	PhD	Education	I	M	2020/04/04
Yanni	Indonesia	PhD	Education	G	F	2020/03/31
Abdul	Indonesia	MA	Management	I	M	2020/04/05
Syntia	Indonesia	MA	Education	I	F	2020/04/15
Lam	Vietnam	MA – PhD*	Hum. & Soc.	I-G	M	2020/04/14
Linh	Vietnam	MA – PhD**	Science & Engr.	I	F	2020/03/25
Hoang	Vietnam	MA	Management	I	M	2020/03/31

Note: MA = Master, PhD = Doctoral, I = Institutional scholarship, G = Government-sponsored scholarship, M = Male, F = Female

** The participant attended master's and doctoral programs in this university.* 2020/04/07

2020/03/26

*** The participant joined the master's program for one year and transferred to a doctoral program* 2020/04/12

Analyzing the Data

Qualitative data is "intense, engaging, challenging, non-linear, contextualized and highly variable" (Bazeley, 2013, p.3). Merriam and Tisdell (2019) mentioned data analysis as, "a process of

making sense out of data" by consolidating data fragments to answer the research questions. Hence, the collected data was analyzed following Merriam's (2009) data analysis procedural guidelines to keep the authors focused on the research questions. The procedural guidelines include: (1) Category construction, (2) Sorting categories or data, (3) Naming the categories, (4) How many categories, and (5) Becoming theoretical. Moreover, to ensure the internal validity and reliability of the data, this paper used the peer review/examination strategy (Merriam, 2009).

First, the two authors separately read and identified the *open coding*, data fragments related to the purposes of research. Second, the authors grouped and sorted these codes. Third, the authors put these codes into categories. Fourth, the authors reduced the categories into five or six themes. All the work of the researchers was carried out individually until their findings reached the consensus to ensure the data trustworthiness and external reliability (Merriam, 2009). Finally, findings were discussed to answer the research questions.

RESULTS

1. Why did participants choose to study abroad at a Taiwanese regional university?

As prospective students, nine participants in the study had applied to at least two universities, and only one participant had applied to a single university, which they currently attend. As the researchers expected, the participants listed international programs, the influences of social connections, and friends as part of their rationale for selecting the university. The results were compatible with the researchers' assumption that receiving a scholarship would be the most influential factor in the participants' decision to select a public regional university. It was reportedly the availability, sufficiency of scholarship, and scholarship-related matter that affected international students' financial and emotional security during their studying abroad.

Scholarship Availability

According to the participants, the necessity of receiving a scholarship was highly influential in their decision-making. All the participants received either institutional or governmental scholarships. Seven participants received the highest level of institutional scholarship, A-type (100 percent tuition waiver and monthly stipends); two participants received the mid-level institutional scholarship, B-type (100 percent tuition waiver); and only one participant received the lowest institutional scholarship, C-type (50 percent tuition waiver). These institutional scholarships are bound by a semesterly review policy, requiring students to reapply every semester. They are awarded based on class rank, recommendation letters, and GPA. Hence, depending on academic performance, a student could move from a C-type scholarship to an A-type scholarship after just one semester, and vice versa. A student's financial status is not factored into the decision about whether to award the scholarship.

The governmental scholarships include the Ministry of Education (MOE) Taiwan Scholarship, Elite Scholarship, and Southward Scholarship, which students can only apply for once, before entering any program. Two A-type scholarship recipients, Yanni and Kamal, were awarded governmental scholarships and were approved to receive them in lieu of their institutional scholarships. One student, Lam, received his Master's degree from the same institution on an A-type scholarship, and at the time of interview, was working on his Ph.D. degree on a governmental scholarship.

Scholarship availability, even a partial award, made it possible for some of the participants to study abroad and choose the Taiwanese university. Abdul decided to come to the university because he received a partial scholarship. He said, "Why not? They [his current university] gave me the scholarship." Similarly,

Kamal commented on his painstaking process of trying to be admitted to a foreign university that would provide him with an adequate scholarship to study abroad:

> "They [a university in the United Kingdom] emailed me they did not have space for PhD in computer science department. And in Malaysia, when I tried to apply, the seats already filled up for PhD because they have limited seat in the university . . . And in Philippines they [a university in The Philippines] said they don't have enough Professors to provide Ph.D.…In Vietnam, when I tried to find some universities, I found only one but in Ho Chi Minh they [the university] said we don't have scholarship to provide you, so you have to pay… I also applied a private university [in Taiwan] …they don't provide enough budget to students."

When considering studying abroad and the necessity of receiving financial aid, some participants noted "the scholarship application deadline" was an important factor in their decision-making. Three participants applied for their university because the application was open longer than other institutions. Linh and Lam were unwilling to "wait for half of a year or one year" to apply for higher ranking universities, thus they decided to come to their university. Similarly, after missing other universities' application deadlines, Dyvia said, "There was an opening on campus, … so I just tried to apply for the scholarship." She received a C-type institutional scholarship, which was substantial enough financial support for her to be able to study abroad.

Sufficient Scholarships*: "*…which university gave me the highest scholarship, I would go for it."

Although many participants mentioned the importance of partial scholarships, the sufficient ones which could cover their living costs in Taiwan were regarded as more important. As explained above, seven participants received A-type scholarships, and then two of them, Kamal and Yanni, applied for a governmental scholarship and were approved to transition to this type of funding after receiving the financial award. One of them, Lam, continued to pursue his Ph.D. in the same university because he believed that he had a high percentage chance of being awarded a governmental scholarship, "I already knew my professor and got used to research, I can prove I have capability to research well when I study here." Tien, who received the A-type scholarship, shared she declined an offer to attend the top-ranking university in Taiwan due to a, "50 percent tuition waiver scholarship," that prevented her from financing herself without her family support. Instead, she selected a regional university, remarking, "I didn't care about which kind of university [it] was, but which university gave me the higher scholarship, I would go for it." Similarly, a Ph.D. student named Domani was attracted to the regional university by a sufficient scholarship that led him to withdraw from a high-ranking metropolitan institution because, "…[the] department they also provide some additional financial support. This is the big reason I selected [his current university], it's [department scholarship] is actually enough but not much."

Semesterly Scholarship Review Policy: "***Even I had C-type for the first semester, but if I perform well, get the good grade, I will get the chance to get A-type after that***."

The semesterly scholarship review policy at the University requires students to reapply for their academic merit-based scholarship every semester. Some participants in the study prefer the semesterly scholarship review policy because it creates feelings of possibility and motivates them to earn it through hard work. Students felt if they worked hard to receive a higher GPA relative to other applications, they would obtain the scholarship. Some students who entered the University on a B-type scholarship felt they could obtain an A-type scholarship if they worked hard enough. For example, Syntia said, "If I get the GPA 3.8 [out of 4.5] I can get A-type." Hoang and Tien heard from their senior peers' comments such as:

“Vietnamese students are hardworking, so don’t worry and at least you can get B-type.” In the case of Ph.D. students, they felt more confident they would receive funding due to a general perception at the University that scholarships were, “priority for Ph.D. students.” Domani, for example, was informed by his friends that, “scholarship… they [Ph.D. students] always get A-type.”

However, the semesterly scholarship review policy also generates controversial opinions. For instance, Linh, who received a A-type scholarship, implied the university should not practice this semesterly review scholarship policy, “It was like the time for applying scholarship will occupy your time when you need to be studying.” The students who received a C-type scholarship expected to be awarded a higher scholarship for the next semester instead of next academic year. Dyvia explained, “. . . it doesn’t matter the way we have to apply every semester and it based on merit… I will get the chance to get A-type after that [first semester].

Other Factors Influencing Study Abroad Decision-making

Through the interviews, the researchers observed that international students are not only concerned with financial aid, but also other factors such as English-taught degree programs, campus environment, social connections, and friends’ recommendations when deciding on their host institution. For example, after searching for top-ranking universities, Hoang figured out, "…they [top-ranking universities] provide English-taught degree programs, but the problem is that they don't open enough English courses for Finance, so you have to find some courses outside the department." All the participants also shared that, prior to committing to their regional university, they connected with enrolled student peers to learn more about the institution. For instance, a senior student created a Facebook group to network and help answer Hoang and Tien's questions, which is regarded as a word-of-mouth networking channel by senior students for the University.

Some participants noted positive interactions with faculty members as influential in their decision-making to attend the University. Domani explained, "They [the professors in his current department] are politer, and humbler and answered everything about my questions." Kamal and Yanni were both granted a governmental scholarship for their transition when they applied to the University. Kamal received helpful guidance from departmental staff, noting, "But the office [his current department staff] said, if you do the Ph.D., it will be better if you take the Southward [scholarship]."

While various qualities listed above attracted participants to this regional university, overall, scholarship support was emphasized as the most important factor in their decision-making. Participants were chiefly concerned with receiving the best scholarship available for their study abroad experience. Competitiveness, review policy, and the duration of time that the scholarship application remains open could impact a student’s decision to choose either a top-ranking, metropolitan university or a regional university. In the following section, the influence of scholarship policy and its related issues impacting international students are addressed, concurrently answering our second research question.

2. How do semesterly scholarship review policies influence participants’ financial and academic adjustment to living in Taiwan and studying at a regional university?

A university’s scholarship policies could be the deciding factor for participants' academic and financial adjustment to their study abroad experience. The policies at this regional university were presented comparatively as pre- and post-arrival scholarships. This framework altered their perception that their scholarship could be retained by academic achievement or financial management. Participants from

different departments provided differing statements regarding their financial and academic adjustment process.

Semesterly scholarship review policy yields high comparativeness among international students

Prior to their arrival, all participants assumed their scholarship would be available and sufficient on a continual basis, which was the primary reason that they selected their university. The low requirements for admission were referenced in most participants' responses when they were asked about the scholarship application. For example, Tien's application to her university resulted in her being awarded the A-type scholarship while other universities she applied to only offered her what is equivalent to the C-type scholarship. Her testimony revealed that low requirements for admission are among the strategies that universities are using to attract international students. However, the "easy" requirements led participants to falsely assume maintaining the A-type scholarship was easy.

Thereafter, international students enrolled in the University and were confused to learn they must demonstrate a high level of academic success to keep their scholarship. Many participants believed that it would be worry-free to achieve sufficient academic performance in order to maintain their A-type scholarship. Yet, they noticed "changes" and "inconsistency" in scholarship policy "year to year." Lam shared his past experience: "From what I experienced, two years ago, 3.5 was not low, because if your GPA was 3.5, you could get B already, for now, GPA 3.5 is really low.*"* Similarly, Syntia experienced "semester to semester" fluctuations, stating, "Next semester [the second semester] I got more than 3.8, and C-type… If the students get 3.8, at least get B, not C."

Moreover, due to unstandardized, merit-based requirements established for registered students, students assume academic performance is supposed to be the key factor in determining who is awarded a scholarship. However, comparisons and assumptions diverged between participants majoring in science and engineering and other departments. Two participants, Linh and Dyvia, assumed they just needed a passing academic performance to clear the semesterly review policy. Linh set an academic performance goal of "around 4.2 [GPA, out of 4.5]" in her comfort zone, and Dyvia emphasized she needed to achieve good grades without obsessing over ranking. In comparison, participants from other departments believed by default if they pushed themselves to be the best, referring to the "first rank" in their department, they could gain a higher scholarship. For example, Hoang expected to get full marks to achieve "first rank", but expressed his uncertainty about the University's scholarship review policy:

> "I expect I will get type A because last semester, my performance is relatively high, and all are A+. But it is just an expectation. I am not sure about it. I am afraid like [his friend], all A+, and first rank, but [she] got type B … I cannot understand the situation and the scholarship policy of our university and department as well."

Domani admitted that though he was a Ph. D. student, which means he had more chances than Master's students to receive an A-type scholarship, he seemed to obsess over, "be better than others," and "be number one" in order to receive the higher financial award.

The key to securing a scholarship is academic performance but "one size doesn't fit all."

Participants frequently noted the importance of receiving a scholarship to satisfy financial needs when living in a foreign country. While each international student has their own needs, a scholarship can assuage concerns about tuition and living expenses. On this topic, Abdul shared his opinion about scholarship sufficiency when he received an A-type financial award after receiving a B-type in his two first semesters:

> "If you get A [free 100 percent tuition waiver and monthly stipend], and for master you will get 6000 NT dollars a month, around that number…. [for me] More than enough. It depends on living cost, and for many things, it is more than enough."

Seven participants stated high academic performance as the key to receiving an A-Type scholarship and achieving financial security for their overseas studies. Hoang explained how he was motivated to receive an A-type scholarship to be less of a financial burden on his family:

> "[I received] B type, and only free for tuition fee [tuition waiver], but no stipend [in my first semester] … Luckily, my parents also support me about financial matters, but a part of it. Anyway, despite my parents' support, I always consider about it [financial issues] … I had decided to achieve 3 A+ last semester, even 4 A+ in this semester. You are motivated, and you are ranked when you study here [his university] because of the scholarship."

On the other hand, academic performance is much less of a factor for recipients of governmental scholarships. Lam was encouraged by his friend to apply for a governmental scholarship for his Ph.D. program in order to receive a "stable monthly stipend" and put "more focus on researching, and not courses." Yanni and Kamal stated the passing score to maintain the scholarship was "3.5 [out of 4.5]". Governmental scholarship recipients expressed feeling much less pressure to perform well academically to retain their financial award, as their expectations were standardized and based on 'retention', not semesterly competition.

Some participants referenced working part-time jobs or asking parents for financial assistance in order to reduce stress related to being able to afford their university studies. Realizing they could not "rank first" competing with other students, some participants found it easier to ask their parents for financial support. Syntia commented, "When I got type C [C-type scholarship], I asked my mother for my travel and my study [travelling fee and tuition fee] … I was doing my part-time job, so I could cover my living in Taiwan". Other participants, like Tien, tried to earn as much as they could through part-time employment:

> "The two next semesters, I got B-type scholarship, I did not have money at all, so I had to work. The second semester I even worked for 4 days to earn enough for my living cost…Each day I worked for 3 hours, sometime more than that, 3.5 hours, so in average about 15 hours a week. Last semester, I worked in a hotel, and I reduced 3 days for restaurants."

Learning Strategies as a Means to Maintain Academic Performance

Although academic performance was essential for participants to retain their scholarship, they recognized maintaining good academic performance, even without a financial incentive, was important to progress in their program. They utilized different strategies to achieve high academic performance. Some participants strategically selected classes they thought they would do well in and made a concerted effort to impress their professors. Domani believed his peer-support might help his component to achieve good scores, "…when we took the statistic course, I still remember …. when they [other students] asked me [about the statistics], I didn't want to give all of them the answer, because we were competing with each other." Other participants also mentioned they participated actively in the classroom to create a good impression with the course instructor and advance their goal of achieving high academic performance. Participants both strategically selected and withdrew from courses to maintain a high GPA. They selected courses based on professors with whom they were comfortable and who were generous in giving high grades. Conversely, they withdrew from difficult courses that could result in their GPA dropping due to a low grade. Tien consulted her senior classmates to determine whether or not to take certain courses:

> "[I asked] whether the professors are generous about the grading. For example, there is a course that I really want to take, but it is tough and it is hard to get high score, I will ignore it. Last semester, I really liked the SPSS course…because it would be helpful for my thesis also, but I heard that the prof [professor] who takes charge of that course was strict, and tough in grading and exams. So, I quit, and took another course."

However, three participants from the science and engineering departments shared a different approach to course selection. They emphasized a "follow my professor" strategy and assumed that their instructors were the decisive factor in their academic performance, scholarship candidacy, and related financial support which professors provide by paying students for assistance on research projects. Both institutional and governmental scholarship recipients reported this strategy. Kamal explained his course selection based on the following rationale: "My professor background and I have to select my research field. My professor's background are computer vision and image processing, so I start my studies from scratch and get little grasp in image processing." Responses from participants also revealed that international students majoring in Science and Engineering could have part-time research assistant employment in the laboratories, which was an additional source of financial support. The part-time research assistant salary for laboratory work was issued as a monthly stipend from their professors, which helped them afford the costs of their study abroad experience.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study addressed the importance of scholarships in graduate international students' decision-making when selecting a host university. The research also examined how receiving a scholarship influences their academic and financial adjustment depending on the financial aid policies of the University. Although this study aligns with previous research on international students experiences and perspectives, its findings can enlarge the literature on this topic with the context of Taiwan and contribute to inquiry about the expanding internationalization of regional universities.

The Recruitment Policy in Relation to English-taught Programs

This study found that offering an English-taught degree programs in Taiwanese regional universities and increasing the variety of English-taught courses is key to expanding the enrollment of international students. This finding is compatible with the results of previous studies (Ziguars & McBurnie, 2011). Contrary to students from high-income countries who tend to participate in short term exchange programs, students from low-income countries engage in long term study by seeking degrees from foreign universities to enhance their future career options (Tran, 2019; Jiani, 2016), especially in the Asia-Pacific region (Ziguras & McBurnie, 2011). Moreover, international students from developed countries Universities can expand their enrollment of international students from developing countries by offering more English-based degree programs.

Recruitment Policy in Relation to Scholarship Programs

Scholarships have emerged as an influential rationale and premier financial resource for students to study abroad. However, policy-making is a latent factor that largely impacts international students' mobility (Kondakci, 2011). International student recruitment in relation to scholarship policy was presented in two key areas in this study.

First, the availability of scholarships provided by the host institution functioned as one of the main "pull factors" even though regional universities are considered second in reputation and social life to

metropolitan universities in many aspects (Townsend & Jun Poh, 2008). This study found that all the participants' greatest concern before and after enrolling in a foreign university was scholarship availability and the amount awarded. This is consistent with literature that non-leading universities can increase student enrollment based on easy-to-access scholarship opportunities (Jiani, 2016). Moreover, the research conducted by Kondakci (2011) suggests that scholarships can diminish the anxiety of financial difficulties which frequently occur when students do not have family support to finance their education. This was implied in the findings herein when participants reflected on being attracted to universities with lower admission standards that offer scholarships for international students. Participants who were awarded governmental scholarships, which do not have a semesterly re-application requirement, gave stronger attestations of financial security than students who received the institutional scholarship, which must be re-applied for every semester.

Second, this study found that the length of the application period and a rapid announcement of results could influence international students' decision-making on whether to attend a prospective university. There has not been much research about how application duration impacts international students' decision-making when selecting an institution for their higher education. Due to scholarships being an essential factor determining whether a student will be able to afford studying at a university (Özoğlu et al., 2015; Jiani, 2016), participants may be risk averse by selecting the first scholarship package which can meet some of their financial requirements regarding their strategic behaviors for their certainty (Avery & Hoxby, 2004).

Recommendations for Scholarship Retention Policy Changes

Consistent with the literature (Mobley et al., 2009), this study showed that participants go to extremes in their learning strategies to retain their scholarship. Although it was part of their academic integration, the financial necessity of receiving and maintaining a scholarship caused students to adjust quickly to their classes and focus on achieving high grades. Being awarded a scholarship could ease the anxiety of financial struggles and put participants in a positive emotional state before their arrival to campus. However, post-arrival competitiveness regarding "inconsistency" and "changes" in the institutional scholarship policy caused uncertainty and anxiety for recipients, which impacted how they approached their academic program, sometimes resulting in strategizing to reach performance targets and maintain their financial aid. This research questions the transparency of scholarship policy, which was also noted in research conducted by Nadi et al. (2019).

In addition, the findings of this study indicated the potential negative effect of the scholarship retention policy on participants' academic adjustment, as demonstrated by their competitive learning strategies to boost and sustain their performance in the classroom. The findings revealed participants' selective behaviors in choosing courses were caused by their financial uncertainty as institutional aid recipients who needed easy grades to maintain a competitive edge. These selective behaviors may have occurred due to the trade-off between academic and social adjustment which has been part of previous studies, such as one by Rienties et at. (2012) which found that international students who tend to be more actively involved in campus life might not achieve good academic performance. These students also targeted courses in which they could excel and achieve good grades (Rienties et al., 2012). These findings imply the University has not been considering participants' social integration into the campus community as an institutional priority. Meanwhile, students' social and academic involvement in the institutional communities can promote students' persistence and success in the account of their commitment to communities they are involved (Tinto et al., 2006, Tinto, 2017). The social integration of international

students can create a culturally diverse campus environment which can also benefit local students' intercultural sensitivity (Mellors-Bourne et al., 2013).

The findings also highlighted that academic performance could strongly impact the participants who received the institutional scholarship while, conversely, it had little effect on governmental scholarship recipients whose financial aid was not dependent on their grades. All the participants referenced their "poor performance" relative to their classmates, which refers to their definition of poor performance being relatively lower to their peers' performance, possibly leading to financial struggles. However, their academic performance would still be good per the general population (3.8-4.2 GPA on a 4.5 scale). This is contrary to the definition of 'poor performance' found by Özoğlu et al. (2015) who stated that international students facing academic challenges, as defined by poor performance in the general population, struggle to retain financial aid and, in serious cases, withdraw from school. Hence, the participants in the research must maintain a higher performance relative to their peers to avoid financial issues; a high performance defined by top GPAs (above 4.2) in the general population.

Hu and St. John (2001), on the other hand, found that a well-structured financial aid package can equalize opportunities between scholarship recipients and students who do not receive funding from the university or government. In this case, equalizing a package, specifically the institutional scholarship policy, will reduce pressure for these recipients and equalize social life and research opportunities with their government aid receiving peers. Post-graduate students would be able to focus on research instead of competing against their peers and having to select courses strategically to maintain their financial aid.

In combination, these findings suggest that financial aid policy is a key to increasing international students' enrollment in Taiwanese universities, particularly international students from developing countries who are seeking a study abroad experience in Taiwan as a result of the New Southbound Policy. There are various external and internal factors influencing international students' decision-making to study abroad that have been explored in previous studies (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Tran, 2019), however, it is challenging for a regional university to meet all these demands.

In conclusion, there are three key points that regional universities should consider moving forward. First, English-based classes and curriculum can be increased to create more access for international students and foster internationalization of the university. Such programs are likely to attract international students away from top-ranking and metropolitan universities which require advanced proficiency in Chinese. Second, involvement in student life activities could be incorporated into the criteria for reviewing scholarship candidacy and awarding financial aid. Third, regional universities need to establish a thorough and transparent scheme for both recruitment and retention policies in terms of scholarship programs for international students.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDY

Due to the small sample size of this study, the results cannot accurately reflect the experiences the greater population of international students in Taiwan. However, the present study does contribute to the literature of regional universities, an often-neglected subject. This study only focused on two dimensions, academic and financial adjustment, while scholarship policy, in general, may influence other dimensions of the international student experience in Taiwan. Future researchers are encouraged to explore these topics as well as the findings of this study, which could benefit from further examination to find better solutions for addressing international students' challenges in acquiring adequate financial aid.

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Pedagogy of Global Positioning Leadership as Applied to Study Abroad

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how the pedagogy of Global Positioning Leadership (GPL) enhanced the educational and global leadership mindset of graduate students who participated in three short-term study abroad programs in Cuba (2015), and Brazil (2016 and 2017). In this study, GPL also made use of grounded theory to analyze the change of worldview students experienced upon taking this interdisciplinary course. The focus was to assist students to achieve cross-cultural success, address serious issues in culturally relevant ways, and to gain a peak learning experience that could propel them toward relevant action. To assess students' change of worldview, GPL proceeded through five stages: 1) fleshing out individual preconceptions; 2) writing up four individual goals; 3) analyzing conflicting narratives; 4) engaging in experiential learning; and 5) mapping post-conceptions. Findings reveal that student immersion in Global South social realities results in significant individual, social, educational and professional change of worldviews.

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Keywords: global leadership, higher education, pedagogy, study abroad

INTRODUCTION

Short-term study abroad programs have provided students the opportunity to discover themselves and develop a global mindset, which they otherwise would not likely have acquired (Geyer et al., 2017). Research also shows that study abroad programs have contributed to the enhancement of student cognitive and affective skills, while increasing their cultural empathy, intercultural awareness, and global mindset (Braskamp et al., 2011; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Ruth et al., 2019; Xu et al., 2013). Some scholars go so far as to conclude that study abroad is critical to success in an educational and global economy (Eagan et al., 2013; Twombly, 2012). However, study abroad programs have mainly concerned undergraduate students who have extensively benefitted from them throughout the United States (Niehaus et al., 2012; Ruth et al., 2019; Streitwieser & Light, 2018).

Holcomb (2019), in her doctoral dissertation on study abroad in higher education and student affairs programs, highlighted the increased interest in study abroad for graduate students, particularly those in educational leadership programs. Studying abroad has become an educational linchpin for instilling in graduate students the necessary intercultural competencies for success in the global economy. A few graduate schools, such as Schools of Business, took advantage of study abroad to refocus the experiential learning of their students (Dayton et al., 2018; DuVivier & Patitu, 2017; Kwok & Arpan, 2002; Witkowsky & Mendez, 2018). For many years, educational leadership lagged other professions (DeCieri et al., 2005; Schweitz, 2006), such as business education, with regard to experiential learning in foreign countries, particularly those in the Global South. Holcomb (2019) posited that recently more educational leadership programs have included experiential learning abroad in their curriculum. These programs have realized that, today, effective leadership is dependent upon hands-on understanding of other cultures because of the interconnectedness of our continuously globalized world (Wibbeke, 2009). Study abroad yields positive impacts on graduate students in educational leadership (Gaia, 2015; Ingle & Johnson, 2019). A study by Richardson et al. (2014) found that doctoral students in educational leadership who had participated in an experiential study abroad program which focused on defining the concept of diversity acquired a more global and educated view of what diversity connotated. Likewise, Gearing et al. (2020) conducted a survey of 90 MSW graduates who participated in a learning abroad program during their graduate studies. The results of their study indicated that participation in study abroad had a strong impact on student competency development. Ruth et al. (2019) concluded that short-term study abroad provides additional values to graduate students when it also includes an experiential pedagogy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The success of such a shift of worldview, however, lies on a rigorous pedagogy of short-term study abroad programs. Bai et al. (2016) presented the results of their research on a cross-cultural pedagogy they used to conduct a three-week study abroad in China. Findings indicated that the success of the pedagogy was based on a six-step strategy consisting of pre-departure preparation, integration with the local community abroad, diversity and small group integration, establishment of weekly themes grounded in academic content, use of experiential activities, reflective assignments, and short- and long-term evaluations. Bai et al. acknowledged some critical shortfalls to their pedagogy or short-term program, namely the insufficiency of pre-departure preparation as well as linguistic barriers. Some studies have also

raised concerns about the ability of pedagogy in short-term study abroad programs (Bai et al., 2016; Pipitone, 2018) to meet the academic and cross-cultural expectations of students' learning. Scholars agree that a short-term program usually lasts from one week to six weeks in a country other than that of the participants, whereas a long-term program extends beyond a semester. Paige et al. (2009) conducted a survey of 6,391 study-abroad alumni from 20 universities who participated in short- and long-term studies abroad over a period of 50 years. They focused their survey on student global engagement, which the authors defined as inclusive of civic engagement, knowledge production, philanthropy, social entrepreneurship and voluntary simplicity (i.e., the ability to adopt a more modest life), and educational and career choices. Most respondents reported that their time abroad enhanced their global engagement; the survey revealed no significant difference between short-term or long-term studies abroad (Paige et al., 2009).

Because two of the current short-term studies abroad occurred in Brazil (2016 and 2017), the literature review for this study has a focus on Brazil as well. Addressing the benefits of pre-departure preparation for study abroad, Dekaney's (2008) study of short-term programs in the fields of art and music in Brazil found that studying abroad enhanced students' worldview and openness to diversity. However, as a prerequisite to the above benefits, this study abroad program required that participants compare and contrast their social structure at home with Brazilian society, with the comparison focusing on the difference between the poor and the rich in both societies. To minimize the challenge of language barriers, students enrolled in this program also showed great drive in learning Portuguese before their onsite experience. Additionally, this study by Dekaney (2008) showed that, prior to departure, students were well prepared on-campus through lectures and meetings. The high level of preparation helped participants anticipate and gain meaning of certain social, cultural, and artistic features of the country of Brazil.

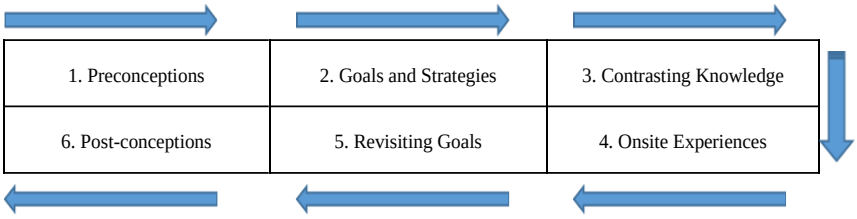
More specifically, Hernandez and Walenkamp (2012) suggested training for both participants and directors of abroad programs, acknowledging that a complex, short-term study abroad pedagogy contributes to enhancing student learning. Their pedagogy begins with a pre-departure process aimed at helping students anticipate challenges and develop a sense of ownership over their own learning. Secondly, the program exposes participants to international competencies and features of cultural adaptation. During this phase, the training program also addresses the critical issue of language, including academic and social skills, and other logistic issues (Hernandez & Walenkamp, 2012). Additionally, the program requires students to set individual goals in addition to course goals. The specific feature of this program lies in its mentorship, which the program says it provides students before, during, and after completion of the study abroad experience.

THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT

This paper aims to examine the pedagogy of Global Positioning Leadership (GPL), which was developed from the experience of teaching over 150 graduate students at the Midwestern University (pseudonym). These students participated in a short-term study abroad course titled "Leadership in the International Contexts," which was first offered in 2009. Since then, cohorts of graduate students have attended summer fieldwork experiences in South Africa (2009 & 2010); Tanzania (2011-2014); Cuba (2015), Brazil (2016 & 2017); Ghana (2018); and Uganda (2021). This article analyzes the data collected from the experiential learning that occurred in Cuba and Brazil and how GPL contributed to transforming student worldviews and to enhancing their global mindset.

Global Positioning Leadership (GPL) seeks to be an engaging system that would provide a leadership tool which can be used locally and globally to position oneself almost comfortably in any given cultural environment. It is particularly meant to address and engage the growing disparity between the socioeconomic contexts of the Global North and the Global South. Figure 1 below presents the sequences of GPL's pedagogy, including six stages: 1) students' reflections on their initial perceptions; 2) students' four specific measurable goals and strategies to attain those goals; 3) initial dialectical views of a Global South country to visit; 4) immersion in cross-cultural experience; 5) review of goals set prior to traveling abroad; and 6) students' change of worldviews or post-conceptions.

Figure 1: Process of Global Positioning Leadership Pedagogy



Since Global Positioning Leadership proceeds dialectically through thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, the methodological approach used in this study also navigates through seemingly polar opposite statements or realities, and encourages students to participate in drawing conclusions or syntheses (Buchwalter, 2012). The underlying process which Global Positioning Leadership uses to create learning contrasts with Black and Gregersen's (2000) proposed model for Global Leadership Development (GLD). The essential elements of their model, according to Oddou and Mendenhall (2013), include *contrast, confrontation, and remapping (or replacement)*. These authors underscore the critical role of *contrast* in the learning process. "We need to experience *contrast* to those views [preconceived notions] and *confront* our beliefs and assumptions" (Oddou & Mendenhall, 2013, p. 220). According to them, change only occurs when contrasting information confronts individuals' traditional way of seeing or doing. Confrontation of preconceived notions, then, would lead to *"replacement"* or *"remapping"* by a process of "letting go and taking on" (p. 220). Oddou and Mendenhall referred to this process of confronting assumptions and mental pre-acquisitions as "unfreezing," "changing," and "refreezing," which they maintain stands at the heart of the process to become a global leader.

At the origin of this approach lies Hegel's dialectical method, which itself dates back to the Greeks' *dialektik*, or discourse between two parties holding opposite views (Bushwalker, 2012). Worth mentioning is the fact that Hegel himself never used the formula of dialectics that history attributed to him. Hegelian dialectic comprised three dialectical stages of development: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. A *thesis* is an initial statement including a personal view or preconceived knowledge, the *antithesis* contradicts the thesis, and the tension between both results in a compromise or a *synthesis* (Buchwalter, 2012).

Specifically, the processes of developing globally positioned leaders and conducting the course "Leadership in Global Contexts" proceed in tandem. They begin with a self- examination of individual knowledge or even assumptions one holds about the culture of the country in which they are to be immersed. Mezirow (1978) and Black and Gregersen (2000) also recommended self-reflection in their Global Leadership Development programs (GLD). However, while Black and Gregersen paired this first step of

GLD with "exploration of options" (preconceptions) and "confrontation," such activities appeared too soon to confront preconceived notions without using them to identify goals that could confirm or deny those un-critiqued ideas. The elements of preconceptions were not to be contradicted in a vacuum, as they constituted individual "theses," so to speak.

In our approach, the establishment of individual goals came in as the second step of the methodology leading toward GPL. In their Leadership Development Plan, Niehaus et al. (2012) encouraged their students to outline three to four goals, then to list specific strategies to accomplish those goals. Borrowing from this process, GPL requires participants to lay out four specific and measurable goals, provide specific strategies to achieve those goals, and present evidence to demonstrate whether or not they had accomplished those goals (Niehaus & Wegener, 2019). At this point, preconceptions and goal establishment went hand-in-hand and they did not contradict each other.

The next stage, "contrasting knowledge," consisted of a dialectic exploration of the readings and knowledge about the culture they intended to visit. Statements in a first set of readings may constitute the thesis element of the process, while contradictory notions or opposite statements constitute the antithesis. From the whole clash of knowledge, a synthesis should appear, at first in an incomplete manner, since the knowledge acquired prior to travelling would later have to confront the reality in the field in a new dialectic. Meanwhile, the preconceptions and goals that were established earlier (as thesis) were put to the test in the conflicting readings (first antithesis). From the collision between pre-knowledge and pre-travel, theoretical information emerged a first synthesis, although partial, pending the reality-check in the field.

The next big step was the field experience, which in itself encompassed "contrasting or disorienting dilemmas" (Oddou & Mendenhall, 2018). Field experiences overall confront the whole of pre-travel knowledge, including preconceptions, individual goals, and even conflicting readings. The experiential moments constitute a search for truth, a time where the realities of the culture are manifested, and are therefore a moment of antithesis. This sets up a back and forth interaction between the goals set and the reality in the field, which kicks off the process of assessing those individual goals. The last stage, "post-conceptions," was the great synthesis that may correspond to the "replacement or remapping" that Oddou and Mendenhall (2018) have suggested in their process of global development. With post-conception as a stage of transformation, the progression of global leadership development comes full circle, and the participants revisit their goals in terms of concrete change which they could engage in globally as well as locally.

Having discussed the dialectical approach that sets into motion the pedagogy of Global Positioning Leadership and underpins the course "Leadership in Global Contexts," I turn to the methodology I used to examine how the development of global mindset unfolded as participants immersed themselves in the human development sectors of Cuba and Brazil.

RESEARCH METHOD

In order to analyze GPL's pedagogical outcomes on graduate students who participated in the short-term studies abroad in Brazil and Cuba, I relied on grounded theory, which Charmaz (2014) identified as consisting "of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories grounded in the data themselves" (p. 2). Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed grounded theory as a constant comparative method of data analysis. Also *called substantive theory* (Merriam & Tisdell, 2017), grounded theory owes its name to the fact that it is grounded in the data and emerges from the data.

Likewise, in this research I used qualitative methods as framed within a case analysis. I used a grounded theory approach to link emerging data to analytic concepts and took care to keep the recurrent

sequences of students' progress in focus while attending to relevant theories. In particular, I constantly compared how students evolved from one stage of the GPL to the other. Following Charmaz (2014), I address the most salient themes that emerged from the data with examples of the most relevant data collected from the 41 graduate students (MA and EdD) who took part in the Cuba (2015) and Brazil fieldwork experiences (2016 and 2017). As indicated in Table 1, a total of 32 MA students and 9 doctoral students representing 15 males and 26 females participated in the course and therefore in this study.

Table 1: Number of Students in EDLD 869 Cuba and Brazil

Country	Number	MA	Ed.D	Males	Females
Cuba (2015)	N = 19	17	2	8	11
Brazil (2016)	N = 13	10	3	4	9
Brazil (2017)	N = 9	5	4	3	6
Total	41	32	9	15	26

Data Collection and Analysis

This study emerged from a compilation of four sets of data. The first set consisted of students' writing essays on their preconceptions about Cuba and Brazil in general. The essays also included four individual goals students identified prior to the abroad experience. The second category of data was made up of students' journal entries in which they detailed facts about their cross-cultural progression while in the host country. The third set of data included students' final comprehensive essays and presentations, which encompassed students' responses to their individual four goals. The fourth set of data consisted of students' evaluations of the course in which they were encouraged to provide extensive written comments.

Specifically, students who participated in the cross-cultural experience in Cuba and Brazil produced written reflections on their preconceptions and prejudices about Cuba and Brazil, in particular, and Latin America, in general. Additionally, they wrote out how they planned to test those perceptions and explore their professional interests through the field experience in Cuba and Brazil. I asked them to lay out four specific and measurable goals, provide specific strategies to achieve those goals, and present evidence to demonstrate whether or not they had accomplished those goals. Then, students read assigned books that presented sharply conflicting views on Cuba and Brazil, from highly supportive to strongly critical (for example, the contrasting values of "racial-democracy" versus "the implementation of affirmative action") and wrestled with the information and attitudes expressed, a first dialectical challenge to their own initial perceptions, as well as between the authors they read (Johnson & Heringer, 2015; Ioris, 2014). Next, students visited Cuba (in 2015) and Brazil (in 2016 and 2017) for two weeks for onsite lectures and site visits, and to talk directly with Cuban and Brazilian national and community leaders, thus experiencing a second dialectical challenge to their initial perceptions and to the materials they had previously read. During the fieldwork, they wrote 10 journal entries reflecting on the plan of step two to test out their preconceptions, on their professional goals, and on the goals of the course. At the conclusion of the Cuba and Brazilian field experiences, students contrasted their post-conceptions with their pre-conceptions, assessed their original goals, gave evidence for whether they had attained their goals, and described what they were taking away from the experience—especially how they might be "replacing" or "remapping" their initial conceptions.

To analyze data that spanned four years, I maintained a constant comparative orientation (Bazeley, 2013) at all levels of data analysis, from the initial comparisons of students' preconceptions to latter comparisons of codes and categories within the steps of GPL. I summarized each set of data to avoid obvious repetitions of students' preconceptions, goals, and similar journal topics and then contrasted them

with student evaluations of the course objectives. Then, I relied on memos to both refine and keep track of ideas that developed when comparing student preconceptions and post-conceptions, as well as the potential change in their worldviews (Charmaz, 2014). As stated by Birks and Mills (2011), "it is the iterative analytical method of constantly comparing and collecting or comparing data that results in high-level abstract categories rich with meaning" (p. 94). As indicated in Tables 2 and 3 below, I laid down recurring categories into the five stages of GPL, representing students' preconceptions, goals, onsite experience, contrasting learning, and the outcomes of their goals. I placed the categories in a parallel table to allow for a synoptic view and an easier grasp of participants' change of worldview along the lines of the steps of GPL.

RESULTS

The worldviews of students who underwent the process of GPL noticeably changed, evolving from their preconceptions to the post-conceptions. Not all pre-departure pre-notions were met with responses in the field or at the end of the program. I have selected a few common preconceptions about education, healthcare, governance, and economy, which students raised at the beginning of the GPL application, and I observed how students strived to answer them as the process of GPL unfolded. Table 2 summarizes the progression—pre-conception, goal setting, contrasting knowledge, onsite experience, and post-conception—with regard to Cuba, while Table 3 presents the findings that emerged from the Brazil study abroad experience.

Most students already had a positive perception of education in Cuba. One argued "one thing I do know about the education of Cuba is that they have an almost one hundred percent literacy rate, which I think is really amazing." Their post-conceptions can sum up to "Cuba has Global North-type of education. Challenges are posed by educational technology." Before traveling to Cuba, most students preconceived the healthcare system of the island as "lacking technology and medical supply, but ahead of many developed countries, and healthcare is offered even to the poor for free." At the conclusion of their study abroad, students confirmed their initial thoughts but went above and beyond to see the Cuban health system as "a high-level healthcare used also for global solidarity, from which hundreds of primary physicians in [the] world have benefitted." As far as preconceived notions of Cuban governance, leadership, and the economy, students had this to say: "Castro's Cuba has always been communist with lack of basic freedoms with constant military policing while its economy resembles that of middle-income country that lacks basic necessities." However, post-conceptions revealed that Cuba has not always been communist, and had no visible uniformed police. "Cubans believe in their freedom from constraints (free healthcare, free education, free housing), whereas the US only has freedom of choice while lacking the basic human necessities"; there is a "visible presence of communism/Marxism; there exists two economies - one for national Cubans and the other for foreigners, with a timid infiltration of capitalism."

In Cuba, students noticed that many of the older people they met were strong supporters of the Castros and remembered the revolution as a glorious time in Cuba's history. That democratic elections existed in Cuba was a shocking reality for students:

> Are there really democratic ideas working in Cuba? It appears so. The neighborhoods vote for representatives and the delegates do not have to be a member of the Communist Party. The People's Power delegates are elected with no campaigning, and anyone can run for the position. In the Marianao neighborhood, there are 21,293 people with 11 delegates (serving 2 years) that form the Popular Council. Mercedes spoke of the "potential of the people"

Students particularly noticed that grassroots leadership was much at work in the local communities of Cuba. To the surprise of most students, one does not have to belong to the Communist Party in Cuba in

order to be socially and politically active. The Communist Party had relaxed on that point (a little bit) so that Party members sometimes now belong to a church. Most Cuban community leaders were quoted as saying "Our democracy is not perfect, but it is our democracy." In contrast, younger people showed a more casual affiliation to Cuban social democracy and its legacy. For example, I asked Reinier (a tour guide in his late 20s) if he was a party member. His eyes lit up and he said, emphatically,

> "No way!" He said that younger people are tired of life the way it has been for them, and they do not harbor the fond memories of the struggle for independence from the US.

In sum, it is safe to state that the process of GPL pedagogy, as applied to the contexts of the study abroad experience in Cuba, operated a positive shift in the global mindset of participants, as shown in Table 2. Students' post-conceptions in the areas of education, healthcare, governance, and economy represent students' responses to their preconceptions, as well as their takeaways from the field experiences.

Table 2: GPL as Applied to Cuba

	Education	Healthcare	Governance/ Leadership	Economy
Pre-conceptions	High literacy rate intertwined with poor economy Poor educational system	Lack of technology and medical supply Ahead of many developed countries The poorest receive healthcare	Always communist Lack of basic freedoms Military policing	Middle income or developed country Lack of basic necessities Insight into US. Embargo
Goal Setting	Explore school system and use of internet Discover education in socialist contexts Interact with students Study Portuguese	Discover healthcare access Discover doctors' compensation Gain insight into nursing profession Find ways to move past propaganda on Cuba	Discuss Cuba/US rapport and relationship Discover human rights abuses	Develop relationship Gain insight into food security Learn effect of US. Embargo
Contrasting knowledge	Free education vs. TV. Education and scarcity of teachers	Free and universal healthcare vs. empty pharmacies and lack of basic drugs.	Marxist-communist vs. grassroots and municipal elections	Unfreedom of Cuba (Sanchez, J). vs. freedom from constraints.
Onsite Experience	Only public schools; Small size classrooms; teaching English	Health system well organized in national, provincial, and local units	Elections of community and municipal leaders; No money involved in election campaigns.	Two currencies: national Pesos for locals and International Pesos for foreigners
Post-conceptions	Cuba has Global North-type of education. Challenges posed by educational technology.	High level healthcare; Global solidarity: Cuba has trained hundreds of primary physicians in world.	Visible presence of communism/Marxism; Rigid old generations; younger generations leaning toward capitalism; Evident equality between men and women.	Two economies: tight grips of socialist economy; timid infiltration of capitalism.

Table 3 summarizes the process of GPL, as applied to Brazil. In the preconception stage of GPL, students thought of Brazilian education as inclusive of "multiple disparities, yet home to Paolo Freire; high literacy rate, yet lack of education opportunity in rural areas, and centralized curriculum." In post-

conception, students retained that Paolo Freire does not have the same impact in his native country; "school experiences are quite different for private and public students leading to a large racial gap." As far as healthcare, most participants did not have a clue about the Brazilian system(s) before the study abroad. However, some preconceived it as exclusively government-run and had "a growing concern about the Zika Virus outbreak" in 2016 and 2017. Upon their travels to Brazil, participants discovered that "healthcare in Brazil is a constitutional right; however, [a] racial gap exists in private vs. public healthcare," and Zika Virus was not as big an issue as the world had made it to be.

Regarding the leadership/governance of Brazil prior to traveling to that country, participants had this to say: "A class-based society; unjust and hierarchical system of authoritarian rule and exploitation of the lower classes; a government like the US; however, Brazil holds a strong central government run with heavy white upper-class influence." Before departing to Brazil, students thought of its economy in terms of "no income inequality based on race; no economic racial inequality; no economic voice for poor communities; however, there is illusion of economic equality." Although participants did not confirm or inform their apprehensions of economic racial inequality, they observed that the "lighter the color of one's skin, the more likely to be economically well-off in Brazil."

I have also learned that a country cannot be defined by the corruption in their leadership. Brazil is so much more than their political climate. It is beautiful and rich and diverse, and it is made up of people that are fighting to make a difference for the future of Brazil. Based on our

> current knowledge, the race-based violence we see in other parts of the world is nonexistent in Brazil. However, the large racial gap in many parts of Brazilian society brings into question racial democracy. Through my experience in spending time in Brazil, and meeting with leaders in both small communities and large organizations, my growth as a leader has evolved. I feel like leadership is universal, but has different contexts depending on where you are from. Brazil's most important political leaders are overwhelmingly white. Black political leaders have often been the strongest advocates of affirmative action and similar types of social and educational reforms.

The process of GPL pedagogy utilized in the contexts of Brazil shows that participants in this short-term study abroad also underwent a change of worldview as they responded to their initial preconceptions with more informed and more educated post-conceptions.

Table 3: GPL as Applied to Brazil

	Education	Healthcare	Governance/ Leadership	Economy
Pre-conceptions	Multiple disparities, yet home to Paolo Freire; high literacy rate; lack of education opportunity in rural areas; centralized curriculum.	Universal, public and free healthcare; No knowledge at all of healthcare in Brazil; government funded; growing concern of the Zika virus; private healthcare just for the rich	A class-based society; unjust and hierarchical system of authoritarian rule and exploitation of the lower classes; Government like the US; Strong central government run with heavy white upper-class influence	No income inequality based on race; Economic racial inequality; no economic voice for poor communities; illusion of economic equality.
Goal Setting	Interact with Brazilian students; discuss access and equal opportunity in education; discuss higher education quality	Discover healthcare disparities; interact with children on welfare; discover socialized institutions of healthcare.	Learn impact of slavery and colonization; discuss women's challenges; develop intercultural understanding; discover sources of favelas.	Discuss impact of the Olympics on economy of Brazil; discover the influence of BRICS on Brazil.
Contrasting knowledge	Expensive private schools for the rich; free public universities for the rich. Controversial affirmative action	Expensive private insurance for the rich; public healthcare for the poor	Whether Brazil is a race democracy: "Brazilian races relations have developed in a tolerant and conflict-free manner" (Palmer, 2006)	The lighter the skin color the more likely to be economically well-off.
Onsite Experience	Well-equipped private schools vs. poor public schools.	Crowded and depraved public hospitals vs. first class private hospital such as AMIL.	The favellas have their own rules and governance. Police and strangers are unwelcome.	Favelas, slums or shantytowns are home to the poorest.
Post-conceptions	School experiences are quite different for private and public students leading to a large racial gap.	Healthcare in Brazil is a constitutional right. However, a racial gap exists in private vs. public healthcare.	Brazil's most important political leaders are overwhelmingly white. Black political leaders have often been the strongest advocates of affirmative action.	The lighter the skin, the better-off; Tourism is huge; oil refinery and agriculture.

Student Evaluations of Course Objectives

To analyze how students overall met the course objectives, I collected IDEA scaling evaluations, as well as written comments by students who participated in the immersion experiences. With regard to the minor objective (IDEA # 4): "Developing specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course," students' average point was 4.6 out of 5. For the important objective (IDEA # 12): "Acquiring an interest in learning more by asking questions and seeking answers," students' average point was 4.5 out of 5. Regarding the essential objective (IDEA # 11): "Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view," students' rating was 4.7 out of 5.

The overall ratings indicate the following: Excellent Teacher (4.7 out of 5) and Excellent Course (4.7 out of 5). The result shows that the goals and objectives for the course were sufficiently met. However,

these positive numbers are more a reflection of students' appreciation of the course, which does not reveal much about the worldview change in students who took the program. Rather, tensions and contrasts between students preconceived notions and student takeaways are likely to determine whether students' worldviews have shifted one way or the other.

Tensions between Preconceptions and Post-conceptions

Further analysis of the findings shows that 60% of students' preconceptions, before they embarked in their study abroad in Cuba and Brazil, did not match realities in the field and caused them to incur a change of worldviews. Concerning Cuba, most students believed that the island has always been a communist country, that Cubans suffer from complete lack of freedom, that it was excluded from the world economy, and that Cuba was a dangerous place for Americans. No wonder students set goals that aligned with their unproven knowledge. They wished "to meet and speak with local Cubans about their life, their attitudes toward the Americans, their perception of freedom and democracy." Most of these preconceptions proved to be the opposite, causing students to change their worldviews about the countries and their people. In the post-conception stage, students had more positive feelings about Cuba, journaling:

Cuban people are the warmest and most welcoming people; Cuban solidarity is about people; little did I know that Cubans organize their own elections, and candidates do not have to campaign; therefore, there is no money involved, like in the US; Cubans seem to enjoy their freedom from constraints because their education is free, as well as their healthcare.

There are also tensions between preconceptions and post-conceptions in the case of Brazil. Most students thought positively of Brazil as "a country with no income inequality, which has attained a racial democracy, home of Paolo Freire and, therefore, a country of high literacy rate with a strong balanced education system." Although the participants believed that all Brazilians benefitted equally from the public health system, they raised great concerns about the Zika Virus outbreak that occurred before the first study abroad in Brazil in 2016. Like in Cuba, these preconceptions in Brazil yielded opposite results and shifted students' worldviews. They acknowledged that "speaking with natives changes mindsets: income disparity goes along the lines of skin color;" "racial democracy is only on the surface. In Salvador, a city with 80% black people, the issue of race discrimination is a daily reality;" "public universities are free but for the elite;" "the line of people waiting to see a doctor in public hospital was despicably long … whereas private hospitals are first-class and for the rich only;" and "political leaders are overwhelmingly whites."

However, about 40% of students pre-acquired knowledge about Cuba and Brazil matched reality in the field and seemed to have bolstered their resolve to cross-culturally exchange with the people of Cuba and Brazil. Rightly so, students' preconceptions about Cuba mentioned "old cars and houses;" "the Elian Gonzales saga between the US and Cuba;" "Bay to Pigs fiasco;" "US embargo that has had implications in Cuban society;" "Castro surviving US assassination attempts;" "communist holdout;" and a "high level of literary and free education." This alignment between preconceptions and post-conceptions in Cuba had some students blame most of Cuban conditions, including old cars and aging housing, on the US embargo, which has prevented the island from importing necessities. One participant had this to say, "[the] US embargo badly affects Cuba … for me, returning to Cuba to establish some form of partnership is a must."

Likewise, some of the students' predictions about Brazil fell right in line. There was a noticeable lack of educational opportunities in rural areas visited by students, and the universal public healthcare reinforced the preconception that Brazil was a tourist wonder, citing in particular the statue of Christ the Redeemer and touristic towns such as Paraty, a fishing town located between San Paolo and Rio de Janeiro. That some students extended their stay to interact with the people and learn Portuguese is indicative of their changes of worldviews as a consequence of the study abroad programs, which GPL facilitated.

DISCUSSION

Study Abroad and Preconceptions

Before setting foot in Cuba and Brazil, study participants had preconceived notions from their parents and other sources. For them, Cuba had always been a completely communist nation, and Cuban communism represented a total lack of freedom and a great danger against the American dream. One student reported, "I knew little facts about the country beyond knowing that it was a communist holdout [and that] Fidel Castro had survived multiple assassination attempts, had a legendary beard, and enjoyed cigars." Although most participants in this study confessed to their lack of specific knowledge about the country, they also preconceived it as a perfect racial democracy that had overcome racial divides. Another student stated a post-conception about Brazil: "My contact with Brazil in the past few months for work has underscored that this is also an incredibly open-minded and progressive population."

The pedagogy of Global Positioning Leadership (GPL) begins with self-emptiness of preconception, allowing more room in the minds of study abroad participants. Participants in the Cuban and Brazilian programs scrutinized their knowledge and presuppositions to uncover the fantasies and grudges they held, knowingly or unknowingly, about these two countries. Many scholars of learning transformation - including Mezirow (1978), Oddou and Mendenhall (2013), and Taylor (1994) - agreed on the importance of keeping preconceptions or assumptions under check in order to construct new ways of perceiving, understanding, and feeling about other cultures.

Study Abroad and Goal Setting

With their pre-departure assumptions sorted out, participants in these study abroad programs also set some goals and strategies to prove or disprove their pre-conceptions. By allowing students to set their own goals (besides the course objectives), they developed a sense of ownership of their own learning. The success of the program, and ultimately the change of worldviews, occurred as students strove to find answers to their goals. In like manner, before embarking in a study abroad program, Niehaus et al. (2012) encouraged their students to outline three to four goals, then to list specific strategies they would put in place to meet those goals. These authors implied that goal setting encouraged students to deepen their cross-cultural experiences.

Study Abroad Contrasting Knowledge

This GPL pedagogy presented to participants in the Cuba and Brazil programs conflicting views, which they were required to reconcile in theory, as well as throughout their study abroad experiences. Regarding Cuba, students had to synthesize the contradictory facets of Cuban society presented in the two books by Veltmeyer and Rushton (2012) and Sanchez (2012). The former dwelt on the distinction Cubans draw between freedom from constraints (influenced by Marxist socialism), which they relish, and freedom of choice (founded on capitalism). The latter presented a day-to-day degradation of basic living conditions of the average Cuban and the complete lack of freedoms, particularly the freedom of expression. With regard to Brazil, students were to solve the dilemma of whether Brazil was a racial democracy entailing a racially, economically, and academically harmonious society (Ioris, 2014). On the other hand, a book edited by Johnson and Heringer (2015) discussed the implementation of affirmative action for students of color who could not otherwise afford access to public universities, which admit, in an almost exclusive manner, white students.

In support of this dialectical pedagogy, Oddou and Mendenhall (2013) maintained that a learning process that includes "*contrast, confrontation, and replacement"* (p. 219) is a *sine qua non* to enhance change. Among the critical elements that enable change or transformation, these authors discussed the ability to tolerate ambiguity, to embrace curiosity or openness, to initiate interpersonal relationships , and

to develop relationships.

Experiential Learning

Participants in the study abroad programs in Cuba and Brazil learned by observing and by immersing cognitively in global events, with specific attention to issues that create gaps between the powerful and the powerless in the two countries. One student exclaimed that "no one library would procure me with the amount of knowledge I am getting by living the life of people, smelling their air, eating their food, and interacting with them." As opposed to Niehaus et al. (2012), who argued that students can acquire the same learning experience whether on campus or on a short-term study abroad, Oddou and Mendenhall (2013), as well as GPL, underscored the irreplaceable importance of experiential learning in the field. They argued that both classroom and experiential learning are complementarily important to bring about a global mindset and a change of worldview in participants. The experiential stage of GPL aligns with Bandura's (1977) states of social development, suggesting that people develop through learning from their surroundings. Learning happens through interactions with other individuals or by observing other people's attitudes, behaviors, and the outcomes of their behaviors.

Study Abroad and Post-Conceptions

Participants in the two short-term abroad programs in Cuba and Brazil affirmed the necessity to experience other cultures in order to increase individual understanding and broaden their perspectives. They accomplished their expansion of worldviews by interacting with Cubans and Brazilians in their communities, workplaces, and in their daily routines. Livermore (2015) and Mendenhall et al. (2013) shed light on the wealth of experiential learning and the courses of action that enfold as a consequence of undertaking a study abroad. The stage of post-conception in GPL anticipated that students who benefitted from the three studies abroad would revisit their preconceptions (or non-critiqued knowledge) held prior to their immersion in the new cultures of Cuba or Brazil. Somehow, the process of GPL has helped these students acquire the capability of "leading through cultural intelligence" (Livermore, 2015). For Livermore, learning to lead with *cultural intelligence* (CQ) amounts to "the ability to function effectively across national, ethnic, and organizational cultures" (p. xiii).

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Although the study yielded non-replicable and non-generalizable findings, the ultimate result of this study is heuristically valuable as an exploratory analysis. It shows that, through the pedagogy of Global Positioning Leadership, graduate students can take advantage of a study abroad in Cuba and in Brazil to gain a global leadership mindset and enhance their self-awareness by confirming or refuting their own perceptions of cultures of the two Latin American countries. Graduate students enhanced their understanding of the distinction that the people of Cuba place between freedom from constraints and freedom of choices. They also grasped the rationale behind the Brazilian underpinning of racial democracy (in theory) and its corollary: the recent implementation of affirmative action in institutions of higher learning. The experiential learning in Cuba and in Brazil feeds into the dialectical and pedagogical nature of Global Positioning Leadership.

In addition to serving as a pedagogical process, GPL also emerged as a theory grounded in the data (Charmaz, 2014) collected during the study abroad programs in both Cuba and Brazil. As a grounded theory that spanned from students' preconceptions to their post-conceptions, GPL pedagogy relied heavily on a constant comparison (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) of students' progress through each stage of this pedagogy.

In sum, participants in this study began their journey toward Cuba and Brazil by identifying whatever preconceptions they held about the two Latin American countries. They adopted measurable goals to make the best of their short-term studies abroad. They contrasted and compared new knowledge and

synthesized it to seek answers from experiential learning in the field. After setting foot in Cuba or Brazil, participants deployed their global mindset by "observing, retaining, remapping (or post-conceiving) their experiences, which prompted them to local and global actions." No wonder some students returned to Cuba and Brazil to either conduct further research, establish themselves, or create lasting partnerships with segments of those societies. This study focused only on 41 graduate students who participated in three short-term studies abroad in Brazil and Cuba. Future research should examine how the pedagogy of Global Positioning Leadership affects the experiential learning of a greater number of students in other Global South countries.

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Exploring the Effect of Team Identification on International Students' Adjustment to Higher Education in the United States

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ABSTRACT

International students have been continuously transitioning to U.S. colleges in pursuit of high-quality education and social mobility opportunities. Multiple studies have dealt with the adjustment of international students in their process of transitioning to a new environment. The purpose of our study is to explore if college sports fan identification can contribute to this population's adjustment process. This study used lived experiences from 10 international graduate students regarding their college sports fan experiences and how that helped them adjust to American colleges. Results showed that answers from international students derived two themes: social and academic adjustments. Social adjustment was specified as a sense of belonging and academic adjustment was specified as finding a way to relax from their academic burden. The results of this study can help both the international student office and athletic departments to utilize college sports to help international students with their adjustment to their new environments.

Keywords: intercollegiate athletics, international students, social identity, team identification

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INTRODUCTION

Institutions of higher learning in the United States (U.S.) have been a popular destination for international students (Chin, 2004). According to the Institute of International Education's (IIE) report (2020), more than one million international students are studying at U.S. colleges and universities. International students choose to relocate to America for a wide variety of reasons, including high-quality education, social mobility, and diverse educational offerings (Altbach, 2004; Li & Stodolska, 2006). Although there are benefits to international students coming to America, previous studies have emphasized the hardships this population faces. International students not only have to adjust to new linguistic and cultural environments, but this population also faces feelings of insecurity and inadequacy (de Araujo, 2011; Gallagher, 2013; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006). International students are said to experience deficient social support as well as self-defeating behaviors, such as homesickness and loneliness (Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2003). Moreover, due to this population's dedication to academic success and career exploration, international students often experience feelings of guilt when participating in leisure activities (Guo & Ross, 2014; Li & Stodolska, 2006).

Sports participation can assist international students in adjusting to their new environment at colleges and universities in the U.S. (Allen et al., 2010; Gomez et al., 2014). For example, Gomez et al.'s (2014) study reported a causal relationship between international students' participation in sports activities on campus and their social adjustment. International students who participated in sports activities (between four to eight times per month) demonstrated an easier transitional process when adapting to a new environment as compared to those who did not participate in sports (Allen et al., 2010). Although previous work has demonstrated the benefits of sports participation for international students transitioning to U.S. colleges and universities, there is a gap in the literature regarding how sports fandom may help international students adjust to higher education is the U.S.

Sports fandom has been found to impact the student experience. Studies have demonstrated that the more students identify themselves as fans of their university's intercollegiate teams, the higher their sense of inclusion and social adjustment in the university setting (Clopton, 2007, 2008, 2011; Clopton & Finch, 2010; Koo et al., 2015). Koo et al. (2015) found that students tend to have greater personal self-esteem through higher fan identification, which eventually leads to positive social and emotional adjustment among college students. Such social and emotional adjustments ultimately lead to positive motivation for student's academic success. However, certain demographic variables (e.g., race, ethnicity, domestic, international) have been largely ignored by the literature.

While intercollegiate sports can serve as a unifying factor on many college campuses (Toma, 2003), college sports may also exclude members of the campus community (Harris, 1998; Palmer & Thompson, 2007; Tonts, 2005). Hence, while the effect of intercollegiate sports fan identity to domestic students is evident through previous studies (Clopton, 2007, 2008; Clopton & Bourke, 2011; Clopton & Finch, 2010; Koo et al., 2015; Sung et al., 2015), literature has largely ignored the impact of fan identity on the international student population. Used in the aforementioned studies, the current study is informed by Tajfel`s (1978) social identity theory [SIT]. Based on a qualitative approach, the purpose of this study is to explore if following intercollegiate athletic programs assists international students in adjusting to higher education in the U.S. This study is guided by the following research question:

1. Do following intercollegiate sports assist international students with their adjustment to an institution of higher learning in the U.S.?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Identity and Team Identification

Team identification is a concept that originated from SIT. Derived from symbolic interactionism, SIT believes that individuals actively create their identities throughout their lives (Tafjel, 1978). Specifically, according to SIT, individuals choose which group they will identify themselves with while creating their identities. In other words, individuals will form an ingroup and/or outgroup by choosing which individuals they choose to identify themselves with. Individuals will then be attached to their selected group and continuously defining their identity inside the group (Foels, 2006). Furthermore, when an individual is attached to a particular group, it may benefit their self-esteem (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), as individuals are more likely to share their concerns with cohorts in their chosen ingroup (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Brewer, 1979). Once individuals become a member of a particular group, it is more likely they will continuously cultivate their membership mentality by defining ingroup members as "us" and by differentiating those from outgroups as "them." For example, Clopton (2008) found sports fans from the South formed a stronger ingroup (i.e., sense of community) than those from the North.

An ingroup (in which individuals define their identity) is often referred to as collective identity (Ashmore et al., 2004; Heere & James, 2007a) or group identity (Ashforth & Mael,1989). However, previous SIT research also analyzed how such emotional attachments and the forming of identity within an ingroup can cause individuals to form bias within ingroups and disparage those from outgroups (DeVries, 2003; Hogg & Adams, 1990). Hence, if one cannot build an ingroup within their communities and are considered as an outgroup by another individual an individual who does not form an ingroup will be reluctant to receive the benefit of being in an ingroup (DeVries, 2003; Hogg & Adams, 1990).

Team identification applies SIT's ingroup concept to sports fandom in that ingroup members may become emotionally attached to other ingroup members (Heere & James, 2007b). According to previous research, sports teams have fans with different team identification levels. Intercollegiate sports teams, specifically, are unique in that fans are students and alumni (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007). Wann (2000) defined students in higher education as a fan segment that are more likely to actively identify themselves with a specific intercollegiate sports team and not only form an ingroup with those who follow the same team as them, but also interact positively within the ingroup. Specifically, in intercollegiate sports settings, students express their fan identity towards their team and unite with those members who follow the same team and differentiate themselves from fans of rival institutions (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Due to this specialty, previous research has used college students as a sample to analyze the effect of this population's team identification on the verbal recommendation of the college sports to friends (Swanson et al., 2003).

Team Identification Impact on School Adjustment

Much research has been done to define the relationship between team identification and social/emotional adjustment of students (Clopton, 2007, 2008; Clopton and Bourke, 2011; Clopton and Finch, 2010; Koo et al., 2015; Sung et al., 2015). Student's fan identification towards their college sports team was identified as one of the factors that can help social adjustment by building a sense of community and social capital (Clopton, 2007; Clopton & Bourke, 2011; Clopton & Finch, 2010). Fan identification was also used in studies to demonstrate its causal relationship with social and emotional adjustment with the moderating effect of personal self-esteem (Koo et al., 2015; Sung et al., 2015). Previous research has also demonstrated that individuals with higher team identification are more likely to experience psychological well-being (e.g., higher self-esteem, sense of belonging, positive mindset) (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Wann, 2006). Additionally, according to the Psychological Health Model, higher team identification cultivates more social and emotional rapport with ingroup cohorts and ultimately leads to increased psychological well-being

(Wann, 2006). Therefore, while studies dealt with the effect of student's fan identification on their adjustment to campus, the international student population has been largely ignored (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Clopton, 2007, 2008; Clopton & Bourke, 2011; Clopton & Finch, 2010; Koo et al., 2015; Sung et al., 2015; Wann, 2006). Hence, there is a need to analyze whether international students can also utilize fan identification to assist with their adjustment to campus environments.

International Student's Difficulties Transitioning to Higher Education in the U.S.

The social and academic adjustments are the processes that international students must experience when transitioning to higher education institutions in the U.S. (Baker & Siryk, 1984a, 1984b; Gerdes & Mallinkrodt, 1994; Gong & Fan, 2006; Kagnici, 2012; Kalpidou et al., 2011). Social adjustment is defined as a process that includes fitting or coping into a host country, building or retaining new societal relations, and cultivating a sense of belonging (Gong & Fan, 2006; Kagnici, 2012; Kalpidou et al., 2011). Studies defined academic adjustment as a student's motivation, accomplishment, commitment to campus, working to meet the academic requirement, getting to learn the objective of studying, and general gratification towards the academic activities on campus (Baker & Siryk, 1984a, 1984b; Gerdes & Mallinkrodt, 1994).

Past literature has focused on the social support that international students receive regarding the difficulty of cultural and academic adjustment (Bastien et al., 2018; Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992; Poyrazli et al., 2001). When international students receive social support from their academic program(s), they are more likely to demonstrate increased academic performance and psychological well-being (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992). In addition to social support, on-campus social event(s) was also found to help international student's social adjustment to campus (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Ramsay et al., 2007). Bastien et al. (2018) mentioned that for international students to adjust to a foreign academic environment successfully, this population must learn and comprehend the social and cultural differences in their new environment. Previous research on the international student population often examines the academic success of this population when compared to their domestic student peers (Bastien et al., 2018; Korobova & Starobin, 2015). However, for international students, previous research has implied that the cultural differences they experience in foreign higher education may cause academic adjustment difficulties (Poyrazli et al., 2001). Studies have also shown international students' obsession with academic success hinders them from participating in leisure. The question then is whether taking part in college athletic fandom can help with international students` adjustment to their educational environment (Li & Stodolska, 2007; Zhao et al., 2005).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative methodology. Specifically, an open-ended questionnaire that consisted of three demographic questions (e.g., where are you from), as well as seven questions (e.g., can you describe your experience as a sports fan) that related to the adjustment and sports fan experience of the participants and the content of the questionnaires were analyzed using Elo et al.`s (2014) check list.

Data Collection

Convenience sampling, which enabled the primary researcher to recruit research participants based on their place of origin, availability, as well as a direct relation with the research question, was utilized to recruit participants (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Ten international graduate students at a public land grant institution in the Southeastern United States participated in this study (see Table 1). The institution is a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I membership institution and is in a Power Five athletic conference.

Table 1: Participant Demographics (By Years in the U.S.)

Years in the U.S.	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Continent of origin	Class Level	Major
1	Javier	24	Male	South America	Master	Civil Engineering
1	Ben	25	Male	Europe 1	Master	Industrial Engineering
1	Chavarin	27	Male	Central America 1	Ph.D.	Environmental Dynamics
1	Alexis	25	Male	Asia 1	Master	Agricultural Economics/ Agribusiness
2	Jasmine	24	Female	Europe 2	Ph.D.	Food Science
2	Paulo	28	Male	Central America 2	Master	Electrical Engineering
2	Stephanie	26	Female	Central America 3	Master	Cell and Molecular Biology
2	Antonio	31	Male	Asia 2	Ph.D.	Cell and Molecular Biology
2	Dimitri	29	Male	Asia 3	Ph.D.	Economics
4	Marina	32	Female	Asia 4	Ph.D.	Biological Science

Data Analysis

Responses to the open-ended questionnaire were sorted into categories, connected with related categories, and as a result, themes that connect the categories were developed. The responses to the open-ended questionnaire were sorted by each question and were saved in one transcript. The transcript was coded following three phases namely open, axial, and selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

The research team utilized Elo et al.'s (2014) checklist, which consisted of three phases (i.e., preparation, organization, reporting) for improving credibility for qualitative work that utilized content analysis. Further, due to potential language barriers, trustworthiness was achieved through member checking as well as triangulation of coding. Upon the participants submitting their questionnaires, the primary researcher reached out to the participants to ensure their words were accurately reflected. This technique is considered to be critical when establishing trustworthiness in qualitative studies (Liconln & Guba, 1985). Upon receiving all the data, the triangulation of coding took place when three experienced qualitative researchers examined data and collectively finalized the codes (Oleinik, 2011).

RESULTS

Ten international graduate students shared their lived experiences on how social identity as an intercollegiate sports fan helped shape their adjustment to campus. Throughout the data, two major themes emerged: social adjustment and academic adjustment.

Social Adjustment

According to the data, following college sports assisted the participants with their social adjustment to campus. Most of the participants shared how following college sports provided them opportunities to meet new people. Jasmine described her experience with college sports as an opportunity that helped her meet people, make friends, and associate with people from different backgrounds. Dimitri further elaborated on how following college sports helped him feel a part of the campus community:

Two of the Ph.D. students in my cohort are local students. They invite me to the college games where they usually throw a tailgate. I like going out in the crowd and cheer. That is a good way to understand the community and campus sports culture. Alexis also provided his opinion on how being a college sports fan not only helps students meet with new people but also provided a platform for international students to share their culture(s):

> Being a college sports fan, especially for the local community, is a big deal. Being part of this community is a fantastic experience as you can meet many new people, make new friends and exchange culture with each other and learn new things. Apart from academic experience, college sports and the community within will give a tremendous experience for all international and local students.

Social adjustment came out as an umbrella theme, which was categorized as an opportunity for students to meet with new people and further informed the sub-theme of a sense of belonging.

Sense of Belonging

A sense of belonging appeared as a subtheme under social adjustment. The participants emphasized how they felt that they belonged to a community when they followed the college sports team with their peers. Jasmine mentioned observing the strong bond between the sports team and the students on campus, expressing that identifying with the university's sports team promoted unity on campus and in the community. Stephanie also mentioned she felt a sense of pride wearing the school's colors, explaining she was a sports fan and enjoyed cheering for her university. For Stephanie, being a fan of her university's athletic teams made her feel a part of the "tradition" of the campus. For Ben attending athletic events and cheering on his university's sports teams made him feel like he belonged to a community and shared a connection with the community through his fandom:

> Identifying as a college sports fan helped to feel that you (are) part of a bigger group and to have people around that have something in common. It definitely helped to feel like part of the campus community from the very beginning. Especially the tradition of chanting together created some sense of connection among the students.

Dimitri supported other participants' opinions by mentioning how being a sports fan helped him feel integrated into the campus sports culture in the U.S.

Academic Adjustment

Participants' answers were able to derive academic adjustment as a second major theme. The participants explained that following the intercollegiate athletic teams on their campus assisted in their overall academic adjustment. Ben shared how he thought following college sports directly helped his academic adjustment, and since he was able to easily acclimate to campus, it assisted with his social adjustment. As Ben felt comfortable on campus and was able to make friends by investing in the university's athletic teams, Ben felt that he had more time to focus on academics. Connecting social and academic adjustment, Javier also mentioned how his sports fan identity allowed him to form a study group:

It certainly has helped me with my academic adjustment, especially social adjustment, since one cannot do everything by his own. Sometimes one needs help from someone else, and that is why it is necessary to have friends to count on. I would say, following the college sport teams or at least knowing a little about them is a good way to be part of a conversation and start new friendships and increase one's social circle.Similarly, Stephanie connected with her friends, and together, they would attend various athletic events. Due to this social connection, Stephanie also formed a study group with her friends. Stephanie emphasized how the emotional support that she received helped her finish assignments and focus on reaching her ultimate goal of earning her degree in America.

Antonio mentioned how he was struggling in some courses; however, like Stephanie, Antonio formed a study group with those who he attended athletic events with as well.

Relaxation

Relaxation emerged as a sub-theme of academic adjustment. The participants expressed that following the athletic teams at their university allowed them to relax and ultimately take a break from studying. For the participants, attending athletic events or watching their school play on television provided them a place to get away from academic pressure. Alexis insisted the break college sport provided international students positively contributed to academic success:

> The college sports team provides a perfect platform for local and international students to make friends. When you are tired of research and study at the weekend, watching a football game with friends gives you positive energy for the rest of the week. As a result, you will do well with your academic grades and, in the meantime, emotionally stable.

For Antonio, studying felt easier when he could take a break and attend an athletic event. Jasmine agreed, feeling more productive when she had a break from studying by going to an athletic event. For Marina, going to a college sports game helped her feel better:

> My academic life has always been a top priority since I came to the United States, so accomplishing course work and other requirements did not depend on my extra-curricular activities. However, it does make academic and everyday life seem better when you have something to look forward to- like a Wednesday evening volleyball game on campus.

DISCUSSION

Fan identity, which has derived from SIT, is often used in higher education research to measure the effect of student's identification towards their college sports team as well as their social and academic adjustment (Branscombe & Wann, 1991; Koo et al., 2015; Wann, 2006). While previous research focused on domestic students, the sample in the present study felt that fan identity also contributed to international students' social and academic adjustment. In the present study, social adjustment was generally indicated by how the participants utilized college sports to meet new people and make friends. Social adjustment through college sports allowed the participants in the present study to feel a sense of community. Further, the participants expressed that the social support they gained through supporting their institutions' athletic teams ultimately helped them to adjust to campus academically.

Social Adjustment

The present study appears to be in line with previous research that mentioned students' team identification with their affiliated intercollegiate sports team affected students' social adjustment to campus (Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Koo et al., 2015). Although previous research was done with mostly domestic students (Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Koo et al., 2015), the participants in the current study found intercollegiate sports were helpful to international students' adjustment to campus as well. In other words, not only do intercollegiate sports assist domestic students with their social adjustment, for the participants in this study, they assisted them with their transition and adjustment to a new environment. The participants in the present study also expressed that following college sports enabled international students to meet with new people in/outside the campus and assisted with their social adjustment to campus. As collegiate sports are a part of the campus culture in the U.S. (Clopton, 2007, 2008; Clopton & Bourke, 2011; Clopton & Finch, 2010; Koo et al., 2015); using college sports to assist international students adjust to life at U.S. colleges and universities might be a viable strategy.

Sense of Belonging

Our results were in line with prior research on how international student's connectedness to campus was a significant factor in predicting their adjustment to campus (Bastien et al., 2018). For the participants in the present study, attending athletic events and rooting for their institution's athletic teams made them feel connected to campus and led to a feeling of being a part of the campus community. This finding is also supported by past studies that mentioned participating in on-

campus social events has a significant effect on international students' social adjustment to campus (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Ramsay et al., 2007). Participants were able to provide their thoughts on how international students' participation in one of the biggest on-campus events, college sports, helped them adjust to campus socially. Therefore, this study adds to the previous literature in that international students can potentially utilize college sports fan identification for their social adjustment to campus (Clopton, 2007; Clopton & Bourke, 2011; Clopton & Finch, 2010).

Academic Adjustment

This study mimicked previous studies in that international students' academic adjustment is connected to social support (Bastien et al., 2018; Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992; Poyrazli et al., 2001). According to our results, international students were able to gain social support by forming social ingroup with their peers. Participants demonstrated how they utilized watching college sports together to form a social ingroup. With the support international students received, they were able to focus on their studies and strive for graduation. Moreover, previous research that dealt with mostly domestic students also mentioned how students' fan identification showed a significant effect on academic performance when mediated by a sense of belonging to campus (Sung et al., 2015). Hence, promoting college sports to international students is highly suggested as a way to create social support with the whole campus community and help this population's academic adjustment.

Relaxation

The results of the present study did not appear to be in line with previous work regarding the notion that international students are obsessed with their academic pursuit at higher education institutions is the U.S. and do not participate in leisure activities as much as their domestic counterparts (Li & Stodolska, 2007; Zhao et al., 2005). Although volumes of previous studies mentioned how international students undergo adjustment stresses in several areas, including academic adjustments (de Araujo, 2011; Gallagher, 2013; Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006), the previous study mentioned that international students need to find a place for relaxation during their adjustment to a new environment for the sake of their health (Mesidor & Sly, 2016). For the sake of lessening this stress, previous research suggested that an international student's self-care, time, and stress management is needed (Mesidor & Sly, 2016). Gomez et al. (2014) also indicated that recreation participation did not have a negative effect on international student's academic adjustment. In this sense, college sports perhaps can be an escape for international students to enjoy high-quality entertainment without leaving campus. Hence, utilizing the benefits of intercollegiate sports can be one of the various ideal options to help international students relax from their academic burden.

IMPLICATIONS and CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to explore if following intercollegiate athletic programs assisted international students in adjusting to higher education is the U.S. For the international students participating in this study, associating with their institution's athletic teams assisted this population in adjusting to campus socially and academically. More specifically, participants shared how they feel a sense of belonging by being connected to their athletic team, and in fact, such connection allowed them to relax from their academic burden(s).

Although the findings from the present study can be applicable to international students, the findings cannot and should not be generalized. This sample included in the present study consisted of 10 international graduate students at one university. As such, the fact that only graduate students were included, and the sample was at one institution should be viewed as a limitation. The sampling technique is also a limitation. Finally, the primary researcher is also an international graduate student who is a fan of collegiate sports. Although the primary researcher cooperated with three qualitative research experts to restrain bias, the primary researcher's status cannot be ignored

Future Directions

Following the results of our study, the researchers recommend that college sports should be utilized to foster international student's adjustment to campus. The athletic department can contribute to fostering international students' social adjustment by providing events that help international students learn about intercollegiate sports culture in the U.S. and help this population feel more connected to campus. As the U.S. sports model is unique, promoting intercollegiate sports to the international community would help this population get involved on campus. Hence, it is suggested that the international students` office (ideally with the athletic department) fosters opportunities for both domestic and international students to form groups and watch college sports together.

Athletic departments can also market different sports (e.g., soccer, swimming) to international students. This study demonstrates that this population is interested in going to various colleges' athletic events, such as tennis, soccer, volleyball, etc. As such, perhaps athletic departments can focus on bringing more of this population into the games. Athletic departments can host international student games. Further, athletic departments can promote diversity and inclusion by working with international students and creating awareness for their cultures. For example, the month of May is Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. Perhaps athletic departments can have an Asian culture appreciation day at a spring sporting event in partnership with the Asian student association on campus.

The lack of literature regarding sport fandom and international students provides a huge opportunity for future scholarship. Future research should include quantitative studies (of both graduate and undergraduate students) with a significant number of international students at various U.S. universities allowing for generalizable results. A larger qualitative study would also allow researchers to look at certain sub-groups of international students (e.g., European, Australian, Asian) and determine if there is a difference in groups regarding fandom. Future research should also examine what sports (e.g., football, soccer) this population is attending to assist with marketing efforts. The present study showed that being a sports fan actually assisted international students with their academic adjustment. Future work should examine sport fandom and academic success of this population. Further, future work should look at international students and donor intentions. Lastly, research is needed to better understand how colleges and universities are using intercollegiate sport to attract and retain international students.

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Education, Aspiration, and Everyday Diplomacy: An Ethnographic Study of Female Malaysian Muslim Students in the UK

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to explore the aspects related to education and aspiration through the on-going experiences of Female Malay Muslim students in UK higher institutions. Building on an ethnographic approach, an in-depth interview with 30 female Malay students, I focus on the various aspects of the students' lives as scholarship holders, addressing in particular how they handle diplomatic practices in their everyday lives as Malaysian mini ambassadors overseas. The notions of aspiration, well-balanced citizenship and 'everyday diplomacy' are deployed in this research to understand the everyday experiences of these students. Hence, it is argued that the privileges in education policy for Bumiputera Malays have shaped the notion of achievement they hold and their attitude towards overseas education as well as their experiences abroad. My research suggests that being a mini diplomat means not only promoting the relationship between different cultures but also contributing to nations abroad through their volunteering work.

Keywords: aspiration, *Bumiputera* Malays, diplomacy, education policy, ethnography, Malaysian students

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INTRODUCTION

Like migrants, international students experience the process of leaving their home country and making their way to a new country through their many aspirations and with a great deal of hope. According to Quaglia and Cobb (1996), a student with aspirations is someone who is involved in various activities for both their inherent value and enjoyment and their connection to future goals. In a recent article by Scheibelhofer (2018) on aspirations among European migrants, aspiration is perceived as hopes, plans, ambitions or goals which are produced or not clearly expressed (due to biographical changes). She also argues that, in the context of migration, aspirations endure throughout the life course and influence the ways in which people act and react over an extended period of time. Thus, aspirations can shift and be unstable over time due to changes in social contexts and transformations in a person's biography, such as migration, marriage and retirement (Scheibelhofer, 2003). In my research, I analyse how the aspirations of female Malay students shift with the context of biographical change such as their status as a scholarship student and mini diplomat after succeeding in going to the UK.

Since 2015, more than 50,000 Malaysian students have arrived in the UK to pursue their studies (Higher Education Statistics Department, 2019). Due to its multicultural atmosphere and the number of prestigious universities, the UK is seen as a preferred destination for Malaysian students to study abroad. Scholarships from both the government and private agencies, such as the MOHE, the Public Services Department or Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam (JPA), People's Trust Council or Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA), PETRONAS, and other private and government-linked agencies are awarded to qualified citizens and government officers to enable them to study abroad. Although the UK has been a top higher-education (HE) destination for Malaysian students, there is very little information or studies pertaining to these students' transnational lives and experiences as scholarship holders. Since most of the Malaysian students appear to be scholarship recipients, my study investigates how these students handled their position as scholarship recipients and the impact on their daily lives in the UK.

Three different aspects of the production and experience of aspiration will be discussed in this paper. The first section deals with the key literature and previous works related to aspirations, achievement and everyday diplomacy. The second section demonstrates the students' aspirations to study abroad in relation to the historical context in which they do so. In this section, I analyse the notion of aspiration and achievement in relation to the experiences of Malay students' desire to study abroad through a consideration of the effort they made in Malaysia to win the scholarships that allow them to pursue their dream. The third section provides a connected discussion of the notion of aspiration and the pressures of student life in the UK in terms of everyday and mini diplomacy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Aspirations and Achievements in Life

Several studies have explored the aspiration of students from ethnic minorities and refugees for education in the field of international student migration and mobility (Chee 2017, Schneider 2018, Hallberg Adu, 2019, Newman, 2019, Shakya et al., 2012). In this case, parents' ethnic minorities play an important role in articulating the aspirations of international students in education. In Hong Kong, the transformation in socio-political could create better opportunities in education to Pakistani-migrant youth and their families in designing their future careers. However, in Singapore, study by Senin & Ng (2012) reveals that there is a lower educational aspiration among Malay youths compared to other ethnicities in education although the Malays belong to the lower socioeconomic status backgrounds. While in Philippines, the aspirations of Filipino returnees from European universities at postgraduate level have reflected heir overseas experiences to create a better career contribution in their respective occupational fields (Liao & Asis, 2020).

Focusing on youth living through the upheaval of Egypt's Arab Spring in 2011, Schielke (2015) critically documents the nature of his informants aspiring efforts in terms of achieving a balance between their hopes and the frustrating conditions of their everyday lives. Schielke builds on the 'grand schemes' approach, which he defines as 'persons, ideas and powers that are understood to be greater than one's

ordinary life, located on a higher plane, distinct from everyday life, and yet relevant as models for a living (Schielke, 2015, p.13). Doing so helps him to explore the moral dilemmas facing his male interlocuters; ethnographically, he focuses in particular on the 'pressure points' that occur in the young people's daily lives. In his work, I am interested in the ways in which he invests the term 'hope' experienced by these youths with specific meanings and attributes, such as the hope to live a God-fearing life, avoid boredom, and with aspirations for freedom and money, love and marriage. This approach helps me to discover the ways in which aspiration is specifically perceived through their everyday life in the UK. Besides, participation in piety movements and commensality among students Malay students community abroad is said to help relieve stress and overcome loneliness in these sponsored students' life adjustments (Ibnu, 2022; Ibnu & Azman, 2021).

Long and Moore (2013), in their book, *The Social Life of Achievement*, provide critical ways in which to explore the notion of achievement within the context of its social life, such as the ways in which achievement is attained and experienced, as well as how its meanings shift in specific contexts. One example that I found relevant is Susan Bayly's (2007) book, Asian Voices in a Postcolonial Age. Bayly highlights the complex relationship between a generation of liminal Asian intellectuals in India and in Vietnam. In her fieldwork in Vietnam, Bayly (2007) explored the French-educated Hanoian intellectuals who signified themselves as active participants in the process of making and mapping the revolution and liberation in urban and rural areas in the period from 1946 to 1954. In her analysis, she also includes the experiences of those who were left behind, such as the French-educated Hanoian families, their emotions of return and separation, nurturing, education, services and sacrifice. From this analysis, we can see how the colonial education and language of socialism was able to structure the experiences and aspirations of students for their nation and family in the context of both colonialism and the post-colonial landscape.

In another work, Bayly (2014) engages with the vision of Vietnam as one of the 'tiger states', analysing how this has shaped the ways in which Hanoians understand citizenship, especially with regards to students' notions of aspirations and achievement. The term 'tiger states' refers to when in 2010, Vietnam was ranked as the world's top CIVETS (Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey, South Africa) economy, which means the country that was renowned as the world's strongest emerging, fast-growth, on-commodity-dependent power after BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, China) in terms of its globalised development potential. To sustain their status as global achievers and to make Vietnam one of 101 marketized South-East Asia's top producers by 2025, the students and parents generate a real effective charge around notions of achievement (Bayly 2007). This, however, has affected the state's education sector and produced a condition widely referred to in the country as the 'achievement disease', the excessiveness of doing something that is perceived as good and moral regarding attainment marking that can cause harm. For example, the parents would bribe the school to make sure that their child became an excellent student or reached a top attainment status. Bayly's works demonstrate the dynamics of aspiration and practices of actors in this context of both colonialism and post-colonialism. In my study, the parents of Malay students from lower income backgrounds gave their full support and motivation by encouraging their children to study hard to win an educational scholarship, as I demonstrate in the next section.

Besides aspirations and achievement, the paper also explores diplomacy practices in the everyday lives of the students after going to the UK. Many studies on diplomacy, especially in International Relations, deal with diplomats, states, foreign policies, embassies, consulates, ministries and international organisations, as both actors and instruments (Cohen,1998; Constantinou et al. 2016 ; Sharp 2009). However, scholars from various disciplines find that the practice of diplomacy is not limited to the formal actors outlined above; it can also be observed or imitated by a multiplicity of actors and instruments beyond states –such as traders, intellectuals, religious organisations or minority groups (Cooper, 2008; Marsden et al., 2016). According to Constantinou (2016), actors need to diplomatically identify and learn knowledge about the facilities they can deploy in order to deal with conflicts. By this he means that actors who practice diplomacy should recognise their role, who they represent and in relationship to what particular cause. Besides, the practice of diplomacy can be translated to the understanding of intercultural responsibility of international students. By using this concept, Tran & Vu (2017) argue that intercultural responsibility can reflect international students' self- determined responsibility to respect, accommodate or incorporate into

the host culture. The study focuses on the role and self-positioning played by international students in a transnational space. The findings show that there are four forms of intercultural responsibility perceived by international students such as their responsibility to represent the home country, responsibility to respect the host culture, responsibility to assimilate into the host culture, and responsibility to integrate into the host culture (Tran & Vu, 2017). These forms of intercultural responsibility are important in shaping the diplomatic practices especially for the students in my study, who came to the UK under educational scholarship.

Marsden et al. (2016) demonstrates through ethnography the diplomatic practices, skills and capacities that are deployed by Afghan traders. These transregional traders identify themselves as diplomats and emphasise how the skills of the trade are also those of diplomacy. The notion of being diplomatic here is the ability to speak multiple languages, the capacity to be flexible when representing themselves to others and also the convenience of living in multicultural surroundings. Drawing on the everyday diplomacy framework by Marsden et al. (2016), this paper seeks to make a case for exploring the everyday diplomacy of student migrants. It aims to extend the focus to the diplomatic practices and activities of these state sponsored students. It also seeks to understand these practices and activities as part of the effort they must invest into fulfilling the aspirations of Malay education policy and becoming both outstanding citizens of a good nation and the global ummah or community of Muslim believers. I now explore Malaysian students' aspirations to study in the UK.

The Aspiration to Study Abroad in Historical Context

In her book on race, education and citizenship, Koh (2017) argues that the culture of migration among Malaysian students abroad is the result of the legacy of British colonial-era racialisation, something that has been inherited and exacerbated by the postcolonial Malaysian state. In her findings, she concludes that the migration for education of the Malaysian-Chinese is seen as an exit strategy (Cartier, 2003; Fong, 2011). The desire of Malaysian-Chinese students to study abroad is due to the failure to the home country's failure to provide satisfactory education opportunities in prestigious universities or colleges in Malaysia, a situation arising from the National Economic Policy (NEP). The NEP is an affirmative- action policy which was aimed to eradicate poverty amongst all Malaysians and to restructure Malaysian society so that the identification of race with economic function and geographical location was reduced and eventually eliminated—especially the Malays, who were the *Bumiputera* ethnic group, made few advances in the modern economic sector, as their business class was very small and weak economically. Thus, building on this policy, this section would like to extend and contribute to the study of the effects of the NEP on Malaysian student migration. It will do so, however, from the vantage point of *Bumiputera* Malay students' aspirations to study abroad. This entails exploring not the experiences of an excluded minority but those of a privileged and dominant race that has received the highest proportion of scholarships from the Malaysian government through the NEP. In this latter, priority has been given to Malays in terms of access to education, government scholarships, property ownership, civil service jobs, subsidised housing and business licences (Lee, 2012). As a result, a sizeable Malay from the lower and middle class has evolved that has had the opportunity to study in both local universities and overseas institutions. Financial aid and scholarships in education have been offered to help Malays' aspirations for educational attainment.

Like Malaysian Chinese students' migration, above, transnational Chinese students in China also explained that study abroad was seen as an alternative route for students after their access to a prestigious education in China was denied (Fong, 2011). Hence, to achieve this aspiration, many parents invest an unprecedented amount of money, sell their homes and borrow money from their friends and relatives to pay for their children's tuition and living expenses. In China, this aspiration became more convincing with the one-child policy in 1970, whereby many urban middle-class parents encouraged their children to study abroad (Fong, 2011). However, the situation is different in the case of Malay students. The privileges which have been given to Malays in education have shaped the nature of their aspirations to study abroad. Though they are categorised as *Bumiputera* Malays by birth and have an advantage as a favoured race since British colonisation and the NEP, these students' aspiration to migrate overseas for their education nevertheless involves a great effort on their part, usually over the years in which they studied in primary or secondary school. Despite investing an unprecedented amount of money on their children's education, Malay parents

encourage their offspring to study hard by giving them full moral support in applying for places at boarding school and then government scholarships which facilitate their studying abroad. In this context, high achievement in education for many Malays is when their children succeed in winning scholarships for a university education abroad (Ibnu, 2019).

Investing money on education since their children were small (in a manner comparable to the Chinese and Malaysian Chinese students discussed by Fong (2011) and Koh (2017) is not an affordable practice for Malays largely because of their relatively low-income levels. In an exclusive interview on Channel NewsAsia in June 2018 with the Malaysian Prime Minister, Tun Mahathir Muhamad, explained why these privileges in education and economy should continue to be given to the Malays. According to Mahathir, 'The reason why Malay students need scholarships to study overseas is because he finds that many Malay parents cannot afford to have a university education for their children'. He also explained that it is because Malay parents are primarily civil servants and wage earners, unlike the Malaysian Chinese who are primarily in business (Naidu 2018). Indeed, during my fieldwork, it was rare to meet Malay students who were self-funded or sponsored by wealthy parents.

Thus, education is perceived as one of the essential ways to render the Malays proud as a majority race that has a significant gap in poverty compared to the country's Chinese community. As Zerrin Salikutluk(2013) said, 'The salience of hoping for socioeconomic improvement can induce a strong belief in education as the key to upward mobility'(Zerrin Salikutluk,2013, p.7). For these sponsored Malay students, the opportunity to study abroad gives them the hope that they can improve their social status and economic condition, secure a job and also gain cultural exposure. The only affordable way for them to study aboard is by attaining excellent academic results in national examinations – a crucial step which qualifies them to apply for government scholarship. It means that they, too, have to compete and gain excellent results in order to get the scholarship, just as Chinese and Indian students have to do. Besides achieving good results, these students also need to involve themselves in a range of extra co-curricular activities and leadership skills, which furthers their chances of being awarded a scholarship over and above their outstanding academic achievements (Ibnu, 2019). The findings section demonstrates the efforts undertaken by these students in order to be awarded educational scholarships.

RESEARCH METHOD

The ethnographic fieldwork for this paper was based in two locations in the UK: Manchester and Cardiff, from January 2016 to January 2017. In my research, thirty Malay students became my informants. From thirty informants, only four students were self-sponsored. As the starting point for one year of intensive ethnographic research with Malay students in the UK, I spent an extended period of time in the northern English city of Manchester. The consideration of statistical data related to the presence of Malaysian students indicated that the city was indeed one of the favoured destinations for Malay students. In this ethnographic study, the data were collected in several ways. Methods such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews, conversations and fieldnotes were deployed throughout the fieldwork. Participant observation is commonly associated with ethnographic research. It is a process of learning and comprehension in which the researcher is exposed to or involved in the daily activities of his or her study participants or groups (Schensul et al. 1999). Apart from observing the way they lived as an international student or a scholarship holder, I also had many conversations with them about their personal lives, family backgrounds, and interests or hobbies. These conversations have provided me with a wide range of perspectives in terms of socioeconomic backgrounds, their hometowns, and most importantly as a way to unpacking their aspiration in education (Trainor, 2018). Besides, in my fieldwork, I used a lot of social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to determine the current events that were going on in the community that I was researching. Using Facebook was crucial for my research because I gained much real-time information, especially about the Malaysian community – much of which was displayed on their organisation page.

During the participant observation, I used visual data such as photographs, field notes and recordings to support my observations during the data collection. According to Bernard (2006), there are four types of field note – jottings, a diary, a log and field notes proper. The field notes are descriptions of

the events and the people whom I met during the fieldwork. They are the most important data in my research. I also took several photographs of the events and places that I visited. The data in my fieldnotes were developed through interactions with the informants or any interesting events that occurred which I found invaluable for my research. The scratch notes help me to produce my informants' viewpoint while observing or talking with them (Sanjek, 1996). Therefore, most of the keywords gathered in my scratch notes enabled me to explain something in more detail later. During the coding process, field notes and participant observation data have been integrated into the data analysis process for the extraction of meaning (Creswell & Creswell 2017, Patton 2002). All of the interviews and memos were transcribed and analysed manually based on the emerging themes from the interviews. To ensure that the obtained data were accurate, I summarized the findings from the semi-structured interviews and share with my informants to get their confirmation

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Aspirations to Study Abroad: The Route to UK Higher Education Institutions

Many Malay students in my research regarded an education scholarship as a passport for them to study abroad. One example is the case of Aty, 23, an optometry student from Cardiff University. Both her parents were police officers in the suburban city of Penang and she was the youngest daughter of three siblings. One thing I found interesting about Aty's background was that all her siblings had graduated in optometry. The main reason why they chose this course was because the oldest sister had managed to improve their family's finances by setting up an optometry business. Her motivation to study abroad started when she saw her older brother – who studied in the UK on government scholarships – return from the work and achieve a stable source of employment and social respect. This shows that personal networks such as family or friends are essential in shaping students' decisions to study abroad (Azmat et al. 2013; Collins 2008; King et al. 2011). Since her brother's return home she told her mother about her desire to study abroad. According to Aty,

> *When I told my mum that I wanted to study abroad like my brother, the first thing she told me was that I must study hard. If I did well in the SPM (Malaysian national examination) I could get a scholarship and have the opportunity to study overseas like him.*

From then on, she was motivated to study hard, attend tuition classes and be active in sports and co-curricular activities. The ultimate aim at that time was to get an excellent result in order to be in a competitive position to apply for a scholarship. She hoped that she could make her parents proud and improve their family economic situation and legacy in optometry.

Unlike Aty, Ameera came from a rural area in Kelantan. She was the eldest daughter of six siblings. Her father worked as a taxi driver and her mother as a housewife. As the eldest child in her family, Ameera felt responsible for improving her family's economic status. Her ambition to be a doctor made her study hard so that she could help her father to support her siblings. However, the route to success was more difficult because she lived in a rural area where there was a lack of educational facilities and support. According to Ameera,

> *It is not easy for a village girl like me to be where I am today (studying in the UK). In my village, I can see that there is a lot of potential among the children; they are not lazy or not smart in their studies, but the problem is that they need motivation, support and exposure to academics. Thus, we have to study harder than those who live in urban areas…*

In Ameera's case, she pointed out how geographical factors and the characteristics of life in the rural areas where most Malays live is an obstacle to Malays' developments and achievements in the field of education. Although similar facilities have been provided in rural areas by the government, the best schools always have good assistants, good teachers and excellent facilities (Mahathir 1970). Another scholar (Roslan 2001) also argues that the reason why many Malays in rural areas have fewer opportunities to enter the upper classes is because of the different mediums of instruction in schools under colonial rule – i.e. most of the English-medium schools were located in urban areas and were attended by Chinese and Indian immigrant children. Many Malays in rural areas were educated in government schools that used the Malay language

and this held them back from entering business and professional fields, which prefer people educated in English.

The above quotations show that Malays invest their individual and familial effort into achieving places in high-ranking universities with the long-term aim of winning a scholarship to study abroad. Although Malays are given priority in terms of access to scholarships in education, these students still have to compete amongst themselves and prove that they are the best candidates and the deserving recipients of a scholarship. However, compared to Bayly's (2007) research, as shown earlier in this paper, there is no evidence to show that the parents or students would use immoral ways such as bribery and corruption to attain scholarships. Instead, the students told me that the teachers and parents would encourage them to apply for as many scholarships as possible to increase their chances of studying abroad.

The Government's Aspiration Towards Malay Sponsored Students and the Challenges

The second theme demonstrates my ethnographic findings based on my participants observation and fieldnotes during the fieldwork in Manchester. The Malay students with whom I conducted my research felt that being a sponsored student – whether privately or state-funded – was a huge responsibility to carry. In comparison to the Chinese students' migration in Fong's (2011) studies, the floating life for my Malay students is their struggle to meet the government and family expectations of sponsored students. The first thing these students realised when coming to the UK was, they had to ensure that they demonstrated excellent of moral behaviour of the type advocated by their sponsors and also maintain an excellent academic track record every term. Second, while living abroad, they were not only representing their family, but also their religion and nation. Thus, they were expected to be responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal wellbeing and to demonstrate excellent behaviour *(akhlaq)* in everyday life such as wearing modest clothes and being trustworthy, respectful and tolerant – and most importantly, being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large.

On 15 October 2016, my informants invited me to attend the Education Malaysia Engagement Session in the student union hall of the University of Manchester. Three Malaysian students' organisations organised the event: the Malaysia Community of Old Trafford (MCOT), the Kelab UMNO Salford and Manchester (KUSMA) and the Malaysian Student's Society of Manchester (MSSM) in conjunction with the Manchester Students' Carnival. The event aimed to introduce the newly arrived Malaysian students in Manchester to the educational attaché and to explain to them the roles that are played by the education officers in helping to shape the students' experience of studying abroad. It also aimed to promote the Malaysian student organisations in Manchester. My appearance at this event was not only as a research student but also as a teacher at Malaysia Community School of Manchester or *Sekolah Komuniti Malaysia Manchester* (SKMM), who attended the event in order to promote teaching as a volunteering experience to the new students. I attended the event with two of my informants, Afiqa and Ainaa, both of whom were students at the University of Manchester and also worked as teaching assistants at SKMM. Afiqa and Ainaa shared their work experience and explained to those gathered what they had learned from SKMM. They did so in order to encourage new students to volunteer their participation.

The event started at around 2.00 pm, and the audience mostly comprised first-year Malaysian students. The students and committee members wore formal clothes such as a blazer with black shoes. The ways these students presented themselves during this ceremony showed how they wanted to be seen by the Malaysian educational attaché – as a future leader or someone properly qualified to study abroad; this underscores the performative aspect of achievement in Malay students' lives as discussed above. This was obvious when Afiqa and Ainaa looked very conscious of their formal appearance, as they had to talk in front of the officers that day. The ceremony started with the national anthem, Lagu Negaraku and a doa or Quranic recitation. Besides the educational attaché, other chief guests for the day were officers from scholarship bodies, including the JPA and MARA. These people were in charge of the affairs of Malaysian sponsored students in the UK.

The event became more serious when the Malaysian Embassy contacted the attaché to get further details or confirmation about the Malaysian students studying in the UK who were involved in accidents while travelling outside the UK. However, what I found interesting in the speeches that evening by Mr Hazim and other officers was when they raised their concerns about the numbers of Malay overseas

graduates who still have a low proficiency in English when they returned home. He said that he hoped students would make friends with different groups of people in order to improve their English language skills.

Listening to Mr Hazim' and others' concerns about and aspirations for the English proficiency of Malay students led me to see the importance of the ethnographic approach to my research. It would be easy for us to say that these students had low English proficiency because they lived with Malays and did not speak English often. Yet we know little about the broader challenges they faced and efforts they invested in improving their English proficiency during the course of their everyday lives in the UK. It is quite striking to know that many of my Malay informants stated that they felt disappointed because of the slim opportunities available to them to make friends with local and European international students on their courses. This was the case for most of my informants, especially those studying Finance and Accounting in Manchester. In my interviews with them, the students stated that most of the international students on their course were Asian and mainly from China. Afia, 22, from Selangor, told me that she felt disappointed because she never thought this would be the case during her studies abroad,

> *I thought that I could speak more English when I studied here (Manchester). But it seems that it won't happen because most of my course mates are Malays and Chinese from China. And we only mingle among ourselves.*

Due to the substantial numbers of Asian students on her course, Afia and her friends rarely had the chance to interact with local and other international students in English. When I asked her why she did not want to sit with other Asian students during the lecture she told me that most of them feel comfortable sitting together in their own groups (for example, the Chinese students from China would all sit together, as would Malays) and the substantial number of them on the course made it seem unimportant for them to extend their friendship networks. Thus, to improve her English proficiency and to have non-Malays friends, these Malay students took the initiative of registering in different tutorial classes, participating in voluntary activities and attending foreign-language classes at the university. This strategy provided them with a greater opportunity to engage with other international students from different countries. Hence, it is important for the Malaysian Higher Education to understand the struggles and experiences of these students in their overseas environment campus. Besides, this finding also demonstrates these sponsored students were trying their best to integrate with the host and international students' community in order to learn different cultures, make friendships and improve their confidence in English. Next sections unpack the experiences of students as mini diplomats in achieving the aspirations above.

Students as Mini Diplomats

Duit Rakyat and Expectations. A further essential aspect of Malay students' behaviour that I heard a great deal about during my fieldwork concerned their relationship to the financial allowance they received as a '*duit rakyat*` (the Malay term for the tax paid by Malaysian citizens to the government that is used to sponsor excellent students to study abroad). Interestingly, *'duit rakyat'* is used among my Malay student informants to remind each other of their responsibility and the hopes that their family and other Malaysians had in them.

For Afia, a 23-year-old from Selangor, living as a sponsorship student in the UK meant that she had a huge responsibility which was quite a burden. She told me that she had to study hard for three years because she knew that the allowance she received was coming from the taxpayer, including her parents, in Malaysia. According to Afia,

> *It is not only a responsibility to a country, but also as the first daughter in my family to go abroad to study. I find it very difficult because they have high expectations of me [and because] I feel like I'm an ambassador.*

The high expectations of her family and her responsibility to the country made her feel as though she was not just a student but also an ambassador. The situation became dangerous when the government and sponsorship officials in the UK raised several issues that addressed how students should utilise their education experience abroad.

Diplomatic and Religious Reputation. Previous ethnographic studies of international students have dealt with the 'floating life', temporality and intercultural adjustments, and it is quite striking that religion was absent in most students' lives (Fong 2011; Hansen 2015). In my study, religion had become the central part of the everyday lives of most Malay students. Besides getting a degree, these students ensured that they learned as much as they could about culture, language and, most importantly, how to handle their religion in diplomatic ways. When the female Malay students first went to the UK, one of the particular things they were able to experience primarily in the Western landscape was the stigma towards Muslims following the various terrorist issues. For many Malay students, the route to getting a degree in life had a lot to do with their juggling the balance between education and religion. Despite their roles as sponsored students and mini ambassadors, the undesirable Muslim stigma and being a student migrant influenced the ways in which they behaved in everyday life. During my interviews, many students presented themselves as mini ambassadors for both nation and religion when they were going to class or taking part in various social activities Many students also shared with me their challenges in integrating with non-Muslim friends.

This, however, did not stop them from trying to learn and prepare themselves through several strategies regarding Islamic knowledge, Malaysian general information and current international issues. In term of the religious aspect, Aida, 24, a final year accounting student in Manchester, found that being the only Muslim in her class made her feel like a Muslim ambassador. Since she wore the hijab, she was easily recognisable by her classmates:

> *In my class, I am the only one who wears the hijab; otherwise they are mostly Chinese so my classmates can soon see if I don't go to class….. I should make an impact. I feel like an ambassador. Because everything I do they will think 'Oh Muslims are like this'.*

Since she was the only Muslim in her class, many students asked her about Islam. Feeling responsible as a Muslim, Aida took the initiative to learn more about Islam by reading books and going to usrah to explain to her international friends about Islam. She also tried to find the simplest method to explain to them so that they could understand the concepts she was talking about. For example, Aida watched YouTube clips of Muslim scholars talking on simple dakwah skills for non-Muslims. For these students, besides carrying the heavy 'burden' as sponsored students, they also have to deal with the idea of well-balanced citizenship in the context of a challenging and highly diverse Western educational environment. To achieve all these aspirations, state and socially sanctioned forms of good moral behaviour, faith and reputation needed to be constantly upheld and enacted in their daily lives. They also had to deal with many hurdles, especially cultural differences, in the new environment. This challenge was unavoidable as they needed to face every day, which required them to act diplomatically as international and sponsored students abroad.

Community Engagements and Transnational Contribution. This section explores the aspirations of the female Malay Muslim students in community engagements and transnational contribution. It documents these in terms of improving the Malaysia education system and becoming well-balanced citizens, thereby building on earlier sections of this paper in which I emphasised the ways in which aspiration among Malay students reflected both their personal desires as well as the collectivist goal of the Malaysian nation-state. Besides promoting good *akhlaq* (behaviour) and diplomatic practices in everyday lives, it showed how female students also seek to cultivate a 'patriotic spirit' by engaging in a range of volunteering activities. Volunteering in the field of education was one of the major activities in which the students in this study were active. Most of the informants became volunteers because they were curious to know how school education in the UK operated, were keen to engage with the local community or meet new people as well as acquiring skills and work experience. As Badri (2015) argues, participating in volunteering activities also provided these students with useful skills, personal development and confidence in helping the community. From her research on the perceptions of and aspirations to social responsibility of Saudi youth, the results show that personal desire, loyalty to the acquisition of community spirit and of new skills and knowledge is the highest factor influencing for young people's participation in volunteer work (Badri, 2015, p. 244). Thus, the volunteering by the female Malay informants in my own research shows that they were students with aspirations and not passive actors, because they enjoyed participating

in activities which related to their future goal of contributing to God, nation and community (Quaglia & Cobb, 1996).

During my fieldwork in Manchester, I was repeatedly struck by the efforts made by these Malay students, who invested their weekends in teaching the Malay child migrants at supplementary school. One example in my research was the Malay students' participation in the Malaysia Community School of Manchester (SKMM). Unlike those in Cardiff, the Malay students in Manchester had the opportunity to contribute to the life skills of Malaysian children who lived abroad by teaching them the subjects that were not taught in the UK state-school syllabus – such as the Malay language, Islamic education and *Jawi* (the Arabic alphabet for writing Malay), Malaysian history and traditional cultures. An exchange of knowledge, culture and self-development occurred among them. Holdsworth (2010) argues that volunteering can develop students' sense of civic duty and responsibility. This was the case of Hafiza, 23, a student at the University of Manchester, who told me that her interest in being a volunteer at SKMM provided her with a platform from which to serve the Malay community abroad,

> *'You know what?,.. I feel happy that I could teach the kids about Malaysia as some of them have never been there'.*

What is more, these students not only helped in the academic sense but also played an essential role in assisting the migrant children's religious life such as teaching the basic Quran and praying. I remember that there was also a Malay mother who drove five hours from Scotland every Saturday to send her children to this school. While I was having a conversation with her at the school one morning, she shared with me that the reason why she was willing to travel to this school every week was because she needed help to teach her children about Islam, and especially about praying. There were not many cities that had supplementary schools and she did not know anyone who could help her to do it.

A similar response was also provided by Aini, a biology student in Manchester who took the Leadership of Learning subject as an option on her course. As a task for the subject, she shared her experiences when doing a placement in a local primary school,

> *These children were inquisitive when they did not understand something… This is so unlike the ways we were taught in school, you know. I mean like…sometimes we were not brave enough and could not really ask more questions in class...and they (the teachers) always expected us to understand it as was.*

From this description, we can see that the students also learned from the Malaysian and local children during the lessons, especially in terms of ideas about critical-thinking skills and the courage required to ask a question in the class. Huda, who hoped to work as a lecturer in a suburban area in Penang after her PhD, wanted to contribute to society by setting up a community learning centre for marginalised children, providing them with free tuition. For her, it was essential for the oldest child in a low-class family to have proper guidance on and motivation for his or her direction in life. Speaking about motivation and support, Aini told me her desire to engage more with non-governmental organisations to help school pupils in education by giving them motivation and guidance to apply for university and scholarships. As an example, she would also share her personal experiences as an overseas student. Thus, these transnational contribution through volunteering work by these students have demonstrated their diplomatic responsibility towards the Malaysian children's migrants in the UK.

Career Aspirations

At the end of my fieldwork, I spent my winter break with my informants in Scotland. The five-day trip was to visit their close friend, Hannah (24), who was doing pre-optometry preparation at an opticians in Edinburgh. Hannah was a cheerful lady who had graduated from Cardiff University. During our trip, we had a conversation and she told me about her course and the reason why she decided to return to the UK. After graduating, she spent a year working in Malaysia. However, it was quite a frustrating experience because she could not practice a great deal of what she had learnt in the UK. She found that the full eye-care routine was only available in hospitals but not in optometrists' practices in Malaysia. According to Hannah:

> *In optometry, I learned much about health care for the eyes. It is more than just checking the strength of the eyes and selling spectacles. When there is a patient, we do the full eye routine…and*

> *this was not happening in Malaysia. I did not learn much. The patient was a customer and we were selling spectacles rather than an eye-care service*.

There are many elements lacking in eye-care in Malaysia. Most of the optometrists' practices in Malaysia do not focus on the full eye check as they do in the UK. She explained that:

> *In the UK, a customer needs to make an appointment for a full eye check-up to be prescribed spectacles or contact lenses. There are many procedures to be carried out before the customers are able to buy the spectacles or contact lenses. However, in Malaysia, an optometrist would either do an eye test, or recommend or take an order for the spectacles or contact lenses for the customer.*

She also added that contact lenses in Malaysia are also available only in one standard size. While on her course, she learnt that customers need to have their eyes properly measured for contact lenses as there are many different sizes. The full eye check-up will determine which size is suitable for the patient. From her training in the UK, she also discovered that those who went to the opticians for a full eye check-up were treated as patients while, in Malaysia, the patient was a customer. For her, it was essential to do the whole eye routine because it could prevent someone from another illness that could be identified by doing the full eye test. As a UK optometry graduate, she and her Malaysian optometry friends hoped that they would be able to practice the full eye routine and educate customers about optical healthcare rather than just sell products in the opticians. Thus, she told me that her aspiration was to gain as much work experience in the UK as she could in the hope that she would be able to help others and implement British eye-care practice when she returned to Malaysia one day. Hannah's case tells us of the aspirations and concerns experienced by undergraduate students in Cardiff who were mainly there as MARA scholarship recipients.

In addition, the students also hope that the Malaysian government will pay greater attention to the value of professionalism in a career. In this case, the optometry students were sponsored to become professional optometrists but, when they returned home, they found that the job scope and environment had devalued. As in the case above, an optometrist was only perceived as an optician – i.e. seller of spectacles – rather than an expert in eye-care itself. This also explains the importance of overseas students building careers and not just those activities which turn out to be market-driven. Thus, this paper suggests that a blueprint or policy for career development by the Malaysian government towards sponsored students is needed to support build a professionalism career as professional optometrists.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This paper has documented and analysed the educational aspirations of female Malaysian Muslim students by focusing on the multidimensional aspect of their lives as scholarship holders, addressing in particular how they handle diplomatic practices in their everyday lives as Malaysian mini ambassadors overseas. This focus is essential because there is a lack of discussion on international students' experiences which focuses on the pressure placed upon scholarship holders by families and by the awarding bodies. The culture of educational migration and aspirations of Malay students today are heavily influenced by the legacy of British colonial-era racialisation. My findings show that the privileges in education for *Bumiputera* Malays has shaped the notion of achievement they hold and their attitude towards overseas education as well as their experiences abroad. As a result, many Malay parents encourage their children to perform well in school in order to win a scholarship, which they perceive as a way to improve their social and economic status. Besides, for the many Malays in my research, achieving an excellent result in national examinations also indicated that the student was hard-working and intelligent; this is important because it reinforces Malay collective self-pride in the face of colonially derived stereotypes of Malays as 'the lazy native'. With all the expectations and uplifting aspirations of being educated abroad, they also come to recognise themselves as mini diplomats.

For policy recommendation, this paper suggests that there should be a blueprint or a professional association for overseas sponsored students to share their ideas and knowledge in their respective field of studies to help them pursue their professional careers which could benefit the country. Besides, this paper also recommends an intercultural responsibility handbook for sponsored Malaysian students who are going to pursue their education at overseas institutions which includes the aspiration and expectations of the Malaysian Higher Education government towards them.

The findings of this study can be developed by doing more ethnographic research on returnee sponsored students on their career development when they return to their home country. Further study can explore what are the challenges or opportunities they have in pursuing their professional careers in Malaysia as a Malay overseas educated. Besides, it is important to know their future direction and socio-economic status after obtaining the scholarship and overseas degree.

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International Students' Perspectives on Online Interfaces, Identity, and Environment in a U.S. Writing Center

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the perspectives of international students in the United States who use writing centers to support their identities and to meet their writing needs and goals. Using survey and focus group data to look closely at how students use one writing center's online Profile and more broadly at the accessibility and responsiveness of writing center services, this study found that students have much to say about their place within writing centers and how writing consultants can best support them. Listening to these international student voices reveals how writing centers and other student support services must take the initiative in opening up conversations with and among our students to create the conditions for their success.

Keywords: International students, writing centers, academic support, identity, technology, U.S. higher education

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INTRODUCTION

Ubiquitous in United States colleges and universities and increasing worldwide (The Writing Center Directory, 2020), writing centers play an important role in supporting international students in their development as academic writers, particularly when their academic reading and writing is done in a language different than that of their home countries (Wang & Machado, 2015). Writing center scholarship has long explored the question of how best to teach and support multilingual and international writers (Bruce & Rafoth, 2016; Bruce & Rafoth, 2009; Hall, 2013; Severino, 1994; Thonus, 2004; Williams & Severino, 2004). Yet, the focus of most of this work has been on training and developing writing tutors/consultants/coaches, who are often assumed to be domestic students and native speakers of the target language, and rarely on the experience of international multilingual writers themselves. Responding to Shanti Bruce's call to writing center "directors and tutors to experience their writing center environments through the eyes of their second language students" (Bruce, 2009, p. 218), this study invited international students who use the University of Minnesota's writing center (known as the Center for Writing) to share their perceptions about the center and how they see their place within it through a brief survey and focus groups.

This research builds on a larger inquiry, started in 2013, into what clients want writing center consultants to know about them by examining the information students indicated in our voluntary Student Profile, an online interface, which is part of our center's home-grown web application used for scheduling appointments (Nichols-Besel et al., 2019). The Student Profile was developed to improve student and consultation interaction by enabling students to indicate a preferred name, how to pronounce their name, what pronouns they use, the language(s) they speak and write, any accommodations they might need using Google Docs, and "any additional information I would like SWS consultants to know about me as a writer/learner." Previous analysis of the information students chose to enter in the Student Profile during 2016-17 revealed their awareness of their identities as writers, students, and learners within a writing center context, while the complexity of their responses challenged our assumptions about both who visits our center and how our university classifies and constructs student identities (Nichols-Besel et al., 2019).

At our university, we enroll an average of 6000 international students (students who are on F or J visas) every year, making up 12% of the entire enrollment. Particularly for the undergraduate international student population, the number has drastically increased over the past 15 years, from approximately 250 to 2500 students, representing 8% of the entire undergraduate population. When an increased number of international students utilize campus resources, a welcoming and globalized environment offered by student services is essential (Yu et al., 2016). We found that international students make up about a third of our writing center clientele annually and are further overrepresented as more than half of the Student Profile users. Thus, we anticipated that international students would have important insights about the Profile specifically, and about the writing center more broadly, which led us to the following research questions:

1. How do international students use the Center for Writing's Student Profile?
2. How do international students use the Center for Writing's website, specifically the "consultant bios" pages that emphasize writing consultant identities (language background, major field of study, etc.)?
3. What does their use of these online interfaces reveal about what international students value about writing centers?

By listening to international student voices speaking about their use of the Student Profile, the website, and the writing center itself, we seek to understand how the writing center can better meet the needs of international students and contribute to their academic success. We hope this close look at a writing center and its clients offers insights into how writing centers and other student support services can create more welcoming, accessible, and responsive virtual and physical spaces for international students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies that focus on the academic needs of international students by and large find that language is students' primary concern (Banjong, 2015; Lee et al., 2019; Roberts et al., 2015; Sato & Hodge, 2009). Despite greater awareness and advocacy for the reality of multilingualism and global *Englishes* (English varieties in addition to "standard American" or "standard British") (Canagarajah, 2006), international students studying in the United States recognize the importance of knowing English as the dominant language of communication. Not surprisingly, studies have shown the correlation between English proficiency and academic success, and between English proficiency and social networking in higher education in the United States (Banjong, 2015; Lee et al., 2019; Martirosyan et al., 2019; Roberts et al., 2015).English language learning experiences vary by individual, but many international students are far less confident in English than in their home or primary language. Students who would be able to fully comprehend and explain difficult concepts in their home language may struggle to do the same in English (Leki, 2009; Sato & Hodge, 2009). Challenges with language encompass reading, writing, speaking, and listening - important skills for learning and for demonstrating one's learning.

Producing U.S. academic writing takes considerable effort for international students. Students need to read and comprehend academic literature in English, synthesize information, cite sources, and often present a central argument or thesis. Furthermore, American readers often expect academic writers to structure their writing linearly, stating their argument or purpose at the outset and reiterating that argument as they present supporting evidence (Fitzgerald & Ianetta, 2016; Leki, 2009).These expectations explain challenges faced by international students as they adjust to academic writing styles in the United States, particularly for students who see writing in their home language as far less structured. Also, "lack of English-writing experience, vocabulary, and fluency may cause [international] students to have a hard time making their point clearly to a U.S. academic reader" (Leki, 2009, p. 9). Academic writing is difficult for most students, but it becomes even more challenging when students' backgrounds include writing in another language with cultural expectations different from those in the United States (Cox, 2016; Leki, 2009; Rafoth, 2015; Ravichandran et al., 2017; Wolf & Phung, 2019).

Identity

Many writing center researchers see connections between academic writing and identity, noting how U.S. academic writing both "reflects many of the values of its home culture, with its general emphasis on efficiency and directness" and "intersects with the identities of the student and faculty writers who try to succeed at it" (Fitzgerald & Ianetta, 2016, p. 133). As Rafoth (2016) explains, international students "carry with them a history of their experiences with English, when and how they learned it, the values they associate it with, and the parts of their lives it displaces" (p. 6). With American readers who are often intolerant of written accent (Cox, 2016), international students can feel the pressure to assimilate and "pass" as a native speaker (Rafoth, 2015), an ideal that leaves them feeling like failures even as they make progress as writers (Wolf & Phung, 2019).

Our previous study of Student Profile data reveals the power of negative self-critique, with many students using the open "About Me" text box to "point out their failings as writers" (Nichols-

Besel et al., 2019, p. 73). Both major themes identified in our 2019 study—"Who am I?" and "What might we do together?"—were often expressed in students' negative assessments of themselves and their abilities: for example, "I'm not a very good writer," "I am not good at logical transitions and connections between sentences and paragraphs," and "I struggle with grammar and proper use of APA formatting for research papers" (Nichols-Besel et al., 2019,pp. 72-73). No students praised their writing strengths in the Student Profile, which seems to resonate with how writing is often taught in schools as eliminating errors in grammar and usage.

International students' challenges are exacerbated by the view that, despite the wealth of knowledge and experience they bring to their education in the United States, being an English language learner is positioned as a deficit (Cox, 2016; Heng, 2017; Lee et al., 2019; Maringe & Jenkins, 2015). As Cox (2016) explains, a deficit perspective "focuses on what L2 writers cannot yet do with English and does not recognize these students' strengths with language and literacy across multiple languages, including English" (p. 60). When faculty and peers focus on perceived shortcomings, English language learners experience alienation and isolation (Heng, 2017; Maringe & Jenkins, 2015). Surveys and interviews with international students show students' desire for faculty and peers to understand and be less judgmental about culture and language differences (Heng, 2017; Lee et al., 2019; Maringe & Jenkins, 2015).

Space

Writing centers play a critical role in addressing both academic and affective concerns of international students and can work to challenge the deficit thinking in higher education about the writing abilities of international students. In many studies of international students' use of campus resources, writing centers are identified as an important resource (Martirosyan, et al., 2019), influencing student success (Banjong, 2015) and being highly appreciated by students (International Student and Scholar Services, 2019). The customized and non-evaluative nature of a one-to-one tutorial focuses on an individual student's needs, which could involve demystifying American academic expectations, clarifying writing context with cultural information, expanding vocabulary, or learning how to detect and remedy grammatical errors (Fitzgerald & Ianetta, 2016).

International students, however, may find it difficult to access and navigate writing centers and other support services on U.S. campuses if they are not familiar with American academic systems (Martirosyan et al., 2019; Banjong, 2015). Recent survey research on our own campus indicated that more than half of the support services have never been used by international students, who noted they were either "not relevant," "relevant but unsure how to access," or "aware but not used." Yet, we often hear from students about the needs for these services that they just have never used (International Student and Scholar Services, 2019). This gap between demand and usage reveals the need for campus services to make their spaces more accessible and more convenient to international students. Without intentional student services that consider holistic student identity, universities miss opportunities to meet the needs of a diverse, heterogeneous population of international students (Ballo et al., 2019; Cong & Glass, 2019).

THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory in student advising and development (1977, 1979, 1992) illustrates how student support spaces are an integral part of a larger ecosystem where students explore themselves, others, and their environment so that they can develop and thrive over time in higher education. Research also reveals a positive correlation between students' interaction with academic support resources, including writing centers, and student success, suggesting that centers should be highly promoted to help students achieve better academic performance and higher satisfaction (Banjong, 2015).

RESEARCH METHOD

To understand international student experiences of the Center for Writing, we conducted a qualitative study utilizing focus group interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

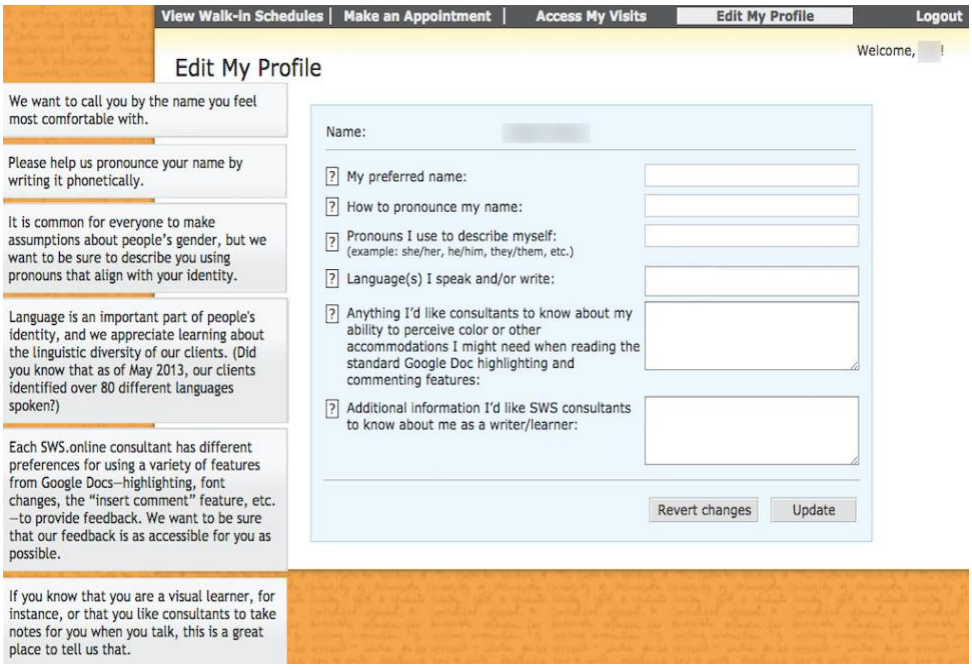
Participants

Research participants were drawn from the 2018-19 client pool of the University of Minnesota's Center for Writing, which includes all registered students, from first-year undergraduate students through doctoral candidates. The survey was sent to all clients whose citizenship status was "international" in the University's student data records. Focus group participants were recruited through the surveys.

Surveys

We administered an anonymous short survey during summer 2019 via email to gather initial information about students' awareness and use of the Profile (see Figure 1) and to garner interest in focus group participation. Recognizing that students who had not used the Profile might not even know what it is, we created two versions of the survey: one for "updaters" (those who had put information in the Student Profile) and another for "non-updaters" (those who had not). We sent emails to the 748 students who were returning in the fall; 153 students completed surveys, giving us a 20% response rate. Of our survey completers, 47 were profile users (updaters) and 106 were not (non-updaters).

Figure 1: **Student Profile**



Focus Groups

All of the students who indicated on the survey that they would or might be interested in participating in a focus group were invited. The days and times for each focus group were set based on student availability. Overall, we had 20 students participate across five focus groups: undergraduate student updaters, graduate student updaters, undergraduate student non-updaters,

graduate student non-updaters, and a mixed group. The purpose of this organization was to group students by common/similar experience to foster conversation. The mixed group, which included both undergraduates and graduates as well as updaters and non-updaters, was created because of scheduling difficulties. Each group had a mix of nationalities and languages spoken.

Data Analysis

Surveys

Although the primary purpose of the survey was to recruit students to participate in focus groups, we used the Qualtrics survey tool to run a descriptive analysis to see the aggregated data. The survey data revealed students' level of awareness of the Student Profile and, even if they were unfamiliar, whether or not they would consider using it to share information about themselves.

Focus Group Transcripts

In both crafting our focus group questions and analyzing transcripts, we were influenced by our previous study of Student Profile data from 2016-17, where we generated such codes as Writer Identity (most frequent), Consulting Preferences (second most), Student Identity, Learner Identity, and Type of Help Desired (Nichols-Besel et al., 2019). When students named examples of Consulting Preferences and Type of Help Desired in the Student Profile, we recognized that they were communicating directly to writing consultants, which encouraged us to ask our focus groups about both the Student Profile and our public consultant bios as parallel interfaces revealing identity. Thus, following Maxwell (2005), we designed the focus group questions with organizational categories in mind, specifically Identity, Profile use, Consultants, and Environment/space.

In analyzing the focus group transcripts, we approached our data much like Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest: our research questions guided the process of determining units of data and assigning them to categories. From our first reading of the five transcripts, we determined that relevant units of data were (1) answers to our direct questions about the Profile, (2) places where identity, either writer or consultant, came up in the conversations, and (3) suggestions on how to improve the writing center. Our methods for analysis of this qualitative data were inductive, in that we let the codes emerge from the data, and iterative, in that we made multiple passes through the data before settling on the codes described below (Patton, 2002). From our first reading, we identified 24 initial codes. We then applied these codes to one transcript, each coding on our own, and then together going through each unit of data, discussing the code, and coming to a consensus for each. For the second transcript, we verified each unit of data and its assigned code, after which we returned to the first transcript to verify coding in light of the decisions we made while coding the second transcript. We followed a similar process for coding each transcript.

As we refined our codes, we began to group them under the four broader organizational categories that influenced our focus group questions, leading us to drop the rarely used and less relevant codes, such as the one noting when students were discussing other forms of writing support on campus (their professors, other tutoring centers, etc.). From this process of grouping and removing codes, we created a master list of 13 codes relevant to our research questions (see Table 1 in the next section).

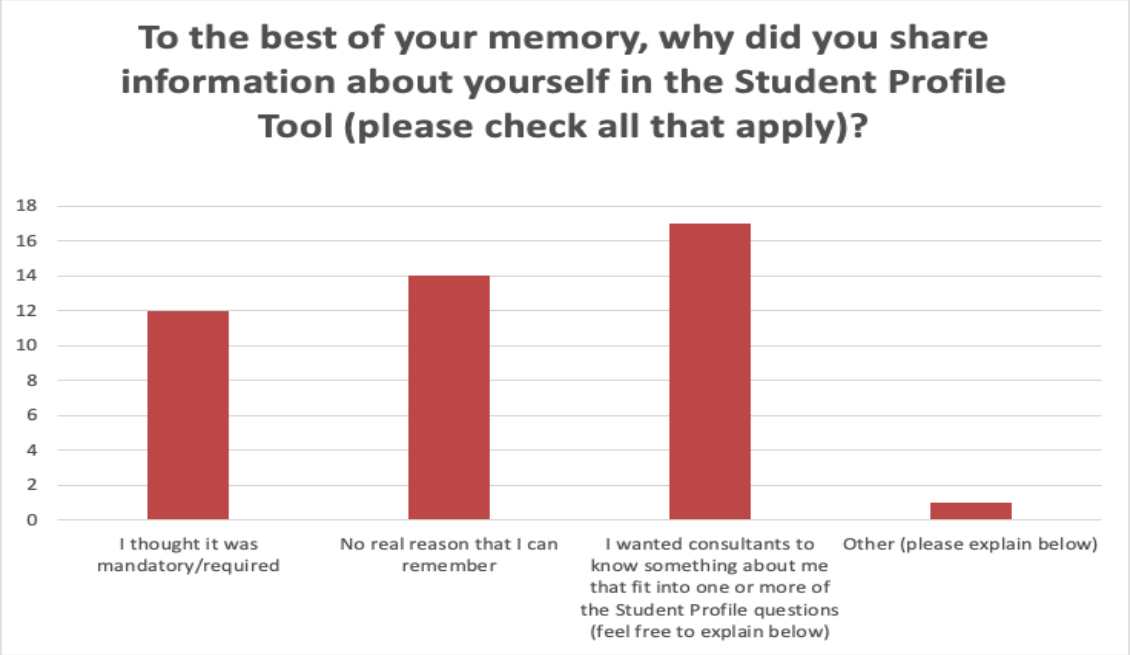
FINDINGS

The data collected in both our initial surveys and the focus groups reveals that student clients have much to say about their identities as writers, the value of the Profile, and how the writing center and its consultants can best support them. Although students had differing awareness of and interest in the Profile itself, their responses revealed their intentional use and savvy

understanding of the writing center as a resource to support their development as academic writers.

When asked in the updater survey why they put information in the Profile, 39% of those 47 students selected "I wanted consultants to know something about me that fit into one or more of the Student Profile questions," the option most aligned to our purpose in creating the Profile. Yet, as revealed in Figure 2 below, students also didn't remember why or thought it was required. They did not elaborate in the optional follow-up part of this question, and only 21% indicated that they ever went back to the Student Profile to revise or update their information, despite the fact we had designed the Profile to be editable and have included an "Edit My Profile" button on our scheduling interface.

Figure 2: Why Students Used the Profile



Of the 106 students who had not used the Profile (and thus completed the non-updater survey), 74% admitted they were not aware of the Profile prior to taking the survey. However, when showed an image of the Profile in the survey and asked if they would consider putting information about themselves in the Profile, 39% said yes, 29% said maybe, and only 33% said no. When asked to explain those answers, non-updaters noted time, effort, and privacy concerns in comments such as "Just too lazy," "Privacy," and "I didn't feel the need of filling out the profile. The writing center always was so great without this information." Nonetheless, with two-thirds of these students open to sharing identity information, we found that several of their brief responses previewed what we would later hear in the focus groups about more comfort and connection during consultations, the consultant being more able to meet their needs, and mutual benefits. For instance, one student mentioned, "I think those information will make the consulting session be more comfortable." Another stated, "I think those information will help the consultant to better accommodate my needs." Additionally, as illustrated by the following quote, students appreciated the potential for reciprocity: "I believe that matching students with the mentors should be two sided where we view their profile and they view ours to ensure the best experience for both parties." With these brief responses in mind, we were eager to hear more from both Profile updaters and non-updaters in our focus groups.

Through our analysis of the focus group transcripts, we identified 13 relevant codes, which are defined, illustrated, and counted in Table 1 below. We grouped these codes into four larger categories, moving inward to outward from the students' comments about their own identities, to their comments about the Profile, to their views about writing center consultants, to the environment and space of the writing center itself. We found when comparing the transcripts from each group, the 11 most frequently used codes appeared across all the transcripts.

Table 1: Codes Generated from Focus Group Transcripts

	Codes	Definitions	Examples	Totals
Categories				
Identity				**27%** of all codes
	Writer/client - needs/goals	Goals for consultations, requests for help with grammar or other writing issues, cultural expectations	"...gain another set of eyes on the paper. Crucially a different set of eyes that are not the graders..."	60% of Identity
	Writer/client - diverse learning preferences	Preferences about mode of consultation (face-to-face vs. online, walk-in vs. scheduled), mentions of own learning style	"I prefer walk-ins... I've always used it as a walk-in because I just sit there and put my name on the list, and I continue my own work."	17% of Identity
	Languages/ country	Languages spoken/ country of origin	"I'm used to write essays in Korean. Because I'm from Korea."	12% of Identity
	Student	Areas of study, year of standing, college enrollment	"[I'm] in CLA [College of Liberal Arts] and I'm majoring in sociology and I'm a junior. I actually changed/ transferred to UMN this January"	11% of Identity
Profile use				**24%** of all codes
	Student use/ appreciation	Positive responses to having the Profile available for use	"I think it's helpful because most people find my first name difficult to pronounce. So, if knowing that, I have a place to tell them how to pronounce my name upfront, I would feel more comfortable."	45% of Profile use

	Consultant use	How consultant might use the Profile information to prepare for consultation/ connect with students	"I think like this part is a bit important. Like, so if let's say we have students that are coming in who are not native English speakers. We would probably use more generic words or vocabulary to help just communicate better."	29% of Profile use
	Student critique/ suggestion	Critique of and skepticism about the Profile and suggestions to improve the and its use	"...you might have the information, but it doesn't mean that you, as a consultant, you should not start a conversation about it and just move quickly into the writing process... even if you have the information, it doesn't mean that the first stage of just checking in and asking [isn't important]."	26% of Profile use
Consultants				**21%** of all codes
	Identity	Information about consultants (major, languages, preferences)	"It's extremely beneficial to me. I use this one [consultant biographies page] a lot to choose the consultant. Their major, their strength."	45% of Consultants
	Facilitation	How the consultant coaches and/or is supportive/respectful —or not	"Consultants are really good at finding something that you're good at, and encouraging you in that thing. So, you don't leave there depleted and feeling frustrated..."	22% of Consultants
	Relationship	Referring to specific consultant and relationship with them	"What I do is have the same person the whole semester. You don't have to start over and over again... if we have the same person, she or he already know our weakness and how to improve."	20% of Consultants

	Knowledge	Consultant expertise	"There are some people who understand the difference between languages, like English and Korean."	13% of Consultants
Environment/ space				**28%** of all codes
	Suggestions for improvement	Suggestions to improve student access and experience	"So, my last suggestion would be, track the data, you know, see the traffic, right? ...I want to make sure that there's a consultant there…[t]hat day at that time when I really needed it."	58% of Environment / space
	Availability	Times available, length of appointment, locations, experience of being in the space	"People are really diverse. ...like international students going there, undergrad, grad students, American students, So, I think it's just, I always experienced it as a really open space and a welcoming space."	42% of Environment / space

Identity

Student responses categorized as Identity were elicited from focus group questions probing why and how they use our writing center. In response, students most often described their needs and goals as academic writers (60% of all the responses in this category), sometimes noting salient aspects of their identity as international students (home country, first language, year in school, major, enrollment in specific courses, etc.) as context for those needs. One student explained, "I use, let's say, twice per week because I am writing a lot now. So I think it's very important to have this chance to check the English. And the reason I use it is because my English will never get at the level as a native speaker." Another student mentioned, "I also worried about my grammar errors because I came here just one year, so I worried a lot."

Although we did not ask explicitly about learning preferences, something that the Student Profile prompts tend to elicit since "visual learner" is used as an example (Nichols-Besel et al., 2019), we found students often indicated such preferences in their descriptions of how they used the center's services, whether face-to-face or online and whether making appointments or just walking in. One focus group had a particularly lively discussion about their different approaches to getting started on writing assignments and when to seek support, with some students waiting until the last minute and others visiting the center as soon as a paper is assigned.

Profile Use

When looking at images of the Profile (their own Profiles for updaters and an empty version

for non-updaters), students gave an overall positive response, whether they used it or not. As one student stated:

> I would [use it] because every time I go, I see a different consultant because I don't go that often. So I could see this being very helpful to me and the consultant as well." In another focus group conversation, a student explained how the Profile would make them feel more comfortable using the center: "So if the consultant can directly use the right pronouns, I think it's appreciated.

Student discussion of the Profile explored not only how it would make them more comfortable as individuals using the center, but also how it might make consultants more comfortable. One student explained, "I think [the Profile] can help the consultant and us feel more comfortable when communicating and we can feel more welcome." Additionally, students mentioned that the Profile could serve as a means for building writer–consultant relationships, as illustrated by the following participant's statement: "I would [use the Profile] to fill out [the question about language]. Obviously I speak Korean. Probably fall semester, there was a Korean speaking consultant there and she helped me a lot in terms of comparing two different structures."

Yet several students wondered if consultants would actually read their Profiles and noted that the Profile would not be a substitute for conversation about their identities and needs in the consultation. In one focus group conversation, a student indicated, "I just felt that most of these things that, they'd figure it out as we speak. And I don't even know if they actually read it before they see us. ...If I knew that it was helpful to them, then I would do it." Another student stated, "I think it's a tool to an end to communication, but I think it's not because some information are there that there should not be conversation about them. It's not because someone's wrote out [how] to pronounce their name that the person shouldn't ask, maybe." This interest in how the consultants use the Profile was one small part of larger discussions about writing center consultants, who they are, and how students interacted with them.

Consultants

Focus group questions about consultants centered around whether and how participants interacted with the Center for Writing website page showing photos and brief biographies of each writing consultant ("consultant bios"). Most of the participants indicated that they did read the bios and found them useful. Participants mentioned the bios were "interesting to read," useful to "learn about different people's life," and "extremely beneficial" for finding a consultant's major or their strengths as writers. One participant gave a detailed explanation of their process for using the bios:

> First, I look for someone in terms of what they, obviously, what they're busy doing. And then I look at what it is they like to help us with. And then the last thing that I check is would I be comfortable sitting next to this person, and working with them closely. Yeah, that's also something. So that's why I know that the hobbies and the things are, they seem silly, and they seem extra, but that's nice for me to know in terms of that.

Participants appreciated reading the available information so that they could see the consultants as people they would want to meet with. They also stressed the importance of being able to choose who they want to work with based on their area of study and/or their strengths as consultants.

In fact, being able to work with a consultant from a different field was identified as a strength, as illustrated by the following participant's comment:

> What's also nice about them being from a different field is you feel a little bit more confident to go to them. It's almost like a non-judgmental space where it doesn't matter what you're coming with, they're going to help you... Sometimes, I've even found that going from brainstorming to putting things into paragraphs, knowing which paragraphs to put what idea into. Yeah, sometimes they even add some ideas, and that's been super helpful.

Participants valued the knowledge consultants brought to the sessions as outside readers positioned to help them with their writing. As outside readers, consultants are non-judgmental and look to writers for their expertise in the discipline, which can help writers to feel more confident. Furthermore, participants appreciated the encouragement they received from consultants. As one writer stated, "So it's just more than just the writing; it's also that encouragement."

In the first few minutes of one focus group conversation, the participants quickly shifted to the benefits of meeting with the same consultant. One participant jumped right in—"Sorry to interrupt this"—and stated, "I think good approach, what I do, is have the same person the whole semester." Two others chimed in to agree, and one explained,

> It's the best way because you don't have to start over and over again...this is the topic, this is the issue… If we have the same person, she or he already know our weakness and how to improve, and what to check. So I think it's very important to have the only one person.

This focus on the writer-consultant relationship was repeated across focus groups with statements such as "[Consultants] care about you so much, they really want to help you out" and "[the] bond, interaction between you and the consultants, [it's] not just about you." Participants appreciated the chance to work with the same consultant over time and the care they received during their sessions. They indicated that a writing center session is about more than writing instruction. Who the consultants are and the ways they encourage consultees contribute to the sessions and the participants' continued visits to the center.

Environment/Space

Although students were largely positive in their assessments of consultants and the writing center generally, they had specific suggestions about how to improve structural aspects of the center, often about the center's scheduling availability. International students want more appointments available to them, and different timing options than the traditional 40-minute consultation, such as 20- or 70-minute appointments and shorter walk-in options. For instance, one participant shared, "There was one time where I did a walk-in and I finished consultation and I had a quick question and then to go back I have to like re-register even though I had like a five second question." Many students shared their own experiences interacting with the writing center space and feeling welcomed. As noted in Table 1, they connected that sense of openness and welcome with the fact the space held people from different cultural backgrounds and academic levels. When asked what could be improved, students noted the empty walls, which could have better signage and decoration.

Participants offered constructive suggestions (58% of comments in this category) to improve student access and experience at the writing center. For example, many students mentioned that it would be beneficial for the center to track appointment traffic and increase consultation appointments and consultants' hours accordingly during peak times. As one participant explained,

> During the rush time, for instance the end of semester, I think it should be able to have more consultants available. Because sometimes you have to wait like 45 minute, and... So especially the last part of the semester, it's very crowded. So instead of having five, maybe you can have... I know it's difficult because there is no more room there, but you can have, I don't know, two or three more.

Another participant shared, "For me, the thing is the time, right? If it just open from 9AM to 5PM, or 3PM, because sometimes I need to have classes, also meetings. So the time's not available for me sometimes."

Some other useful suggestions for improving access acknowledge the way the center has set limits on numbers and appointment making as well as the need for marketing. One participant suggested letting students schedule appointments further in advance:

> You can only book twice a week, and I think you can only do it a month in advance. If they took those restrictions off, I know why they do that, but if there's some sort of improvement, like if you can book for, I don't know, six weeks or something like that, that would be more helpful.

Another participant shared an idea for marketing the center:

> [The International Student Office] may include information about the writing center in the weekly newsletter. Like, 'Did you know that the writing center is located in Nicholson Hall, in Appleby. You can set the appointment…' every week. Because I know that I have used some services of the university...because another international student recommend it to me...

There were also suggestions regarding online consulting, which has been available for more than ten years but now has become the new normal due to COVID-19. Some students would like their paper to be reviewed and co-edited via Google Doc, whereas others prefer synchronized sessions and more close interactions with the same consultant. As one student stated, "Some new international students, they might prefer to use keyboard, not just like talking directly like this."

International students' interactions with the Profile, the consultants, and the writing center environment are holistic, interrelated, and in alignment with their own identity and writing goals. No matter if they have extensively used the Profile or not, students are seeking opportunities to express their identity preferences, build reliable writing relationships with consultants, and experience an accessible and welcoming environment for writing consultations.

DISCUSSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

In this section, we explore how participant responses—which often took our questions about the Student Profile and writer identity and ran with them to talk more about their interactions with writing consultants and the center space more broadly—give us a fuller picture of how writing centers and other student support services can create more welcoming, accessible, and responsive spaces for international students.

Writer Identity

Our survey and focus group findings confirm our initial understandings of the Student Profile as a space for students to express their identities as writers (Nichols-Besel et al., 2019), a space that may be of special importance for international students. Our annual snapshot and analysis of what students choose to reveal about themselves in the Profile reveals that international students use the Profile at higher rates than their domestic student peers: over three years, international students averaged 52% of Profile users, although they averaged only 37% of the Center's clientele during that same time. Similar to what we found in our previous study coding student responses to the Profile's open "About me" text box (Nichols-Besel et al., 2019), our focus groups revealed that students are willing to share with us very explicit goals, concerns, and experiences related to writing, revealing their awareness of their own agency as learners. In all the focus group transcripts, we were struck by the knowledge the students had about how the center worked and the specific strategies they used to ensure they were able to schedule the consultations they wanted.

Our participants' comments identifying their specific needs and goals echo previous studies of international graduate students in the United States where students describe their significant writing challenges and a desire for extensive feedback, particularly around American expectations for academic writing and use of sources within one's field of study (Wolf & Phung, 2019; Ravichandran et al., 2017). Our participants valued consultants' academic, cultural, and linguistic expertise when it aligned with their own (for example, a consultant studying in one's own field or a speaker of their same first language), but also, importantly, when it did not. Several of our students

appreciated having a consultant who was outside their field and outside the traditional academic hierarchy.

Consultant-Writer Relationship

Because our focus group questions addressed the consultant bios, it was not surprising that a majority of comments related to consultant identities. Our intent was to connect the Profile, where consultees provide information, with the consultant bios, where consultants provide information. Participants did see the connection: many wanted to read the bios to choose their consultant, and they commented that they did or would add information to their own Profile if they knew the consultants would read it. These online descriptions of the consultants (bios) and the writers (Profile) were seen as beginning the conversation for the human interaction that would take place in the session. Students recognize the two-way street of consultations, or "communication both ways" (Kahu & Picton, 2019). They benefit from knowing more about the consultants before beginning a session, and they understand that consultants could benefit from knowing more about them. One student imagined themselves both in the consultant's and student's position: "I see it mainly as that the consultant [has] a chance to get ready... So can be a nice thing, I think, for the consultant to [think], 'Oh, I'm going to support another student now.' ...And, I think, it's, well, from the student perspective, you don't necessarily want to share the same information every time."

This two-way street of consultations was evident in participants' conversation about the relationships they formed with consultants. In four out of five focus groups, participants mentioned the importance of finding one or two consultants to work with consistently over time. Writers want to find consultants they work well with and who get to know their writing/project so they don't have to "start over" every session. Additionally, they appreciate the encouragement they receive from consultants. Even though our participants did not specifically connect the impact of their relationship with their consultant on their writing improvement, research has shown the positive effect tutor–tutee relationships and the frequency of interaction have on student learning (Kahu & Picton, 2019; Marx et al., 2016). When we asked questions about the consultant bios, we didn't anticipate that the conversation would shift to the importance of finding a specific consultant to work with over time. But in the four focus group conversations where someone mentioned this relationship, most of the participants chimed in to agree. Relationships between writers and consultants clearly matter, and the Profile and bios are useful to initiate these relationships.

Consultees' comments about the importance of bios indicating consultants' area of study as well as strengths and personality mirror Xiao's (2012) findings where 93% of tutees indicated that tutors' personal characteristics influenced their motivation in tutoring sessions and 70% indicated the same for tutors' subject matter expertise (p. 369). These motivating factors also surfaced in our focus group discussions, with both updaters and non-updaters articulating the value of the Profile and the consultant bios as a means of building rapport with writing consultants. Some mismatches between student and tutor perspectives in Xiao's study, however, suggest that tutors "should adopt a more positive attitude to drawing on students' prior knowledge and experience," take "extra care" to meet students' affective needs, and "take the initiative in approaching and accepting students" (p. 376). This conclusion echoes our participant, quoted above, who reminded us that filling out the Profile is not enough; writing consultants must check in and ask about the student and their needs.

Writing Center Environment

As noted in the Findings, a welcoming and open space created at the writing center is critical to international students' experience. Supported by Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory in student advising and development (1977, 1979, 1992), students' experience on campus is a complex, multi-faceted, and ever-changing system, involving the exploration of self and others,

interrelational interactions with peers and professionals, and navigating U.S. academic culture. In a writing center, international students not only seek transactional writing support but also appreciate a space where they can learn, thrive, and build long-term academic relationships.

Based on the participants' understanding of the "welcoming" environment, availability is a very critical aspect and was the first thing they discussed across all the focus groups. A majority of students confirmed that our writing center is creating a welcoming environment for international students but is not fully meeting their needs. With 42% of comments under the "Environment/space" code category related to consultant availability and time available for students, we recognize that demand is higher than supply. Therefore, we need to review the availability of appointments and be creative in fulfilling international students' needs.

In addition, students suggested how our writing center can better advertise its services. However, they acknowledged the danger that increased visibility might reduce their own access, or as one student asked their fellow focus group participants, "If they were to advertise, do you think… we'd never get appointments because everyone knows about it?" Others agreed, replying, "That's the only thing I'm worried about if they do that. But I want everyone to know, but I don't" and "Keep it secret in between us." As Banjong (2015) indicated, some international students might not be aware of where the student services centers are located and how these centers can help them. Encouraging international students to visit the campus resources will improve student experience and their academic performance (Banjong, 2015).

International Students and Writing Centers in a New Global Context

Analyzing data collected from international students in 2019 via face-to-face focus groups during the 2020 COVID-19 world-wide public health crisis gives us a greater appreciation for the space of our writing center to support international students and the writer–consultant relationships formed in that space. International students and student services providers on campus have been suffering from the uncertainty of instruction and services delivery modes during the pandemic. Our writing centers and other student services must accommodate how we offer and market our services to satisfy international students' current concerns.

CONCLUSION

Our findings reveal that international students have many important and specific insights about our writing center and how it can best meet their needs. With the Student Profile as the touchstone for this research, we expected to see differences between Profile updaters (those who used the Profile) and non-updaters (those who did not) and between undergraduate and graduate students, but the codes and categories we identified in Table 1 were present in all the focus groups. All five focus groups included people from a variety of countries and languages, and unless a student shared that information, we did not know those demographics.

We built the Student Profile and embarked upon this research to hear the voices of our international students, who have deepened our understanding of their self-aware and strategic approaches to higher education. With only 20 focus group participants, all writing center clients, in this study, we recognize the need for future research to hear more international student voices on our campus and on other campuses, including those unfamiliar with writing centers. In an era of isolation and division, writing centers and other student support services must take the initiative in opening up such conversations with and among our students to create the conditions for their success.

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The Impact of COVID-19 Outbreak on International Student Mobility: Analysis, Response Strategies and Experience from China

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ABSTRACT

The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 has had a huge impact on international higher education. As the largest exporter of international students, China bore the brunt. Facing the uncertainty of health and overseas study policy brought by the pandemic, Chinese students and international students in China are all waiting and considering whether to abandon or change their study abroad plans. In this article, we analyze the impact of the pandemic on the mobility of different international student groups in China and discuss China's higher education countermeasures from the perspectives of government, higher education institutions (HEIs), academic researchers, students, and service agencies for studying abroad. China's experience in combating COVID-19 can offer valuable lessons for global student mobility and international higher education, including building up a top-down government-led management system, a collaborative network of different stakeholders, and fighting the pandemic with international education cooperation.

Keywords: China, COVID-19, international cooperation, international student mobility, internationalization of higher education

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INTRODUCTION

The unexpected outbreak of the new crown pneumonia spread rapidly to the world, causing a huge impact on the international mobility of higher education. China is currently the largest exporting country of international students in the world (Yue, 2020) and the largest receiving country of international students in Asia (Ha, 2020). Its international student mobility has been seriously affected. An investigation report of Quacquarelli Symonds ((QS), 2020a) shows that among prospective international students from China, India, the European Union (EU), and North America, Chinese students' study abroad plans are most affected by the pandemic. Faced with such a problem, how China takes action will have a great impact on the flow of international students in the future, which will also have an impact on the internationalization of higher education.

This paper aims to introduce the impact of the pandemic on the international student mobility of Chinese higher education and China's countermeasures. First, we analyze the impact of the pandemic on the student mobility of China, including the impact on international students and prospective international students from China, as well as international students coming to China. Then, we outline China's measures to reduce the impact of the pandemic on higher education from four perspectives: the Chinese government, higher education institutions (HEIs), educational researchers and students, and service agencies for studying abroad. At last, we summarize some inspirations brought by China in the fight against the pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With the process of globalization, the term internationalization is increasingly used to discuss the international dimension of higher education. According to Knight (2012a), the internationalization of higher education include two pillars: "at home" and "cross-border". Cross-border education refers to the cross-border flow of people, projects, providers, policies, knowledge, ideas, projects, and services, including face-to-face and virtual flows. Among different forms of internationalization, international student mobility has received the greatest attention and has become a priority area (Knight, 2012a).

Research on International Student Mobility

Scholars from various countries have conducted a lot of research on the concept, structure, motivation, and value of international student mobility.

Regarding the concept, the scope defined by academic organizations or scholars has expanded with the diversification of international student mobility. A broad definition in a Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) report of 2004 is that International Student Mobility is "any form of international mobility which takes place within a student's program of study in higher education" (King, et al., 2004, p. 11). Knight (2012b) classified the forms of international student mobility into the following six categories: (a) a complete degree program in a foreign country, (b) short-term study abroad experience as part of a degree program in a domestic institution, (c) two or more cross-border cooperation degree programs between institutions or providers, (d) research and field trips, (e) internships and practical experience, (f) study tours, seminars. With the development of society and technology, new virtual forms of international student mobility have emerged. Wells (2014) expanded the conceptual scope of international student mobility. He proposed that international student mobility can be virtual (computer-mediated, remote) or physical (also called spatial or geographic); it can be introverted (to enter a country) or outgoing (to leave a country). At present, virtual mobility is becoming more and more common in cross-border learning. Therefore, international student mobility discussed in this article also includes virtual mobility.

In terms of structure, the scale and direction of international student mobility are the focus of scholars and governments. In the past ten years, the number of international students has grown rapidly. There are currently more than 5 million international students worldwide, an increase of 67% compared to a decade ago (Ma & Chen, 2018). International organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and educational groups with international influence such as the Institute of International Education (IIE) and the National Association of Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA), have played an important role in the statistics of international student mobility. Ma and Chen (2018) analyzed the relevant data and reports of international organizations and found that the number of international students continued to grow, but the number of students in destination countries was uneven, showing a trend toward high-end academic qualifications and sought-after STEM fields. In terms of spatial distribution, international students are unevenly distributed among different countries according to the level of education and population size. Nicolescu and Galalae (2013) conducted statistics on the main exporting/receiving countries of international students from 1968 to 2006, finding that European and American countries were the most popular study destinations, and China, India, and South Korea were the most active providers of international students. At present, although European and American countries are still the preferred destinations for studying abroad, Asian countries such as China and Japan are emerging as host countries for international students. In particular, more and more Asian students are turning their study destinations to Asian universities (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2020).

Regarding the motivation of international student mobility, scholars often use theoretical frameworks to support their analysis, including push-pull theory, human capital theory, cultural capital theory, international migration theory, etc. The push-pull theory advocates that the motivation of international students is combined with the "push" factors from the home country and the "pull" factors from the destination country. This will be described in detail below. The human capital theory advocates that the international mobility of students is a typical human capital investment of individual students by the national government or individual families (Crossman & Clark, 2010). On this basis of Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, Waters (2007) proposed that the pursuit of high-quality overseas higher education is to protect the advantages of the class and promote the reproduction of family cultural capital. International migration theory advocates that international student mobility is a special phenomenon of international migration (Bai et al., 2018). Wolf, Freedman, and Soldo (1997) proposed that international migration is a collective decision and strategy aimed at ensuring the economic survival and development of family units. Therefore, social units (such as families) influence the formation of international student mobility and migration decisions.

Many scholars have also summarized more comprehensive influencing factors through surveys. Soutar and Turner (2002) proposed that the factors that influence international students' choice of studying abroad can be divided into two categories: objective factors and subjective factors. Objective factors include course type (professional setting), academic reputation, campus cultural atmosphere, teacher quality, school type, etc. Subjective factors include the distance from home, family views, and friends' choices. Some scholars have also conducted subdivision studies on different types of countries. Kondakci (2011) proposed based on empirical research that, for students from the West and economically developed countries, personal factors are the main factors affecting their choice to study abroad; while for international students from the East and economically developing countries, economic and academic factors are the main influencing factors.

Besides, studies have proven that international student mobility is valuable to the country, family, and individual. At the national level, international student mobility has reproductive value and effect on national education (Collins, 2008). On the level of family and personal development, Crossman and Clarke's (2010) research showed that international student mobility can bring economic benefits in the form of money, such as higher incomes, more reasonable expenditures, healthier bodies, and greater professional development prospects. It can also bring non-monetary benefits, such as the level of knowledge and ability, the level of mental health, the quality of leisure, the quality of family life, and the improvement of social status. In an increasingly international environment, the importance and benefits of promoting international student mobility have become more prominent.

Research on International Student Mobility under COVID-19

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, scholars have paid attention to the impact of major health crises on international student mobility. International organizations such as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Goris, 2020), research teams such as the Institute of International Education (Martel, 2020), and scholars from various countries (Mok et al., 2020) have all conducted investigations on the flow of international students after the epidemic. These studies all predict that the mobility of international students will decline. Marginson (2020) proposed that COVID-19 has also changed the weight of factors influencing students' and parents' decision on studying abroad and country choice, and health protection and safety will occupy a more important position. During the pandemic, the psychological pressure on international students has also received attention. Bilecen (2020) examined the uncertainty, social isolation, xenophobia, verbal attacks, and discrimination faced by international students during the pandemic.

Some researchers have also explored the teaching and management challenges of international students brought by the pandemic to universities. Novikov (2020) investigated the learning adjustment difficulties faced by international students after the seamless transition to distance learning during the national pandemic lockdown in Russia, to explore strategies for improving online teaching. Jiang and Zhang (2020) focused on the management of higher education tuition for international students from universities, and put forward the challenges and countermeasures under the pandemic.

Research on Countermeasures of Different Countries under COVID-19

In the face of an unprecedented public health crisis, learning from each other has become a necessary means of coping with the crisis. Khan and Bertone (2020) introduced the Australian government's placement of international students in the field of higher education during COVID-19, and its possible economic and long-term emotional impact. When social isolation hinders face-to-face teaching, online teaching has become a common response strategy. Cervi et al. (2020) conducted a comparative study on the digital teaching of higher education institutions in Spain, Italy, and Ecuador during COVID-19 through a questionnaire, and proposed areas for improvement. Besides, new forms of international student mobility are also in the pipeline. Johnston (2020) discussed the "Internationalization at Home" global citizenship program offered by La Trobe University as an alternative to the international mobility program.

In summary, a wealth of research on the connotation, structure, influencing factors, and value of international student mobility has been accumulated. However, a sudden outbreak has triggered new discussions. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, there have been many predictions and empirical studies on the impact of the pandemic on international student mobility, but the research on the coping strategies of countries is still relatively weak, especially on the coping strategies of emerging international student host countries such as China. Therefore, this paper analyzes the impact of the epidemic on different international student groups and countermeasures from the case of China.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The push-pull model was originally used in immigration theory to explain the factors that affect population mobility, and now it has been used to understand the motivations of international student mobility (Altbac & Lulat, 1985). The driving factors are factors related to the education, economy, and policies of the home country. According to related researches, the driving factors may include the home country's lower quality of education, fewer educational opportunities, the level of per capita GDP (Gross Domestic Product), the government's emphasis on educational development, limited access to funding, and employers' preference for overseas qualifications (Ahmad, 2015; Lee, 2014; McMahon, 1992). Pulling factors include the attractive political, economic, educational, and cultural factors of the host country. The most frequently mentioned in the literature include the host country's economic scale, reputation, lower cost of study and living, opportunities to experience new cultures, environment, host country government's policy on recruiting international students, and course quality (Maringe & Carter, 2007; McMahon, 1992; Singh, 2014; Wilkins, et al., 2012).

The COVID-19 has had a major impact on the politics, economy, education, and culture of various countries. Therefore, this article believes that the pandemic will also become an important factor affecting international student mobility. However, the impact of the pandemic is complex and dynamic. Complexity refers to the impact of COVID-19 on the home country and host country, as well as the inflow and outflow of international students. Dynamics means that the impact of COVID-19 changes with the pandemic response measures adopted by countries. Therefore, under the influence of the pandemic, it is of great significance to explore how each country, as the home country or host country in the international student mobility, transform unfavorable factors into favorable factors to promote or stimulate the mobility of international students. Taking China as an example, this article first discusses the unfavorable factors that China faces as the home country and host country of the international student under COVID-19, and then introduces how China has adopted countermeasures to create factors that promote or stimulate the inward or outward movement of international students.

METHODOLOGY

This article adopts the case study method, taking China as a case to analyze the impact of the COVID-19 on international student mobility and the countermeasures. According to Robert (2004), the case study is an empirical inquiry, which studies temporary phenomenon in the real life background; in such a research situation, the boundary between the phenomenon itself and its background is not obvious, and researchers can only use a large number of case evidence to conduct research. Compared with other qualitative research methods, the case study can enable readers to grasp the details and important factors of specific events more clearly, and help readers analyze and judge similar cases accordingly (Huang & Wen, 2008). The impact of COVID-19 on international student mobility is closely related to the economic, political, cultural, and educational backgrounds of countries, and the response measures of different countries are very different. Therefore, selecting a representative country as a case for analysis will help to more clearly grasp the specific obstacles to international student mobility under COVID-19 and the coping strategies that can be used for reference. It can not only provide a reference for countries with similar systems and backgrounds to China, but also provide comparisons for other countries that are completely different from China. According to the summarized case study steps, we conducted a non-empirical case study design: a) Literature review; b) Identify the question: How will COVID-19 affect international student mobility? How to respond? c) Theoretical assumption: According to the push-pull theory, the pandemic will have adverse impacts on the motivation of international student mobility. To effectively deal with it,

the unfavorable factors of international student mobility must be turned into favorable factors; d) Case selection: Because China is the earlier country where the pandemic broke out and took countermeasures, and it is also one of the major international student exporting and receiving countries, so this article uses China as a case; e) Data collection and analysis; f) Preliminary research results; g) Literature comparison; h) Form the final research results. In the stage of data collection and literature comparison, we mainly use EBSCO, Springer, CNKI, and other databases and the Research Gate website to collect and screen relevant literature using keywords such as "COVID-19", "international students", "China", and "international higher education". Due to the sudden arrival of COVID-19, there were few journal articles on the impact of COVID-19 on international student mobility and China's response measures at the time of our research. Therefore, we also based on the research reports of relevant international organizations, newspaper articles, and policy documents for analysis. Regarding the impact of the pandemic on international student mobility, due to the different difficulties faced by different Chinese international student groups, this article divides them into three groups: international students from China, prospective international students from China, and international students coming to China. We mainly cited relevant data reports from international organizations, such as Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) and Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), to support our views. Regarding the countermeasures taken by China, to fully and accurately reflect China's response strategy, this study lists several representative cases from the perspectives of government, HEIs, academic researchers, students, and service agencies for studying abroad, such as the 15th "Chunhui Cup" Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition, "X-LENSE at PKU" global classroom project, and "learning supermarket" at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University.

RESULTS

The Impact of COVID-19 on International Student Mobility of China

The pandemic will not only cause the suspension of international student mobility in the next semester or even the next academic year, but will also cause irreversible and unpredictable changes in the pattern of international student mobility. Security risks, changes in school opening times and teaching methods, and the unclear policy environment of some countries may cause international students from and to China to change their plans of studying abroad.

Current International Students from China: Stay or Return?

The large number and wide distribution of Chinese students abroad have brought thorny problems. According to statistics from the Chinese Ministry of Education, there are about 1.6 million Chinese students studying abroad, among which about 410,000 are in the United States, about 230,000 in Canada, about 220,000 in the United Kingdom, and others in Germany, France, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, etc. (Hui, 2020). Due to the cancellation of flights, the entry and exit restrictions of individual countries, and the security risks of travel during the pandemic, many Chinese students are stranded abroad and cannot return. As of the end of March, there are still about 1.42 million Chinese students staying abroad (Hui, 2020).

The pandemic has caused not only short-term travel restrictions for international students, but also changes in teaching methods, tuition costs, and study plans. HEIs in many countries have closed their campuses and changed face-to-face teaching to online teaching. And for some institutions, such changes are likely to continue into the next semester or even the next academic year. For example, The Cambridge University Newspaper "Varsity" reported that Cambridge University plans to change all lectures (large group teaching delivered generally in a non-participatory way) in the 2020/21 academic year to online teaching, and the Cambridge Student Union has launched a campaign to move all 'non-essential' teaching

online (Leggatt, 2020). Although some group teaching may still be conducted offline, due to travel restrictions and blockade measures, most international students may only have access to online teaching. Compared with offline learning, online learning may make students feel frustrated because of the lack of accessible campus facilities and campus activities, face-to-face interaction with professors and classmates, etc. In this case, international students may re-evaluate the cost-effectiveness of online teaching at the same cost as face-to-face teaching. In order to get more rewards for the high tuition fees they paid, many students choose to take a one-year break to wait for the reopening of offline teaching (Song, 2020).

In addition, in the context of the spread of the pandemic, China has suffered unprecedented public opinion attacks, and international students studying in European and American countries have repeatedly encountered discrimination and even attacks. At present, the epidemic situation in some countries is still severe, and even the study abroad policy and study environment are no longer friendly. Most Chinese students have low confidence in the country's prevention and control measures and prospects against the pandemic (Lang, 2020). Although the high-quality educational resources and academic qualifications of foreign HEIs are still very attractive to Chinese students, some international students may choose to return to China to continue their studies for health and safety.

Some students who want to return to their country to continue their studies may also be hindered. Since the current credit recognition and transfer systems between Chinese and foreign HEIs need to be improved, these international students who want to transfer back to domestic universities may encounter considerable setbacks. Facing a more difficult situation are those Chinese students who have given up the college entrance examination and chosen to study abroad. Due to China's degree system linked to the college entrance examination, if they want to go back to study in China, they must take the college entrance examination first, which means that all the credits they have obtained in foreign colleges or universities will be forfeited.

Prospective International Students from China: Leave or Stay?

The response of the group of students planning to study abroad during the pandemic is also an important factor for predicting the development trend of international student mobility. In recent years, more and more Chinese students studying abroad have come from ordinary working families (Huang, 2019). Due to the economic shock and unemployment problems brought about by the pandemic, a number of students who originally wanted to study abroad may be forced to abandon their study abroad plans or choose lower-cost study abroad countries. But for most students who want to study abroad, they and their families have spent a year or more preparing for studying abroad in economics, learning content, grades, etc. Therefore, studying abroad is still in their plan. They will consider the return of studying abroad and safety issues more than economic issues. In particular, many parents and students don't want to spend a high cost to go abroad or stay at home to take online classes without bringing expected returns. Among the prospective international students from China surveyed by QS (Quacquarelli Symonds, 2020a), 37 percent expressed no interest in online learning at all, which may explain a large part of the 48 percent of students who intend to postpone admission.

The attitudes of student groups in different school stages are also different. QS (Quacquarelli Symonds, 2020b) conducted a comparative analysis of prospective undergraduates, masters, and doctoral students, and found that prospective undergraduates are the least willing to postpone their studies, and prospective master students are the least willing to accept online teaching. This may be because there are fewer alternative options for prospective undergraduate students (such as employment, transfer to domestic schools, etc.), and postgraduate studies require more communication with tutors and classmates.

Overall, in the short term, the scale of international student mobility may slow growth or even decrease. However, in the long run, the demand for studying abroad will continue to increase. Academic exchange is still an effective way for students to seek better development prospects and for countries to enhance their international influence and attractiveness to international students.

The more potential impact of the pandemic on prospective international students may be a change in the concept of studying abroad. In the next few years, prospective international students may put safety and health protection in a more prominent position when choosing a destination for studying abroad. Compared with the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and other major study abroad countries, East Asian countries such as China, Japan, and South Korea may occupy a more advantageous position, because the pandemic in these countries has been controlled earlier and more effectively. Many scholars have predicted that the flow of international students in some Western countries will be transformed into the flow of East Asian students (e.g. Altbach & De Wit, 2020; Marginson, 2020). However, we cannot ignore that the mobility of international students is also affected by the destination country's educational strength and international student policies. At the beginning of the pandemic, the British had pessimistically predicted that the number of international students enrolled in the next academic year would be reduced by 47 percent (McKie, 2020). But the last statistics published by the British Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS, 2020) show that as of June 30 this year, the number of Chinese students applying for undergraduate courses in U.K. universities has increased by 23 percent over the same period last year. The "2020 China Study Abroad White Paper" issued by a Chinese service agency for studying abroad can explain this. The report launched a survey of students and their parents who intend to study abroad from January to March 2020, and recovered 6,673 samples. Combining the data of foreign students in the past six years, it found that the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and Canada are still popular destinations for potential international students in China. However, this year the UK surpassed the US for the first time and became the "first choice for studying abroad" among Chinese students. The report pointed out that the relatively tense Sino-US relations (relations between the US and China) in the past two years, as well as the United Kingdom’s reopening of PSW visas and short school system advantages, have caused Chinese students who originally planned to go to the US to “diverge” to the UK (Song, 2020). In addition to the UK, Asian countries such as Japan and Singapore are increasingly popular with international students (Song, 2020). In the future, the attitude of governments and schools to international students, the ability to provide students with a safe learning environment and high-quality courses will have a great impact on international student mobility.

International Students Coming to China: Coming or not Coming?

According to statistics from the Chinese Ministry of Education (2019), there were 492,000 international students studying in China in 2018. Among them, students from countries along the Belt and Road (the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road) are the main force (Li, 2020). The Belt and Road initiative was proposed by China in 2013, with the "five links" (policy, facilities, trade, capital, and people-to-people connectivity) as the main content, connecting 65 countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe. As most countries along the Belt and Road have low economic levels and low levels of talent competitiveness, there is a great demand for talent exchanges to train high-level talents. Therefore, China has attracted a large number of international students with the Belt and Road initiative (Zong & Li, 2020). Due to the impact of the pandemic, the number of international students to China may decline in the next few years. Before the pandemic, for many international students who were unable to study in high-income countries, China provided them with new hope of gaining global experience at an affordable price (Choudaha, 2020). After the pandemic, affordability to study overseas will become a greater challenge for

them. But the general trend in the future mainly depends on China's subsequent actions in the post-epidemic period.

China's Response Strategies to COVID-19

In the post-pandemic period, China's opening of higher education faces many challenges. First, international mobility has suffered a huge impact in the short term. Secondly, the "anti-globalization" trend of thought and the complex international situation (such as the deterioration of Sino-US relations, international public opinion attacks on the virus, etc.) will hurt China's cultural and talent exchanges (Wang, 2020). Finally, the degree of international openness of online education is still not satisfactory. However, China quickly recovered from the pandemic, and resolutely adopted a policy of expanding the opening up of education.

The Overall Command of Government Education Departments

China is a centralized country where the central government and its education administrative departments issue orders, and local governments and their education administrative departments implement superior instructions. During this fight against the pandemic, China's education system has shown a high degree of cohesion and execution with the central government and education administrative departments as the core. Many foreign scholars have pointed out that China's ability to achieve a major victory in this fighting in such a short period has benefited from its institutional advantage of concentrating power to do things (e.g. Dieterich, 2020).

Chinese Ministry of Education Led the Battle. During the pandemic, the Chinese Ministry of Education played the role of commander-in-chief, uniting all forces to provide support to international students. In terms of health, the Chinese Ministry of Education cooperates with hospitals to develop the "COVID-19 Risk Self-evaluation Application for International Students", on which international students can complete the self-evaluation of the risk of suspected symptoms within 3 minutes (M. J. Hao, 2020).

In terms of academics, the Ministry of Education of China has issued a policy to allow international students to enter domestic universities for short-term study or to enter Chinese-foreign cooperative education institutions through assessments, thereby broadening the path of international students' education (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2020a). Besides, the Chinese Ministry of Education is deploying the construction of international platforms for online teaching in English. Two representative examples are "iCourse" and "xuetangX". In the first batch, "xuetangX" launched 109 English courses, and "iCourse" launched 193 English courses (Wan, 2020). The goal of these platforms is to bring together the best universities, the best teachers, and the best courses in China to provide high-quality online course resources and services for students from all over the world. In response to the situation of many international students taking online classes at home during the pandemic, the Ministry of Education has also organized a series of online activities for international students in collaboration with multiple departments, such as sharing stories about studying abroad, online chess games, etc., to enrich the lives of international students (China Education News Web, 2020).

In response to the employment difficulties of returned overseas students, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Technology hosted the 15th "Chunhui Cup" Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition of Chinese International Students (Ou, 2020) online. Chunhui Cup is an innovation and entrepreneurship competition for international students co-sponsored by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Technology, aiming to build a platform for overseas students to return to China to start their own businesses. From its establishment in 2006 to 2019, more than 448 international students have successfully started their businesses through this competition, and have established 634 key enterprises. In recent years, the Chunhui Cup Competition has continued to innovate

its format and expanded 9 overseas sub-contest areas (Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange, 2019). Under the influence of the COVID-19, returning international students face more challenges in development. The Chunhui Cup provides them with a creative platform and an opportunity to understand the domestic entrepreneurial situation.

The pandemic has made many international students worry about the future situation of studying abroad. Under such circumstances, the Ministry of Education of China has established a firm position to promote the opening up of education. On June 18th, the Chinese Ministry of Education (2020b) issued the "Opinions on Accelerating and Expanding the Opening up of Education in the New Era" (hereinafter referred to as the "Opinions"). It has determined the general direction and goals of the external development of Chinese education from the aspects of Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools, training international talents, optimizing the work of studying abroad, and global educational governance. When the international mobility of education suffers interruption, and many countries are conservative or even retreating towards “opening up to the outside world”, the "Opinions" issued by China gave the study abroad industry a shot of "reassurance agent".

The Provincial Ministry of Education Thoroughly Implemented Actions. In the post-epidemic period, the provincial ministries of education and HEIs have thoroughly implemented the directive in "Opinions" on expanding education opening to the outside world and formulated plans for the opening up of education under local characteristics, such as existing higher education international cooperation projects. Take Guizhou Province’s Ministry of Education of China as an example. It will continue to leverage its geographical advantages and strengthen exchanges and cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries. HEIs in Guizhou Provinces are gradually offering majors and courses in the official language of ASEAN countries (Zou, 2020), which will help attract more international students from ASEAN countries.

Teaching, Research and Governance Reforms of HEIs

During the pandemic, faced with multiple difficulties for international students such as campus closures, face-to-face courses being converted to online courses, and the interruption of international academic exchanges, HEIs in China opened up new paradigms for teaching, research, and governance. These measures have provided more learning options for international students in China.

Sharing Teaching Resource Online and Reforming Teaching Model. In terms of teaching, HEIs in China have opened online and remote courses that include live broadcasts, MOOCs, and other teaching methods. On the one hand, they have provided better course resources for students at home and abroad through inter-school and international cooperation. On the other hand, they have established an adequate sharing mechanism for course resources. Taking Peking University as an example, it has cooperated with the University of Chicago to launch online courses in specific fields and launched the global classroom project called "X-LENSE at PKU" to open to the public high-quality lecture resources from outstanding scholars around the world (P. Hao, 2020). In addition, HEIs have also actively shared online teaching experience with their peers and the international community. For example, Nanjing University (2020) quickly published the "Nanjing University Online Teaching and Training Manual" at the beginning of the pandemic to introduce their simple online teaching models and methods. Beijing Normal University has cooperated with UNESCO (2020) to prepare a Handbook on Facilitating Flexible Learning during Educational Disruption: The Chinese Experience in Maintaining Undisrupted Learning in COVID-19 Outbreak, introducing China’s online teaching experience during the pandemic. This helps HEIs in various countries to adapt to online teaching more efficiently.

Many university leaders have realized that the future must be a combination of online education and campus learning. In the past, offline teaching occupies an absolutely dominant position in Chinese schools, while online teaching is almost invisible in schools. During the pandemic, almost all courses were moved online, which also accelerated the development of online teaching (Hu & Xie, 2020). Although large-scale online teaching has exposed various problems (such as the imbalance of educational resources, the need to update teachers' educational concepts, students' poor self-learning ability, etc.), it has brought a profound idea to traditional school teaching innovation (Hu & Xie, 2020). Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University has established a "learning supermarket" that integrates the world's best online education resources to explore a new form of future university that integrates online and offline (Kaup & Venn, 2020). This innovative education ecology will be conducive to personalized lifelong learning.

Reforming and Innovating the Overseas Study Model. In order to solve the learning problems of a large number of prospective international students from China, many domestic institutions have or are considering cooperating with foreign institutions to launch a mixed study abroad model. Under this model, students can study online in their home country in the first semester, and study abroad when it is safer. For example, many HEIs such as Tsinghua University and Peking University have cooperated with Cornell University to launch a "study away" program, allowing Chinese international students to enroll in these domestic institutions for the fall 2020 semester (Cornell University, 2020). In addition, some Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run schools also provide opportunities for Chinese students who cannot go abroad to enroll nearby. According to the "Go Local" learning model released by New York University, New York University Shanghai (NYU Shanghai, 2020) will welcome approximately 2,300 Chinese undergraduates and 800 Chinese graduate students from New York University and New York University Abu Dhabi this fall. These students can participate in the offline courses of New York University Shanghai and the online courses of the mother campus until the immigration policy returns to normal.

Diversified Managing International Students. Facing the complicated situation where international students were distributed on campus, off-campus and abroad when the pandemic broke out, HEIs in China have strengthened the management of international students. Take the Hubei University of Technology with 1080 international students from more than 70 countries as an example. During the pandemic, the university implemented closed management of dormitory area, daily health monitoring system, and an off-campus isolation program for international students on campus, and provided psychological counseling for international students on and off-campus. Under strict control, none of the international students at the university has been infected (Ma, et al., 2020).

Anti-epidemic Actions of Academic Researchers and Students

The pandemic has triggered heated discussions among academic researchers. Academic researchers in China have actively organized or participated in domestic or international higher education conferences, expressing opinions on the educational issues exposed in the pandemic. For example, Zhou (2020), Xi, and Lu participated in the "Stay or Return: Changes in the Overseas Study Policy of Western Developed Countries under the Global Epidemic Situation and Responses" forum organized by Changjiang Education Research Institute, and provided professional opinions on the study abroad difficulties and response policies under the pandemic. For example, Zhou (2020) believes that the current theme of peace and development and the trend of globalization have not changed, and the demand for studying abroad will not decrease in the long run, and proposed to broaden the study channels for international students through the forms of "transfer", "insertion", "credit recognition", and "borrowing". Tu and Lu (2020) proposed that Chinese higher education should breakthrough national boundaries in terms of the capacity of universities to accept transfer students, transfer examinations, the educational financial significance of transfers, and actively

expanding Sino-foreign cooperation in running schools, to provide overseas students with the opportunity to transfer back to the country for higher education. Xi (2020) took the initiative of Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University as an example to illustrate the enlightenment of the mixed study abroad model to solve the problem of studying abroad under COVID-19.

Chinese students and scholars who stayed abroad have also made great contributions to the anti-pandemic work in the motherland and the local area. For example, the Chinese Students and Scholars Association of the University of Toronto raised funds and supplies to help Wuhan as soon as the domestic pandemic broke out. When the pandemic spread in Toronto, the association took the initiative to assist the embassy in Toronto to distribute "health packs"[2] to local Chinese students (Chen, 2020).

Information Bulletin of Service Agencies for Studying Abroad

During the pandemic, service agencies in China for studying abroad provided domestic students and their parents with relevant information on the admission policies and teaching methods of overseas HEIs promptly. At the same time, they paid great attention to the changes in the intention to study abroad of international students. For example, reports published by Kai Tak Education and Ginger both show that the impact of the pandemic on the Chinese studying abroad market is only temporary (Wu, 2020), which has given international students and their parents great comfort.

Challenges Faced by China in International Student Mobility

Although China has taken so many response measures, it has also produced some problems. China needs to find suitable solutions to face these new challenges in order to better promote and attract the mobility of international students.

Challenges in Online Teaching

Affected by COVID-19, universities urgently adopted online teaching. Due to the lack of pre-plans of universities, and the lack of psychological preparation of international students, online teaching has caused many problems.

Since international students come from different countries around the world, and the network operating environment in each country or region is different, problems such as the difficult selection of teaching software and unsmooth cross-border networks have arisen. Taking international students in Heihe University as an example, the registration rate of the online teaching platform for international students is only 74% due to problems such as time difference and the inability to download Chinese teaching software on their mobile phones after returning home. In the first week of class, the teaching process was slow due to problems such as unsmooth internet, teachers and students unfamiliar with teaching software, and lack of printed textbooks for students (Zhu & Chen, 2020).

A related survey by Yuan (2020) shows that international students studying in China have difficulties in adapting to online learning. The large number of online teaching platforms increases the complexity of students' learning process, making students tired of dealing with issues such as platform switching, knowledge repetitive learning, and homework submission. At the same time, some international students have problems with jet lag and can only study at night (Yuan, 2020), facing the trouble of irregular study schedules.

In addition, compared with offline teaching, the current online teaching model is quite lacking in providing teacher-student communication, campus services, and club activities. Therefore, students and their parents have to weigh the cost-effectiveness of online teaching. Since it is still uncertain when international students can return to school, improving the quality of online teaching and learning interest of students is a major challenge faced by Chinese universities.

Challenges in the Management of International Students

Affected by COVID-19, many international students cannot return to school, and daily education management can only rely on the Internet. Chinese universities have consistently adopted unified class management and student organization management methods. Since international students studying in China come from countries with different levels of economic development and network infrastructure construction, it is difficult for managers to organize collective online classes (Liu, 2020). In order to respond to the individual needs of international students in a timely manner, Chinese universities urgently need to establish a peer-to-peer network connection with international students, and achieve refined service management for international students.

For some international students staying in China, universities implement strict closed management. However, long-term closed management has caused some students to feel resistance (Zhang & Li, 2020). Especially when the pandemic situation has improved to a certain extent, the normalized management of pandemic prevention has encountered difficulties.

Challenges in Mental Health Support for Overseas International Students

Due to media exaggeration, many international students from China face discrimination and isolation abroad. Their mental health issues require urgent attention. However, the huge number of Chinese overseas students has brought great difficulties to the support work. Although the Chinese government and universities have provided some support, such as the counseling services mentioned above, these centers are often understaffed, and long waiting periods may exacerbate students' mental health problems (Zhai & Du, 2020). Therefore, China's deployment of mental health support for overseas students' needs to be further improved.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned above, China has taken a series of measures to provide support and services for international students and prospective international students from China, as well as international students coming to China. We can get some inspiration from China's actions to support international students.

A Top-down Government-led Management System

In this pandemic, China's government-led national system has profoundly played its advantages. In China, the central government is the "backbone" of the pandemic prevention and control work, playing a role in stabilizing the overall situation, raising forces, and deploying resources. The unified command of the superior government and the active response of the inferior departments have enabled the pandemic prevention and control work to be carried out in an efficient and orderly manner. This top-down, highly centralized management system is an important reason for China's rapid victory in the fight.

In the face of major events, the government needs absolute leadership and voice to lead the people of the country to form a united front. During the epidemic, due to the tradition of highly advocating "individual freedom", some countries did not implement mandatory epidemic prevention and control measures in a timely manner, leading to missed opportunities in epidemic prevention and control. The closed management and isolation measures adopted by China from top to bottom are not a check on individual freedom, but rather reflect the governance philosophy that puts people's interests and health first.

A Collaborative Network of Different Stakeholders

In the field of education, China has formed an anti-epidemic network featuring "government-led, school-based, and social participation". The education departments formulate pandemic prevention and control policies and coordinate the efforts of all parties. While implementing online teaching, HEIs also played their role as publicity stations of pandemic prevention and control knowledge and psychological consultation stations. Various service agencies for education have also provided free learning resources and information about studying abroad. China fully realizes that relying on a single government force is not

enough to deal with a major crisis such as COVID-19. The country needs to mobilize a wider range of social forces and resources. This is exactly the "cooperative governance" path that China is exploring. According to the definition of the United Nations Global Governance Committee, “cooperative governance” refers to the sum of many ways in which various public or private individuals and institutions manage their common things. It is a continuous process that allows conflicting or different interests to be reconciled and take joint actions. (Peng, et al., 2019). In the process of pandemic prevention and control in China, the advantages of cooperative governance have been fully proven. Under the leadership of the government, social forces such as hospitals, universities, service organizations, and the public have exerted their respective strengths.

Some problems have also been exposed during the test of the pandemic, such as the lack of coordination between government leadership and social forces, and the lack of clear division of functions among various departments. China still has a long way to go in collaborative governance. China needs to explore a path of cooperative governance with Chinese characteristics in light of reality.

Fighting the Pandemic with International Education Cooperation

In this crisis, China's victory in the fight against the pandemic is inseparable from international cooperation and support. Under the influence of the COVID-19, a mixed model of studying abroad has gradually emerged (Xi, 2020), and Chinese-foreign cooperative education institutions will also receive more and more international students' attention. These are inseparable from the international cooperation of higher education institutions. China's insistence on opening up education to the outside world will help promote larger and more diversified international student mobility, thereby cultivating more talents with international perspectives.

At the same time, China has also actively shared its educational resources and experience in the fight against the epidemic with the international community, making great contributions to the education of the international community. As Bolivia’s Minister of Health Aníbal Cruz said: “Because of China’s selfless sharing, many countries and regions have had reference and countermeasures when the pandemic broke out (Kuang, 2020).” The future world is both a competitive world and a cooperative world. Countries need to promote international cooperation in consideration of long-term development.

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Fostering Diversified Cultural Perspectives in a New Era of the Globalized Higher Education System: Comparative Analysis of Arab and American Student Perceptions

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ABSTRACT

Among the leading issues that dominated debate throughout 2020, diversity on higher education campuses surfaced once again demanding change of existing as well as future practices. Addressing and incorporating diversified cultural perspectives require universities to do much more than issuing diversity statements. This research study employed Q-methodology to explore and compare the perspectives that one group of international students and one group of domestic students hold regarding the American model of the research university. The groups included Arab students studying at a public research university in the United States, and domestic American students studying at a public research university in the United States. Fifteen students from both groups—representing a total of 30 participants—were interviewed. Factor analysis indicated that students from both cultural backgrounds held unique perspectives regarding the value of the American model of the research university.

Keywords: culture, diversity, higher education, perspectives

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"Covid-19 has the potential to radically reshape our world"

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2019.

INTRODUCTION

Education institutions and organizations were probably one of the first to address the impact of the outbreak of COVID-19 on education. At the onset of 2020 and when the pandemic hit, we thought that the worse was over for higher education as it is the case with other sectors as well and that universities will be able to open their doors to local and international students by the fall semester of the same year. However, this assumption proved to be out of reach in the foreseeable future, at least. This new reality has shaken the pillars of the globalized education model that higher education universities have thrived on since the turn of the millennium.

There has been a push to create a more connected world in the age of mass information and technology. The challenges imposed by internationalization and globalization trends in higher education—in particular that of escalating competitiveness—is forcing higher education institutions worldwide to look for models to respond to this push for globalization in higher education (Agnew, 2010; Matta, 2010; Parsons & Fidler, 2005; Schoorman, 2000; Yao, 2009).

The effects of globalization have been studied, mainly, from a corporatization perspective (Kleypas & McDougal) and have used classic economic and academic capitalism theories (Walker, 2009), and administrative theoretical frameworks (Barrow, et al., 2003). Such views have contributed to the widespread adoption of a business model of the university that emphasizes knowledge production and the view of education as a commodity (de Wit, 2011; Murphy, 2006).

A common response to this trend of higher education globalization is the literal adoption, and in some cases the localized adaptation, of the American model of the research university (AMRU) [a model that has its roots in the United Kingdom and is employed in Australia, so it is also referred to as the Anglo-Saxon model of the research university (Teichler, 1998; Wanger, Azizova, & Wang, 2009; Wang &Wanger, 2011)]. The Bologna Accord, signed by 40 European countries, for example, utilizes the model as the base in an attempt to homogenize higher education degrees and to harmonize standards in Europe (Finn, 2007).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The effects of globalization on higher education is an issue that requires particular attention if the United States wants to remain as a leading nation in the domain of higher education. Hutcheson (2011) argues that U.S. higher education institutions should be leading not only because they are major academic engines to be imitated, but because they add to the quality of life of their students. Historically, the United States has played a dominant role, along with Europe and English speaking countries, as a nation that receives a great percentage of international students (de Witt, et al., 2012). However, the number of students who select the United States as their destination country is declining and it is expected to continue to decline (Yelland, 2011). This decline might be attributed to the increasing competition from higher education of other countries, in particular that from Australia, Russia, Canada, and many Asia-Pacific countries (Yelland, 2011), the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center, and the subsequent changes in immigration requirements for international students as a result of heightened security threats to the United States (McCloud, 2004). In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought about additional restrictions for International students. However, other factors such as perceptions of quality, graduation outcomes, and the academic experience have been found to have an impact on students' decision when choosing a country to study abroad (Hobsons, 2014; Institute of International Education (IIE), 2015).

In the Arab Gulf region, efforts to emulate the research university model have been documented (Obst & Kirk, 2010). In this region, also referred to as Al Khaleej region within the Arab World, reforming and modernizing higher education to create knowledge-based societies is ongoing (Obst & Kirk, 2010). The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)—composed of the countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi

Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—shares a regional vision to make the Arab Gulf region a hub for world-class education (The Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf, 2014). Arab higher education systems that were long characterized by mass production of undergraduate programs and college graduates and incremental support of the state are shifting to new Western models. Several factors, as Acosta-Silva (2000) states, including the development of the knowledge economy, massive access to higher education, and increasing higher education differentiation—contribute to a push for universities to transition quickly and, in many cases, without certainty toward new models. To achieve the vision the AMRU has widely adopted (Mazawi, 2010), the model also is embraced through the large number of GCC students studying in American universities. According to *Open Doors* (2019) annual report that is produced by the Institute of International Education (IIE), Saudi Arabia and Kuwaiti are ranked two of the top twenty-five places of origin of international students studying in the United States. The report also noted that there is a steady and notable increase in the number of Arab Khaleeji students studying in the United States.

Mazawi (2010) asserts that the "Gulf educational policies are drawn mainly into the orbit of American and British educational policy making through the active involvement of think tanks and consultants" (p. 215). These educational policy reforms have significant implications. One main goal of globalization is to create new international partnerships. Therefore, policy borrowing form the global center represented by these two forces links the GCC States to educational systems of Western countries. This kind of partnership dictates the Arab Gulf dependency on policies and strategies foreign to the region for the sake of achieving international competitiveness status. For Donn & Al Manthri (2013), "this is not 'policy borrowing' but rather 'cultural replacement'" (p.24).

To achieve the GCC vision for building knowledge-based societies, the Western model of the research university is also widely adopted through hosting Western branch campuses in the region. In addition, the model is embraced through growing study abroad scholarship programs sponsoring large numbers of GCC students to study in Western universities. As highlighted above, according to *Open Doors* (2015) Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were ranked two of the top twenty-five countries of origin of international students studying in the United States. Within the United States, higher education institutions that once focused primarily on teaching are also increasingly emphasizing research to position themselves within increasingly competitive national and international environments. The impact of the developing AMRU on Arab Gulf students and their decisions to study in the United States can be significant. This study accordingly assessed the perceptions of Arab Gulf and American students of the AMRU and analyzed these perceptions in the light of the Cultural Dimensions Theory proposed by Greet Hofstede (1983).

Culture plays a significant role in shaping individuals' perceptions and approaches to learning. It has been found by recent learning theories to be of central importance to any discussion about the relevance and rigor of the learning process. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) believe that culturally relevant education engages and empowers learners. It is logical to say that education itself is a cultural process. American higher education institutions reflect mainstream American culture. This situation might promote for under-recognition of other cultural backgrounds of foreign students. As a result, international students feel less engaged and disconnected in an educational system where their values and practices are ignored. Consequently, this might affect international students' decision to pursue postsecondary education in the United States. Therefore, what is needed here is the development of more culturally-based strategies in American higher education in order to enhance the educational experiences of foreign students as well as American students. Promoting a culturally diverse American higher education system benefits all involved as it fosters for an environment of innovation and creativity. Hence this presented study attempts to pave the way for more creative approaches to prepare higher education institutions to keep international students, especially those form the Arab region, interested in being part of institutions that better their needs and expectations.

THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT

Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory guided this study. Hofstede (2001) defined culture as a combination of thinking, feelings, and action patterns that are usually learned and shared in social environments such as ethnic groups and nations, with national culture defined by nationality or geographic location. Hofstede (2001) and Hofstede & McCrae (2004) initially analyzed culture through four cultural dimensions:

1. Power distance index: the extent to which the less powerful members of a culture accept the unequal distribution of power within a given culture;
2. Uncertainty avoidance: the intolerance of unusual and unexpected situations that members of a given culture show;
3. Individualism vs. collectivism: the degree of integration and sense of belonging within groups in society;
4. Masculinity vs. femininity: the distribution of emotional roles between sexes with the culture;

Two cultural dimensions were subsequently added to the theory:

5. Long-term orientation (vs. short-term orientation): the representation of perseverance in contrast to obligations of respect for traditions and social obligations, and
6. Indulgence (vs. restraint): the extent to which a society allows the gratification or suppression of natural needs of members of the society.

We analyzed the perceptions of Arab Gulf and American students through these cultural dimensions.

RESEARCH METHOD

The purpose of this study was to explore the values of Arab Gulf and American undergraduate students regarding core elements of the AMRU and to compare and contrast these values. Q methodology was used to determine extant views between and among two groups of undergraduate students enrolled at a public research university in central United States. The results indicate the presence of at least three predominant views of the model among Arab undergraduate students as well as three predominant views among American undergraduate students. The predominant views for both groups suggest that students view higher education primarily as a tool for economic advancement. The results suggest that students' views are aligned with the global trend that frames higher education as a private good.

Q Methodology

Q is a systematic methodology that utilizes a sorting technique and a combination of research methods to identify factors or subjective views that groups of individuals hold of a given issue (Brown, 1993; McKeown & Thomas, 1988, 2013; Watts & Stenner, 2012). This methodology has been used widely in the behavioral sciences and related fields for over eight decades (McKeown & Thomas, 2013; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Q methodology is increasingly used in higher education to explore the perceptions of students and personnel. Q was recently explored for the study of the subjectivity of university students and faculty members on issues such as media access and use (Riggs, 2011), emotion in the higher education workplace (Woods, 2012), and sustaining college students' resiliency (Seaman, 2014). Q correlates individual perceptions of participants (sorts) to determine if groups of participants (factors) sharing similar perspectives exist. Therefore, Q was determined as the methodology that best served the purpose of identifying the existence of different viewpoints of the AMRU between and among the groups of undergraduate students that participated.

Sites

Data for this study were collected at an American Public University (APU) during the 2015 spring and fall semesters. The APU is a comprehensive institution located in a rural area that grants Bachelor, Master, and Doctoral degrees in most knowledge areas. A total of 30 participants—15 American and 15 Arab students—comprised the P-sets. Approval to conduct research with human subjects was granted by the institution to which the researchers are affiliated. Data from both groups of students were obtained

individually on diverse campus locations. All students volunteered to participate and received no compensation.

Participants

Purposive snowballing was used to select participants. The only criteria established by the researchers was that students were classified as undergraduate students and matriculated from either the Arab Gulf or the United States. American participants included 11 females and 4 males. Their ages ranged from 18 to 25, with an average of 20. Ten of the participants self-identified as white, one as Hispanic, two as American Indian, and two as multi-ethnic. Their number of university semesters in undergraduate programs ranged from 1 to 13, with an average of 5. All participants in this group were students in education related fields. Arab participants included 2 females and 13 males. Their ages ranged from 20 to 30 years old, with an average of 23. All participants self-identified as citizens from an Arab country. Their number of university semesters in undergraduate programs ranged from 4 to 11, with an average of 7. Fourteen participants in this group majored in engineering and one was a science major.

Instrument

The basis of the instrument was a composite conceptualization of the AMRU, as developed by multiple researchers (Teichler, 1998; Arthur, et al., 2007; Finn, 2007; Gill, 2008; Wanger, Azizova, & Wang, 2009; Yao, 2009; Arthur & Little, 2010; van Santen, 2010; Wang & Wanger, 2011). The composite model comprised five key elements: (1) the use of English as lingua franca, (2) the presence of a relatively fixed structure of academic programs, (3) the presence of a flexible curriculum and a growing stratification of programs/institutions, (4) the promotion of autonomy and decentralization of higher education, and (5) the integration of research into higher education. In addition to these elements, and derived from the literature, we added a sixth element conceptualized as "Understanding knowledge as national capital."

These six key elements of the AMRU were conceptualized as follows:

1. Use of English as lingua franca (ELF). This element refers to the increasing use in higher education of English as the primary language of instruction, academic materials, and publication of research (Baker, 2009; Bjorkman, 2010, 2011a, 2011b; Hevey, 2013; Mauranen, 2003; Mauranen, et al., 2010; Smit, 2012; "The pragmatics of English as a lingua franca in the international university: Introduction," 2011; Wanger, Azizova & Wang, 2009; Wang & Wanger, 2011; Wilkins & Urbanovic, 2014; Zierer, 1974).
2. Structuring of academic programs in three tiers (SAP). This element is defined as the structuring of academic programs that incorporate a three or four-year bachelor's degree program, a two-year master's program, and a three-to-five-year doctorate degree (Leake, 2013; Montoya, 2004; Wanger, Azizova & Wang, 2009; Wang & Wanger, 2011).
3. Flexibility of curriculum and growing stratification of programs and institutions (FSP). This element refers to the increasing flexibility of graduate curriculum and higher education programs, a greater institutional flexibility that allows students to transfer between institutions, and the increasing preeminence of university rankings in students' decision to pursue a program at a given institution (Aboites, 2010; Acosta-Silva, 2000; Bastedo, et al., 2009; Bougnol & Dulá, 2006; Davies & Zafira, 2012; Knutson et al., 2014; Leake, 2013; Ross, 1977; Wang, 2004; Wanger, Azizova & Wang, 2009; Wang & Wanger, 2011).
4. Promotion of autonomy and decentralization of higher education (PAD). This element denotes the promotion in higher education of students' autonomy in learning and scholarly work, as well as the governmental decentralization of higher education which allows institutions a greater autonomy to deliver educational services and to grant degrees with minimal legal regulations (Aboites, 2010; Acosta-Silva, 2000; Brown, 1990; Eaton, 2009; Larson, 2003; Leake, 2013; Merino Juarez, 2000; O'Donnell, et al., 2013; Overall, et al., 2011; Ross, 1977; Wanger, Azizova & Wang, 2009; Wang & Wanger, 2011).
5. Integration of research into higher education (IRH). This element refers to an increasing emphasis in higher education programs on the production and publication of scholarly research

(Aboites, 2010; Acosta-Silva, 2000, 2002; Knutson et al., 2014; Leake, 2013; Wanger, Azizova & Wang, 2009; Wang & Wanger, 2011).

6. Understanding of knowledge as national capital (KNC). This element is characterized by the growing emphasis in higher education on the understanding and the promotion of knowledge as a private good that serves for personal and national economic advancement (Alexander, 2000; Cucchiara, et al., 2011; Davies & Zafira, 2012; Judson & Taylor, 2014; Lynch, 2006; Sellar & Lingard, 2014; Taylor & Judson, 2011; Wanger, Azizova & Wang, 2009; Wang & Wanger, 2011).

The instrument for data collection included a set of 36 paper squares (Q-set) containing statements related to the six elements of the AMRU. Table 1 includes the 36 statements (six per element). These were numbered randomly to avoid interfering with the rank-order that students were asked to conduct. The same set of statements in English was used for both groups of participants because all participants were fluent in English.

Table 1

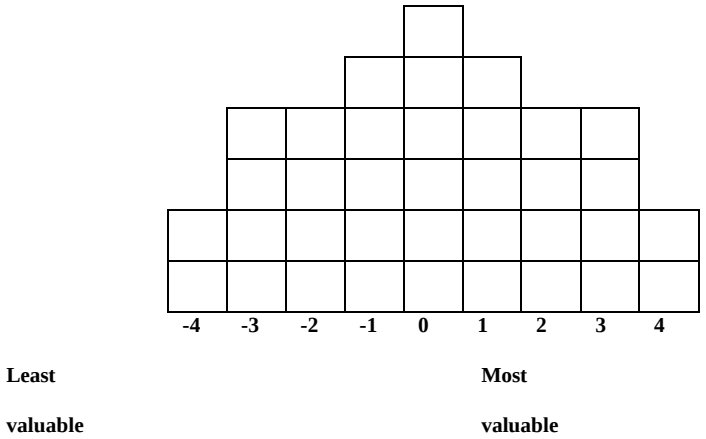
Statements Associated with Key Elements of the AMRU

Random Number	Statement with Element Code	ASM Element
34	[ELF] Getting university instruction exclusively in English	Use of English as the lingua franca [ELF]
14	[ELF] Reading academic materials in English	
6	[ELF] Publishing in English	
19	[ELF] Not using materials in languages other than English	
26	[ELF] Improving my English proficiency	
8	[ELF] Studying in English speaking countries	
9	[SAP] Having a graduate degree	Structuring of academic programs in 3 tiers [SAP]
27	[SAP] Taking graduate courses	
2	[SAP] Studying a demanding program	
35	[SAP] Having incremental graduation requirements	
21	[SAP] Studying more than four years at a university	
15	[SAP] Following the bachelor-master-doctorate sequence	
28	[FCS] Studying a flexible university program	Flexibility of curriculum and growing stratification of programs/institutions [FCS]
10	[FCS] Being able to transfer from one institution to another	
22	[FCS] Taking distance learning classes	
3	[FCS] Taking courses without prerequisites	
16	[FCS] Conducting multidisciplinary work	
36	[FCS] Choosing a program based on university rankings	
17	[PAD] Developing independent learning	Promotion of autonomy and decentralization of higher education [PAD]
23	[PAD] Getting a degree without government intervention	
4	[PAD] Studying a program that has minimal legal regulations	
11	[PAD] Studying at a university with little bureaucracy	
29	[PAD] Getting preparation to be autonomous	
32	[PAD] Completing administrative processes easily	
18	[IRH] Conducting research in class	Integration of research into higher education [IRH]
24	[IRH] Improving research skills	
12	[IRH] Publishing research studies	
5	[IRH] Studying a program that emphasizes research over teaching	
31	[IRH] Writing a thesis or dissertation	
30	[IRH] Taking classes that integrate theory, research and practice	
7	[KNC] Creating new knowledge	Understanding of knowledge as national capital [KNC]
20	[KNC] Learning new knowledge in class	
33	[KNC] Studying to succeed economically	
1	[KNC] Acquiring knowledge that makes me more competitive	
25	[KNC] Getting preparation to be a professional leader	
13	[KNC] Obtaining a university degree to get a better job	

As Figure 1 demonstrates, the instrument also included two paperboards for students to glue their sorts onto, with a scale ranging from of a negative value of -4 to a positive value of +4.

Figure 1

Paper Board with Scale



Students were provided with glue-sticks. A brief survey was also attached to the boards to gather participants' demographic data, as well as their feedback on their sorting experience and/or on the Q-set. A record sheet was also added to the instrument for the researchers' use. The components of the instrument, except for the Q-set, were stapled altogether.

Data Collection

All participants were informed, in English, of the purpose of the study. Participants were informed that the set of paper squares contained statements regarding elements of higher education that the literature suggests are key; however, they were not informed that the statements belonged to the six elements. We did this to avoid confusion and interference in the sorting process. Students were instructed about the procedures to rank-order the Q-set and were invited to express any doubt about the procedure at any time during the sorting procedures. We communicated to participants that all written information provided on the different components of the instrument would both remain anonymous and would be destroyed at the completion of the study.

Procedures

All participants were asked to sort the set of statements (Q-set) twice using two different conditions of instruction. The conditions of instruction were given in participants' native languages. The first condition of instruction for all participants was to rank-order the Q-set according to the question, "What elements of my undergraduate education are valuable to me?" To complete the sorts students were asked to first separate the statements into three piles that represented high value, low value, or neutral value. Participants were informed that, due to methodological purposes, any statement that was not understandable to them or any statement that had conflicting values should be placed in the pile of statements that they considered of neutral value.

Participants were then asked to select the two pieces of paper containing the statements that were most valuable to them (from the pile of statements they had presorted as being of a high value) and glue them onto the column with the highest value (+4) of the paper boards. They were informed that the position within the column was not important because any statement in the column would have the same methodological value. Next, they were asked to select the two pieces of paper containing the statements that were least valuable to them (from the pile of statements they had presorted as being of a low value) and glue them onto the column with the lowest value (-4). They were asked to go back and forth to the piles and glue the statements from the outside columns to the center. They were informed that once they ran out of statements on any pile that they could use a statement in the neutral value pile and place it in any column according to their perceived value. They were also informed that they could change the position of

statements among the piles or the columns if they wanted to, even if the statements were already glued onto the board.

After participants glued all statements onto the first board, we requested that they complete a second Q sort. This was done to capture if the higher education values they held for themselves differed from what they perceived were the values of others. Thus, the second condition of instruction for American participants was to rank-order the Q-set according to the question, "What elements of undergraduate education are valuable for American students?" For Arab participants the second condition of instruction was the same, "What elements of undergraduate education are valuable for American students?" Because the Arab participants in this study had firsthand experience both studying in the U. S. and interacting with American students, we asked this question to determine Arab students' views of the value of higher education held by American students. Participants followed the same procedures as they did for the first sort. After completing both sorts, participants were asked to provide anonymous demographic information and their feedback on sorting and/or on the Q-set.

Data Analysis

PQMethod was used to perform the Q methodological analysis of data. PQMethod is an access-free software widely used in Q methodology studies (available from http://schmolck.userweb.mwn.de/qmethod/). A first-order factor analysis was conducted for the 30 sorts for both groups to determine if participants in each group held more than one view of the AMRU. This meant: (1) creating a PQMethod project for each group, (2) entering the 30 sorts of each group in each project, (3) performing a principal components factor analysis and a Varimax rotation for each group, and (4) performing a final z-score calculation of the rotated factors. A three-factor solution resulted for each group indicating that participants in each group had three different views of the AMRU. A threshold of 0.45 significance (when rounded to two digits) was observed to flag manually the defining sorts for all nine views. These three factors are represented respectively for American and Arab students in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2

Values of Higher Education for Self and Others Held by American Undergraduate Students

Factors				
Q Sort	**1**	**2**	**3**	
1 AU_1	0.6480X	0.0968	0.4066	
16 AU_1_2	0.1930	-0.0064	0.6567X	
2 AU_2	0.2841	0.7318X	-0.0979	
17 AU_2_2	0.2930	0.7458X	-0.0577	Exemplar
3 AU_3	0.3765	0.2827	0.5235X	
18 AU_3_2	0.3519	0.1449	0.6941X	
4 AU_4	0.3886	0.3765	0.0480	
19 AU_4_2	-0.0864	0.6841X	-0.0689	
5 AU_5	0.5127X	0.1619	0.4223	
20 AU_5_2	0.1799	0.3746	0.4494	
6 AU_6	0.6700	0.0167	0.5284	
21 AU_6_2	0.5594	-0.1340	0.6845	
7 AU_7	0.6711X	0.2486	0.1304	
22 AU_7_2	-0.1118	0.2572	0.7321X	Exemplar
8 AU_8	0.7857X	0.1505	0.0749	Exemplar
23 AU_8_2	0.7324X	0.3806	-0.1542	
9 AU_9	0.5894X	0.2765	0.1465	
24 AU_9_2	0.1743	-0.1131	0.6907X	
10 AU_10	0.4419	0.7064X	-0.0611	
25 AU_10_2	0.1988	0.6486X	0.2005	
11 AU_11	0.0391	0.5592X	0.1773	
26 AU_11_2	0.0144	0.6673X	0.2266	
12 AU_12	0.4134	0.4220	0.5058X	
27 AU_12_2	0.2042	0.4777X	0.4074	
13 AU_13	0.6177X	-0.0595	0.2712	
28 AU_13_2	-0.0528	0.1134	0.6562X	
14 AU_14	0.4936	0.2626	0.4584	
29 AU_14_2	0.2780	-0.0402	0.6897X	
15 AU_15	0.5784	-0.0082	0.5090	
30 AU_15_2	0.7133X	0.2808	0.2557	
% Expl. Var.	**20**	**15**	**19**	
# Defining Sorts	**8**	**8**	**8**	

Table 3

Values of Higher Education for Self and Others Held by Arab Undergraduate Students

Factors				
Q Sort	**1**	**2**	**3**	
1 AR-1	0.0505	0.0313	0.7710X	
16 AR-1-2	0.5714	0.4512	0.2418	
2 AR-2	0.4378	0.1329	0.5178X	
17 AR-2-2	0.0526	0.7516X	-0.1681	
3 AR-4	0.3337	0.3201	0.6050X	
18 AR-4-2	0.4542X	-0.3527	0.1747	
4 AR-6	0.6763X	0.0301	-0.0453	
19 AR-6-2	0.0648	0.6249X	-0.1150	
5 AR-7	0.6446X	-0.0861	-0.0958	
20 AR-7-2	0.3558	0.4853X	-0.3071	
6 AR-10	0.7544X	-0.2377	0.1424	
21 AR-10-2	0.1018	0.6734X	0.1864	
7 AR-12	0.4055	-0.2228	0.6479X	
22 AR-12-2	0.0633	-0.1489	0.8592X	Exemplar
8 AR-13	0.5263X	0.1396	0.4185	
23 AR-13-2	-0.4744	0.6054	-0.0555	
9 AR-14	0.6235X	0.0660	0.2505	
24 AR-14-2	0.4767X	0.4384	0.1558	
10 AR-15	0.6409X	-0.3000	0.1648	
25 AR-15-2	-0.1747	0.6929X	0.0238	Exemplar
11 AR-17	0.8174X	-0.0651	0.2376	
26 AR-17-2	0.5325X	0.1232	0.1430	
12 AR-18	0.7704X	-0.2262	-0.0043	Exemplar
27 AR-18-2	0.0751	0.2688	-0.0536	
13 AR-20	0.6006	-0.3288	0.4877	
28 AR-20-2	0.5354X	0.3825	0.1093	
14 AR-21	0.6693X	0.2107	0.1563	
29 AR-21-2	0.5701	0.5142	-0.0528	
15 AR-23	0.4231	-0.6351X	0.1432	
30 AR-23-2	-0.0449	0.6793X	0.1446	
% Expl. Var.	**24**	**17**	**10**	
# Defining Sorts	**14**	**8**	**3**	

Tables 4 and 5 highlight the correlation between factors for both groups.

Table 4

Correlation between Factors for American Students

Factors	1	2	3
1	1.0000		
2	0.4947	1.0000	
3	0.4716	0.2789	1.0000

Table 5

Correlation between Factors for Arab Students

Factors	1	2	3
1	1.0000		
2	0.2468	1.0000	
3	0.4684	0.3391	1.0000

Correlations between factors 1 and 2, and 1 and 3 of the American students, were fairly high at 0.4947 and 0.4716 respectively. Such strong correlations may be explained in part by the number of consensus statements that are discussed in subsequent sections. A high correlation suggested at first that a homogeneous view among American students did exist. However, the low correlation between factors 2 and 3, and a deeper analysis of individual factors, suggested that American participants indeed held both strong and subtly different views. Correlation between factors 1 and 3 of Arab students was fairly high at 0.4684, also suggesting some degree of a shared view among some Arab participants. However, the fairly low correlation between factors 1 and 2, and 2 and 3, and a deeper analysis of individual factors, also suggested that Arab participants also held both strong and subtly distinct views at the time the study was conducted.

Factor arrays, distinguishing statements, consensus statements, statements' array positions, and z-scores were all used to interpret the views and values that participants held at the time the study was conducted. Factors were then named and characterized. The interpretation of the factors and their characterization is presented and discussed in subsequent sections.

FINDINGS

Two groups of fifteen undergraduate students participated in the study (30 sorts). Each group of participants (American and Arab undergraduate students) sorted statements belonging to elements of the AMRU twice, resulting in 30 sorts for each group and a total of 60 sorts. For both groups, statistical loading charts showed that three factors were statistically significant in each group. Of the 30 sorts produced by the American group of undergraduate students, 24 sorts were defining and six were confounded at the 0.45 significance threshold. Eight defining sorts were loaded on each of the three factors. This means that these three factors were statistically significant and that they were almost equally strong. Of the 30 sorts produced by the Arab group of undergraduate students, 23 sorts were defining and 7 were confounded. Seven sorts were loaded on factor 1, and an equal number of 8 sorts were loaded on factor 2 and factor 3. Analysis of the distributed sorting loads also indicated that the three factors identified by Arab students were statistically significant and reflected views that were almost equally strong.

Our focus was on analyzing and understanding all views of both groups of participants, as manifested by the factors particular to each group. Although the focus was on understanding positive and negative values, neutral views or views that had zero value on the array charts were also considered. It is worth noting, however, that neutrality toward certain statements could be attributed to a lack of understanding or the clarity of these statements.

The analysis of factors' arrays and statements' positions in the arrays indicated that students in both groups held clearly defined views of what is most valuable for them in their academic experiences as undergraduate students studying in American higher education institutions. Further analysis of factors' distinguishing statements and consensus statements among factors helped to characterize and to name each

view in accordance to their value orientation. Three defining viewpoints characterized the participants in each group as follows:

American Undergraduate Students

The Market-Oriented

Students of this group of participants are best described as the competitors. They assigned significantly high positive values to all statements related to the core element of understanding knowledge as national capital. In addition, they were in favor of the autonomy and decentralization of higher education. However, they placed negative or neutral values on the use of English as lingua franca. Also, they did not care much about either learning or producing research or the flexibility of programs and the stratification of institutions. In addition, they were significantly neutral about the structuring of the academic programs that might or might not follow the traditional 3-tier academic system.

The Planners

Unlike the previous factor, this group of American students positively valued preparation that might lead to further education, as exemplified in statements related to the core element of the structure of academic programs and the realization of knowledge as national capital that might help them get a better job. However, the array position of statements related to the core AMRU elements (the use of English as a lingua franca, the promotion of autonomy and decentralization of higher education, and flexibility of curriculum and growing stratification of programs/institutions) showed that these three elements had more of a negative value for this group of students. The array position of statements and *z*-scores related to the integration of research into higher education highlighted that these students are particularly neutral about this core element.

The Pragmatic

This group of American students held a view that seemed contrary to that of the planners and an extreme version of the market-oriented group. These students decisively placed all statements related to the understanding of knowledge of as national capital in array positions with the highest positive value, and therefore having the highest *z*-scores. Also, they assigned negative values to statements related to the integration of research into higher education. They were seemingly either undecided or neutral about the remaining core elements of the AMRU.

Arab Undergraduate Students

The Investors

This group of students placed positive value on three core elements of the AMRU: understanding of knowledge as national capital, the use of English as lingua franca, and flexibility of curriculum and growing stratification of programs/institutions. On the other hand, they placed low negative value on the elements of structuring academic programs in three tiers and the integration of research into higher education. However, they placed zero value on the element of the promotion of autonomy and decentralization of higher education.

The Creators

Participants in this factor highly valued the core AMRU element of understanding knowledge as national capital. They also positively valued the integration of research into higher education. However, they negatively valued the use of English as lingua franca, the structuring academic programs in three tiers, and the flexibility of curriculum and growing stratification of programs/institutions. In addition, just like the previous group, this group of Arab students felt neutral regarding the promotion of autonomy and decentralization of higher education.

The Progressives

In addition to valuing and understanding knowledge as national capital, this group of participants was particularly attracted to the traditional 3-tier structure of academic programs. However, they negatively valued the integration of research into higher education and the flexibility of curriculum and growing stratification of programs/institutions. Similar to those in the two previous groups, these students negatively valued flexibility of curriculum and growing stratification of programs/institutions and the integration of research into higher education. Their views regarding the use of English as lingua franca and the promotion of autonomy and decentralization of higher education were seemingly neutral.

Distinguishing Statements

Data analysis revealed statistically significant distinguishing statements for each factor of the two groups of students sampled for this study. Distinguishing statements were especially important to consider because they highlighted the domains, or the degree of a given domain, to which participants in a factor were distinct from participants in other factors. Coincidently, these statements had statistically significant z-scores.

American Students

Distinguishing Statements for the Market-Oriented Group. Because these students were primarily concerned with obtaining better jobs they placed a high value on developing learning and leadership skills that prepare them to work independently. They highly valued academic and institutional flexibility that facilitate their end goals. They were definitely not in college for the sake of academic work. Therefore, research and publishing were not their interest They were in school in search of instruction. They were not concerned with the type or ranking of the institution from which they obtain their degree from, so long as they get the degree. They wanted to obtain their degree with the least bureaucratic and legal complications. Graduate education for them seemed of neutral value.

Distinguishing Statements for the Planners Group. Students in this factor strongly valued having a graduate degree and developing independent learning. Because they were considering and preparing for future opportunities, they cared about the structure of the higher education system. They were interested in academic work and therefore wanted to see research integrated into higher education. They also encouraged some level of autonomy. Unlike the previous group, and because they valued education as a means for academic training, they were not bothered by processed dominated by institutional bureaucracy and legal regulations.

Distinguishing Statements for the Pragmatic Group. Students in this group significantly valued obtaining a university degree to get a better job. Therefore, they were studying to be more successful economically. To them, education meant acquiring knowledge that makes them more competitive. For this reason, they were inclined to learning and creating new knowledge in class. However, they were not concerned with publishing research studies, conducting research in class, or improving research skills. Success for this group was measured by the economic status a degree can offer rather than by pursuing academic publication.

Arab Students

Distinguishing Statements for the Investors Group. Students in this factor strongly desired global employability. Therefore, it was important to them to study material in English and to use English as lingua franca. Mobility was thus a key factor that they considered when choosing a higher education program. They looked for flexibility in the structure and format of the classes and programs. They were part of a growing segment of students who are globally focused. They saw value in a universally recognized 3-tier system of higher education and the ranking of universities. In addition, this group realized that adequate training in research was an essential skill for global employability.

Distinguishing Statements for the Creators Group. This group was different from the other two groups of Arab students particularly with regard to the integration of research into higher education. They valued creating new knowledge. Therefore, improving their research skills, taking classes that integrate theory, research and practice, and publishing research studies were viewed as critical attributes of education that could prepare them to be knowledge creators. They viewed the bachelor-master-doctorate sequence of higher education as a viable structure of education. To them knowledge was universal, and so it was important that they improve their language skills, study, and produce knowledge in English.

Distinguishing Statements for the Progressives Group. Postsecondary education, for this group, was highly valued as national and personal capital. Therefore, rigorous education and acquiring language skills were viewed as important for positioning within competitive workforces. However, the structure of the educational system and observing the traditional bachelor-master-doctorate sequence was not

necessarily of concern. Here, a flexible educational system was perceived as an attribution that facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and language skills.

Consensus Statements for American and Arab Students

Consensus statements highlight the statements with which the students most agreed; they reflect shared similar values and views.

American Students

Consensus Statements for All Groups. Data analysis revealed that American students shared similar views about statements that emphasized preparation to become autonomous, studying more than four years at a university, conducting multidisciplinary work, publishing in English, and taking courses without prerequisites.

Arab Students

Consensus Statements for All Groups. Agreement among Arab students clearly focused on obtaining a university degree to get a better job, studying to succeed economically, learning new knowledge in class, preparation to become a professional leader, preparation to become autonomous, conducting multidisciplinary work, publishing in English, completing administrative processes easily, and studying a program that has minimal legal regulations.

Because we are more concerned here with the cultural representation of each group, consensus statements for the two groups are examined below in reference to Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Analysis indicates that significant differences exist in students' perceptions, both within and among the groups of participants and the aggregate of all participants. The results reported above emphasize collective perceptions, which correspond to the purpose of this study to examine Arab and American students' views of the AMRE and to compare and contrast their views.

The results reveal that students view the AMRU as educationally enlightening. A majority of participants perceive the model as holistic. However, examining the data through Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory highlights the distinctive perspectives of the groups with regard to four elements of the AMRU, namely, the structure of academic programs, the promotion of autonomy, the flexibility of curricula, and the recognition of knowledge as national capital.

The results also reveal that participants perceive that students in general value higher knowledge as national capital and for its promotion of autonomy and decentralization, the flexibility of curricula, and the stratification of programs and institutions. Cultural differences between the two groups of students—with regard to power distance, individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation—dominate how students view elements of the AMRU. Subsequent paragraphs examine these dimensions. Within these four dimensions the views include: taking courses without prerequisites, completing administrative processes easily, getting a degree without government intervention, studying a flexible university program, acquiring knowledge to be competitive, gaining preparation to be autonomous, obtaining a university degree to secure a better job, studying to succeed economically, gaining preparation to be a professional leader, and improving English proficiency. However, data reflect no significant values for the two cultural dimensions of masculinity/femininity and indulgence/restraint.

Power Distance

This is one of the original dimensions of the theory and the most prominent cultural dimension when examining the impact of culture on any group of people. As previously defined, power distance indicates the extent to which the less powerful members of a culture accept the unequal distribution of power within a given culture. According to Hofstede (2017), the American culture scores low on power distance; the culture promotes the belief that every person is unique. However, power is perceived as the individual's power to influence others. Accordingly, there is tolerance for attempts to challenge power by those who are at the bottom of the perceived hierarchy. In contrast, Arab cultures score high in this dimension, indicating that individuals expect and accept that power is distributed unequally because individuals are inherently unequal. Within the culture members follow a centralized system in which

decisions are typically made at the top of the hierarchy; the perception is that these decisions should not be discussed or opposed.

The power distance cultural dimension is prominent when comparing and contrasting the views of the two groups of participants in this study. For example, American students highly value the promotion of autonomy and the decentralization of higher education. Specifically, they value American higher education because they perceive it as preparing them to become autonomous. In contrast, Arab students in the study seem apprehensive about terms such as "authority," "administration," and "legal regulations," perhaps because these terms reflect power-related considerations that should not be challenged. Thus studying at a higher education system that promotes autonomy and decentralization is of a neutral or negative value for them.

Uncertainty Avoidance

This cultural dimension refers to the intolerance that members of a culture demonstrate for unusual and unexpected situations. It also refers to the perceived ability to control events in the future. Not surprisingly, cultural practices and reactions regarding avoidance of ambiguous and unknown situations differ from culture to culture. According to Hofstede (2017), American culture scores below average on the uncertainty avoidance dimension; the culture promotes accepting and embracing new ideas. We consequently see that American students prefer a higher education system where they can experience fewer rules. There is a consensus among the members of this group that highly values an educational system that allows students the flexibility to conduct multidisciplinary work and to take courses without prerequisites. Counter to American culture, Arab culture scores high on Hofstede's scale of uncertainty avoidance; individuals from this culture may be intolerant of unorthodox ideas or ways of doing things. Consequently, Arab students in this study demonstrate a clear preference for traditional and structured educational systems in which sharp distinctions between academic disciplines exist.

Individualism vs. Collectivism

This cultural dimension refers both to the degree of integration and to the sense of belonging within groups in society. It also refers to the degree of independence individuals of a certain culture enjoy. In this dimension, American culture ranks at the top of individualism, allowing members of this culture the maximum freedom to pursue individual rather the group needs. "I" is more dominant in American discourse than "we." On the other hand, Arab cultures score at the top of collectivism in that individuals provide unquestionable loyalty to the group, tribe, or sect to which they belong. Arab societies are highly collective societies in nature. Therefore, the good of the group overrides individual needs and priorities. This is resoundingly manifested in this study through a wide consensus among Arab students regarding the view of education, and thus individual betterment, as an individual contribution to national [group] capital.

Long-Term Orientation vs. Short-Term Orientation

This dimension contrasts perseverance with respect for tradition and social obligations; it is thus related to the previous dimension that compares individualism vs. collectivism. The focus of the dimension is on the ways in which cultures honor the past and face the challenges of the present and the future. Both American and Arab cultures score below average in this dimension Hofstede (2017). Although they demonstrate respect for tradition, both cultures endeavor to achieve quick results. In this study, both groups of students expressed long-term orientation with their own cultures by emphasizing what is culturally acceptable. For example, American students value the independence of the individual and the willingness to embrace untraditional ideas, whereas Arab students perceive individual success as a contribution to the success of the group.

Interestingly, comparing the consensus statements from the two groups highlights that both American and Arab students highly and positively value obtaining a degree from an American research university because they perceive it as a means to better jobs. Conversely, most students sampled in this study do not place high value on doing research and publishing. This certainly could be attributed to the fact that all participants were pursuing undergraduate education at the time the study was conducted.

In conclusion, this exploratory study highlights the importance of international and domestic undergraduate student perceptions of the American model of the research university. Focusing on two initial groups of students from the Arab Gulf and the United States, this research study is the first of its kind and,

as such, establishes a baseline for ongoing expansion of the line of inquiry. Exploratory in nature, the study only controlled for type of university, namely, the research university. Future studies may focus on other classifications of higher education institutions. In addition, considerations such as age, gender, disciplinary differences, or other demographics may be controlled. The massive impact of the 2020 pandemic on higher education institutions operating in the United States is expected to be devastating. Some universities will survive these difficult times, but many other are expected to cease. Now it is the time for institutions to rethink of ways to cater and recruit international students from the Arab region that have always provided a considerable portion of revenue. Given growing efforts across the globe to either adopt or adapt the American model of the research university as a means to strengthen national higher education systems and to compete within the global knowledge economy, understanding the perceptions of students educated or influenced by the model is an important addition to the literature that may inform higher education administration and public policy. Hence, this study may contribute to the emerging conceptualization of the research university model that is currently widely emulated around the world. In addition, understanding the perceptions of an important population of international students studying in American higher education institutions, such as Arab Gulf students, may be of value for university administrators when they endeavor to host students from this region.

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Chinese Graduate Students' Narratives and Sociolinguistic Advice on Intercultural Communication at Southern U.S. Universities

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ABSTRACT

Although intercultural communication competence can be developed through cross-cultural experiences and dialogues (Jin, Cooper & Golding, 2016) and involving interactions (Rodenborg & Boisen, 2013), studies show that Chinese graduate students considered advanced English speakers continuously report difficulties in engaging in "intercultural communication" with Native English Speakers (NESs) in the U.S. (e.g., Gareis, 2012; Xiao & Petraki, 2007). Drawn upon co-cultural theory, the narrative-research-design study utilizing 17 scenario-hypothesized interviews reveals the experiences of eight Chinese advanced-ESL graduate students as they describe sociolinguistic struggles and cultural variations in verbal communication with the dominant linguistic group-NESs on their campuses. Four main instructive themes emerged. Specifically, participants felt misunderstood when NESs failed to understand that Chinese students' words were not literal or that their selfless words were self-centered decisions; and they insisted that truly effective intercultural communication would require effort from both sides on their host campuses. Through this underrepresented group's narratives, I outline recommendations for developing intercultural communication competencies for higher education institutions.

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Keywords: advanced NESs, Chinese international graduate students, co-cultural theory, ESL, intercultural communication, narrative research, sociolinguistics

INTRODUCTION

Human beings usually subjectively interpret and experience the world in ways based in their core cultural values (the immersive norms of communication and social order in their cultures of origin). When different groups come into contact, many of the breakdowns in their communication can result from the clash in their culturally imbued speech and thought patterns (Ahour & Mukundan, 2012; Jing, Tindall, & Nisbet, 2006; Zhu, 2010). And when these interactions occur on one group's "turf," the intercultural dialog is suffused with a power relation: Native English Speakers (NESs) have the advantage over their Non-Native English Speaker (NNES) communication partners. Cummins' (2000) definition of coercive relations of power is useful here: "the exercise of power by a dominant individual, group, or country to the detriment of a subordinated individual, group, or country" (p. 44). Thus when NESs naturalize their communication advantages and refuse to acknowledge the impacts of sociolinguistic identity and power in intercultural exchanges, NNESs' sociolinguistic capabilities and even their cultural identity may be devalued to their detriment.

International students on U.S. campuses provide a ready group of informants. Of the more than one million international students in the United States in 2019-2020, nearly 37 percent were Chinese (i.e., from China or Taiwan; IIE, Open Doors 2020). Yet studies show that even Chinese students considered advanced English speakers report difficulties in engaging in "intercultural communication" in the U.S. (e.g., Gareis, 2012; Xiao & Petraki, 2007). Given that one study using a sample of 450 East Asian international students found that half reported having no close U.S. friendships (the sample of students from English-speaking countries reported three or more close U.S. friendships), it is intuitive to ask whether Chinese students' reported lack of intercultural communication skills with NESs is a potential cause of their relative social isolation (Gareis, 2012).

Researchers (e.g., Banks, 2015; Hofstede, 2011; Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2019) have put considerable energy into exploring intercultural communication, particularly with respect to increasing globalization and parallel increases in attention to the values of cultural sensitivity and multiculturalism. Still, most have focused on intercultural features and experiences, rather than communication partners' sociolinguistic narratives. Thus, along with documenting their sociolinguistic difficulties in this regard, the present study aims to engage with the lived experience of Chinese advanced ESL graduate students and suggest that NESs and U.S. institutions of higher education must attend to those experiences if they hope to strengthen cultural awareness and further develop the intercultural communication competencies considered so paramount in a connected world. Notably, these students have already gone through the so-called adaptive journey of living and learning abroad, transforming from true cultural outsiders to "welcome guest" or even "at home" identities in the U.S. (Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013) and they are willing to communicate effectively with others (Dervin & Dirba, 2006), still they struggle with intercultural misinterpretations and communication breakdowns (Chang, 2009; Yu, 2005).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communicative Features in Collectivism and Individualism

Individualism highlights autonomy, self-esteem, and self-reliance; collectivism represents a self-effacing orientation in which praise, validation, and in-group belonging are earned by obeying group norms and goals. Further, collectivist communicators privilege other people's feelings and avoiding "losing face" (Kim, 1994; Kim & Wilson, 1994; cited in Gudykunst & Lee, 2003). Speaking proverbially, researchers occasionally boil these down to a pair of "truisms": in individualist cultures, "the squeaky wheel gets the grease," while in collectivist cultures, it is said that "the nail that stands out gets pounded down" (Gudykunst

& Lee, 2003, p. 11; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 234). Thus, in communication, we see that individualists will confidently engage in direct requests, justifying these as the most clear and effective ways to achieve a goal, while collectivists tend toward indirect requests aimed at preserving the relationship between the communicating parties (Toomey, Dorjee, & Ting-Toomey, 2013).

High- versus Low-Context Communication

Recall that studies characterize communication in western, individualist cultures as "low-context." Low-context communication involves making intentions and desires explicit, bypassing socially palliative small talk in the pursuit of a goal. Americans, for example, often use clear subjects and strong verbal indications of their desires when they speak, frequently starting off with "I want" or "I need" (Okabe, 1983). In contrast, high-context cultural communication may forego a subject entirely, declining to indicate the individual self, and employ flexible qualifiers such as perhaps, maybe, and probably throughout the discourse process (Okabe, 1983). Chinese people, then, are observed communicated with interlocutors in either "physical" or "internalized" context (Hall, 1976 p. 79) which presents implicit messages and implied intentions in communication for group harmony.

Again, previous research hints that intercultural miscommunication is likely when people from low- and high-context cultures meet. In fact, high-context communicators may feel frustration with the indirect style of low-context communicators, and low-context communicators can feel insulted by or uncomfortable with the direct strategies of their high-context peers. First-person accounts will round out the social scientific understanding of these communicative pitfalls.

Self-Disclosure in Individualistic and Collectivistic Cultures

Self-disclosure, in which a person expresses and builds self-esteem by discussing their own accomplishments, is framed in individualist cultures as confident behavior, while in collectivist cultures, this can look more like distasteful bragging. Mindful of the "nail that stands out," collectivists are far more inclined to adopt humble and self-effacing attitudes as a means of maintaining group harmony. Because the moderation taught by Confucianism is a salient feature in East Asian culture, self-disclosures in international communications could yield cultural conflicts that negatively impact East Asians living in western cultures (Hofstede & Bond, 1987; Yum, 1988). When Chinese ESL speakers are challenged to defend their individual rights and legitimacy in English-speaking countries, they can experience a painful inner conflict between their inclination to save others' face (a collectivist impulse) and the low-context exhortation to make their own desires plain (as individualist NESs do).

An important caveat, researchers note (Cho, 2010; French et al., 2006), is that people in collectivist cultures actually demonstrate higher levels of self-disclosure than do Americans, provided they are speaking with in-group members like immediate family and close friends. This indicates that in collectivistic cultures, self-disclosure is not verboten. The level of self-disclosure simply depends on the relationship between the speaker and interlocutor. Researchers have attributed this difference to a collectivistic tendency to treat in-groups and out-groups as distinct categories featuring different standards and attitudes (Gudykunst & Lee, 2003) and an opposing, individualistic tendency to "be universalistic and apply the same value standards to everyone," whether in- or out-groups (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 2002, p. 27).

As such, Chinese ESL speakers tend to share more intimate information privately with their close family and friends, while NESs maintain similar social distance and level of disclosure with everyone. With respect to cross-cultural interactions between Chinese ESL speakers and NESs, close friendships appear to face some roadblocks. How, for instance, could a Chinese ESL speaker make sense of their NES friend sharing private information with anyone and everyone, rather than establishing a special, more intimate in-group relationship that reserves certain self-disclosures for close friends only? More research needs to examine Chinese ESL speakers' intercultural perceptions of and difficulties around self-disclosure, should we intend to address specific intercultural communication issues, such as East Asian students' social isolation on U.S. campuses.

Other Key Cultural Dimensions

Though the contrasts set out above are the most widely studied, researchers comparing collectivist and individualist cultural dimensions have identified many other divergences. Among them is called power distance. In high power distance countries such as China and Taiwan, strict and steep hierarchy structures mean that those at the top have enormous power and those at the bottom very little (hence, a high power difference); in low power distance countries such as the United States, values like equality, democratic principles, and meritocracy urge a lower degree of power differences (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010). High power distance cultures admire, respect, and defer to powerful others while in low power distance cultures, unequal power demands may be great offense. Chinese international students often experience struggles adjusting to equal power relationships with seniors and authorities in the United States.

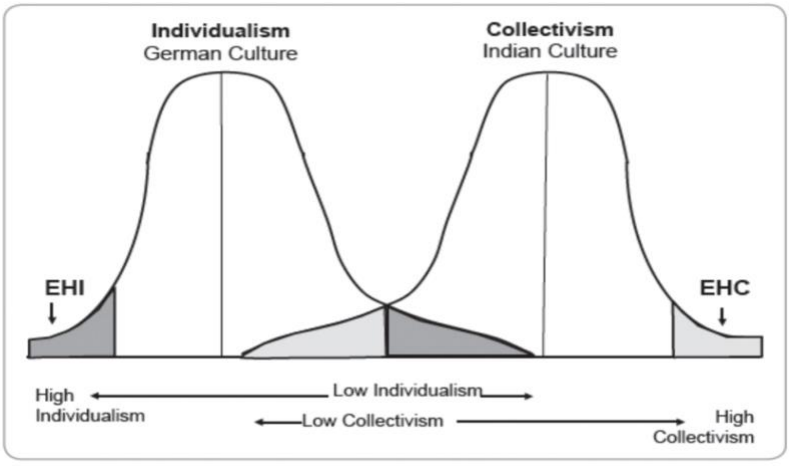
Warning of Categorizations and Complex Central Value Tendencies

While the aforementioned contrastive sociolinguistics approaches by comparing sociolinguistic accuracy between two cultures help us make sense of the ways Chinese international graduate students and NESs communicate in the U.S. university campus environment, the dichotomy approach or simple categorizations cannot accurately interpret intercultural communication due to the nature of its enculturation, dynamic, and complexity (e.g., Dervin 2012, 2016; Holliday 2012, 2019). Figure 1 below (adapted from Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2019, p. 165) presents the central value tendencies of two comparative cultures, Germany (on the left) and India (on the right). In general, Germans are highly individualistic while Indians are highly collectivistic. Each contains its own variations. Some outlier Germans are noted as highly individualistic or not at all individualistic; because of unique cultural encounters and experience, some Germans may even become collectivistic over time. Cultural value tendencies can also vary by sociocultural region, socioeconomic status, and the cultural and linguistic diversity of populations sharing geographic space.

Thanks to globalization, scholars confirm, intercultural interaction is on the rise, whether through social media contacts or even in experiences living or moving abroad, and results in many individuals' personal assimilation or adaptation to cultures different from their own. For these reasons, Holliday (2011) emphasizes that "we must not indulge in essentialist Othering. We must not consider people's individual behaviour to be entirely defined and constrained by the cultures in which they live so that the stereotype becomes the essence of who they are" (p. 15). Acknowledging the dynamism of cultural value tendencies not only avoids essentializing individual people, it is also critical if we are to bridge communication gaps and forge intercultural connections.

Figure 1

Central Value Tendencies of Two Comparative Cultures. EHI, Extreme High Individualism; EHC, Extreme High Collectivism



Note: Retrieved from Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2019, p. 165.

Intercultural Communication and Co-cultural Theory

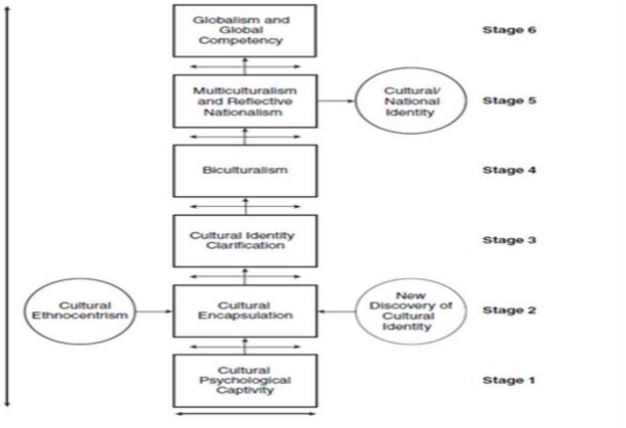
Intercultural communication heavily discusses how culture affects communication, generally at the level of interpersonal interaction between individuals and groups from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Exchanging information in verbal and/or nonverbal ways across such differences is most effective when all parties understand and value cultural differences. But as Hinnenkamp (2009) writes, "intercultural communication is about the confrontation of one language-culture link with another. Specifically, it is human beings bearing the whole burden of culture-in-communicating as individuals, who meet, converse, talk, have conflicts, struggle" (p. 186). Similarly, Chick (1990) regards intercultural communication as a kind of uncomfortable interaction in which the speakers' divergent socio-cultural backgrounds and norm systems risk poor outcomes. When NESs communicate with advanced NNESs, the lack of a true language barrier can be misleading: even when both parties are speaking the same language, in other words, intercultural gaps can still produce misunderstandings (Hinnenkamp, 2009) and inequity (Dervin, 2011). Co-cultural theory specifically examines how underrepresented group members communicate with a dominant group (Orbe & Roberts, 2012). In order to explain communication outcomes, co-cultural theory looks into personal factors such as preferred identity outcomes (assimilation, accommodation, and separation), communication approaches (nonassertive, assertive, and aggressive), past interaction experiences, situational context, and ability to communicate as well.

Stages of Cultural Identity

Banks (2015) further pointed out the six development stages of cultural identity, including Stage 1: Cultural Psychological Captivity (acknowledging feelings of a self-cultural group), Stage 2: Cultural Encapsulation (Recognizing self-cultural identity), Stage 3: Cultural Identity Clarification, Stage 4: Biculturalism (Understanding cultural identities of self and other groups), Stage 5: Multiculturalism and Reflective Nationalism (developing cultural literacy over knowledge of many global cultural groups), and Stage 6: Globalism and Global Competency (developing a global identity based on social justice and equity). He suggested level-appropriate curricula to enhance learners' cultural identify proficiency. The figure 2 shows the cultural identity typology; the development from Stage 1 to Stage 6 is dynamic and "in a zigzag pattern" (Banks, 2015) and within each stage, individuals' characteristics vary. The type of Chinese international graduate students such as participants in this study often falls between Stage 4 and Stage 5. To improve our intercultural competence, Dervin (2020) stresses exercising a critical and reflective approach to examine our own perspective towards intercultural communication and we should not assume that "our models are THE right models" (p. 58). It is crucial to see how international students see their "model," and how they exercise a critical and reflective approach, if any, to develop their cultural identity and intercultural communicative competencies.

Figure 2

The Stages of Cultural Identity: A Typology



(Retrieved from Banks, 2015)

METHODOLOGY

Hofstede's macro, large-scale, quantitative approach provides generalized cultural dimensions along which to interpret cultural value differences across world countries. To dig deeper, I adopt a qualitative narrative research methodology in this study of Chinese advanced ESL graduate students' intercultural sociolinguistic difficulties in their communication with NESs (Lincoln & Guba, 2003; Quinn, 2005). Among research methods, the narrative research design, which aims to reveal participants' experiences, life stories, and inner thoughts, is best suited to conducting thorough and rich inquiries that allow respondents to articulate and structure their stories and, along the way, reveal their communication tendencies rather than the researcher's (Smith, 2000; Veroff, et al., 1993). Narrative research entails systematically investigating selected participants, analyzing their responses/stories to uniform prompts, and enriching the scholarly understanding of that group's worldviews and values (Webster & Mertova, 2007). By contrast, a case study aims to "illustrate an issue and the research compiles a detailed description of the setting" for the cases (Creswell, 2018, p. 103), so it may not fulfill the purpose of the study.

The guiding research questions used in this study as prompts for Chinese advanced ESL graduate students are: *What cultural values do Chinese ESL speakers use when they communicate with NESs? What intercultural perceptions do Chinese ESL speakers hold when they communicate with NESs?* and *What intercultural challenges do Chinese ESL speakers experience when they communicate with NESs?* All scenario-hypothesized and open-ended questions for the interviews are designed from the literature review.

Participants

Eight participants, three doctoral and five master's degree students with an average age of 27 years old, were conveniently or purposively recruited from universities in the United States. All are native Mandarin speakers with an average TOEFL iBT score 82. They all majored in engineering, communication, and/or education and met sampling criteria including graduate enrollment at the participating university, at least six months' U.S. residency, and an average of at least five hours spent conversing with NESs each week (their total average weekly conversation hours tallied to 28). Each of the three male and five female respondents are given pseudonyms for the duration of this paper (Participant 1=Andrew; P2=Bailey; P3=Connor; P4=Debby; P5=Erick; P6=Farah; P7=Georgina; P8=Helen).

Data Collection and Analysis

In-depth and saturation data were gathered through 17 scenario-hypothesized, guiding, and open-ended-question interviews, including 16 individual interviews (two with each participant) and one focus-group interview. To faithfully present their voice and lived stories participants perceived, a second round of the one-on-one individual interviews provides every participant a chance to elaborate inconsistency, ambiguity, or missing pieces to connect the dots among their stories. Beyond the foundational "predetermined questions" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. vii), "responsive interviewing design is flexible and adaptive" allowing the researcher to "find out more about the research questions" through follow-ups and requests to elaborate (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 36). Then, to supplement the individual interviews, I engaged all of the participants in the focus-group interview to provide an opportunity for interaction which, given the topic of communication, often "yield[s] the best information" (Creswell, 2012, p. 164). As the researcher, I served as an objective listener, flexible moderator, and persuasive facilitator, engaging every participant in the focus-group discussion and ensuring that each expressed their voice (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Sheḳedi; 2005).

In social science, there are no uniform, prescribed particular methodologies for the analysis of narrative data (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilbert, 1998). My approach here is two-pronged. First, I conducted a collective analysis, seeking holistic themes across stories (Shekedi, 2005). Then, following Bryman's coding system (Gibbs, 2011), I systematically sorted my data into contextual units, linking codes and indexed themes with my research questions and relevant theories from the extant literature. In order to further strengthen the coding results, I conducted a cross-comparison, using each single-participant dataset to question and confirm the representative notions I had drawn from my collective analysis across participants (Shekedi, 2005).

Language being crucial for this study, I ensured that participants' language choice was honored in conducting our interview, in the verbatim transcription of interview data, and in seeking translation verification and member checking for data validity. With respect to the confirmation of investigator triangulation, I invited the assessment of two fluently bilingual (English and Mandarin) professors with expertise in multicultural education. They concluded that the triangulation of data analysis reached inter-coders' acceptable agreement levels (Schamber, 2000), exceeding the minimal standard of 80% agreement (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Researcher bias, in this study as in any other, is potentially limiting factor, as it can distort interview data. I am a Chinese American who had the similar study background as the interviewees. The ethnic background and academic training and specialization in intercultural communication allowed me to understand cultural identities of self and other groups and recognized many possible factors that stimulated interviewees to reflect more and speak willingly and freely but remained in a neutral position. To assure the credibility of my data collection processes and analysis, I worked to establish trust by carefully examining my own positionality and conducting a self-reflection process (Creswell, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

My respondents' narratives about intercultural communication with NESs on American university campuses, after transcription, translation, and data coding, converged on four broad themes. Each theme is stated in this section as a first-person statement from the point of view of the Chinese students, so "our" should be read accordingly.

Theme 1: NESs regarded our literal words as our real thoughts, failing to grasp our inner feelings and affective concerns.

For Chinese people, the saying "silence is golden" encourages thoughtful, indirect expression. Every one of my participants in this study told me that NESs incorrectly assumed the Chinese ESL speakers' words were their literal thoughts, rather than indirect ways to "say less and listen more," be polite, maintain harmony, or avoid appearing self-interested. All of the interviewees *also* agreed on a solution: rather than urge NESs to adapt to their collectivist conversational impulses, the Chinese graduate students urged fellow Chinese ESL speakers to be straightforward and adapt to NESs direct, literal communication style. Georgina explained:

> NESs cannot understand my actual inner feelings. They regard my spoken words as my actual thoughts. However, Chinese ESL speakers say things indirectly and thoughtfully. Chinese ESL speakers should directly express their feelings. For instance, if you are asked whether you want Coke, you should say yes—you may even request adding ice, if that is what you want.

In this way (and noting that this should not be extended to the topic of sexual consent), a Chinese ESL speaker's "no" may mean yes. It may also mean no, in which case that decline may come out of either politeness or truth. For example, Helen told me that she might say no to something initially, but eventually NESs' hospitality and repeated offers could lead her to yield and accept: "I would be polite by saying no the first and second times. I would say yes when asked the third time, probably because the friends were affectionate and sincere in their insistence."

Another reason Chinese ESL speakers' words may not be consistent with their inner thoughts is their cultural, collectivist preferences. "Chinese ESL speakers always say less and listen more," said Helen. "Very often, Chinese ESL speakers' words may not really mean what they really think, because they may be afraid of losing face or being rejected by others." One respondent, Bailey, cringed as she reported, "My Taiwanese friend's boyfriend is a NES. He often argues over the quality of food with sellers, comparing it to similarly priced food elsewhere." Bailey said her Taiwanese friend described her boyfriend's behavior as "very embarrassing" and "she felt like she was losing face" when he asserted his rights as a customer. Bailey implied heavily that a Chinese ESL speaker would not communicate like this man's unseemly directness or blatant regard for money.

Because he believed NESs "cannot read our intentions behind our spoken words," Chinese ESL student Connor said, "I will directly say what I really think and want to them." Still, he added, "this does not work in China, because you are not allowed to directly say what you want." Debby confirmed, saying, "NESs do not think carefully and deeply over your words. They believe what you say and will not try to find out the intentions behind words. Chinese ESL speakers need to communicate with them in a direct way."

In this regard, all of the participants commented that NESs would not think deeply about whether their ESL interlocutors' words held hidden meanings, would not mind if they verbalize their desires and needs, and could not understand their embarrassment with making direct requests. In contrast to Chinese ESL speakers' high-context conversations, my respondents found it simple to talk to NESs, because yes was usually yes and no was usually no. Farah expanded on this point:

> Take a simple example, yes or no answer. In China, when people ask you whether you have eaten, you have to consider their possible intentions. If they want to show you they care, and they receive the message that you did not eat yet, they would try hard to bring you some breakfast. In this case, although you were hungry, you may kindly say, "Yes, I did eat." By contrast, you can just say no… to NES friends. It is very simple to communicate with NESs, because yes is yes and no means no—based on facts.

As indicated, Chinese ESL speakers' cultural values encourage people to be restrained and sincere, so they often think thoroughly, listen to others before talking, speak indirectly, and even say things they don't really mean in order to maintain harmony or avoid showing self-interest. But to avoid miscommunications with NESs, these Chinese ESL speakers suggested they must compromise their own cultural values regarding restrained communication or risk NESs taking their words literally.

Furthermore, Mandarin-Chinese is an ideographic language, in which each character represents an object or idea, whereas English is phonographic, with letter symbols indicating discrete sounds. This core linguistic difference is instructive. Lay (1991) indicates, for instance, that "the Chinese speaker allows the relations between words to be established in the minds of the audience, whereas the English speaker has to make those relations explicit" (p. 45). During intercultural communication with native English speakers, however, it is incumbent upon the Chinese ESL speakers to take pains in order to avoid ambiguity or confusion.

Past researchers (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005) have laid out stages of acculturation (approximately from acquaintance to curiosity; adaptive, negative socialization; to integration or assimilation) and the similar U-curve hypothesis (which predicts four assimilative stages from honeymoon to hostility, humor, and home, see Birrell & Tinney, 2008), each a trajectory toward full immigrant incorporation. Accordingly, ESL speakers in the final stage are assumed to be comfortable in their sense of belonging. Yet, this is not necessarily true in Chinese ESL speakers' cases. Their sociolinguistic struggles on U.S. campuses are concrete evidence that, beyond language, communication styles can prevent them from ever feeling fully understood and comfortable in intracultural exchanges.

Theme 2: NESs considered our selfless words self-centered decisions, so we ought to adapt communication styles and speak our inner feelings.

All of the participants addressed that NESs regarded their selfless words as self-centered decisions. Farah reflected, suggesting that particularly female Chinese ESL speakers are intent on listening to others when making decisions with close friends and family: "They believe that you need to pay careful attention to and figure out what others think and want if you are truly friends or family." Of course, "you may guess incorrectly about what they want, and it takes effort to make your loved ones happy." To her, "This kind of affection is not about individual equality or rights. By contrast, it is much easier to communicate with NESs, because they just say what they want directly."

Georgina agreed and added "NESs think that everyone is independent and should make their own decisions…. Chinese ESL speakers would think deeply about their friends' or family's inner feelings, but NESs focus on what they want." Andrew and Helen used almost the same words—telling me that Chinese people attend to others' "inner feelings"—with Helen adding that because "NESs regard Chinese ESLs' words as their individual and independent decisions," meaning could get lost in translation. Bailey alluded

to this cultural difference in describing a cross-cultural relationship in which a NES professor proudly described "training his [Taiwanese] girlfriend to think independently and make her more like an American."

Realizing this communication barrier, Georgina said she had consciously shifted toward making decisions based on her own desires first: "For instance, my NES boyfriend suggested that I make a decision regarding applying to Ph.D. programs based on my own goals…. Since he makes decisions based on his goals, I chose to plan for my own future based on my best interests." A Chinese ESL speaker might need to become more direct, Erick added, because NESs are not inclined to base their decisions on others' interests:

> If you want something, you have to directly say what you want. In NES culture, people would not sacrifice themselves to satisfy others. You have to speak up for yourself. If they cannot understand you, you need to communicate with them for agreement. In their perspective, they believe that you need to say things out loud so people can know what you think and then discuss to reach mutual agreement.

While previous studies suggest that the goal of multicultural language education is integrating diverse races, ethics, classes, and genders toward greater equality and democracy (Alim, 2010; Gay, 2003, 2004; Pennycook, 2001, 2004; Sleeter & Grant, 2006), the participants told me repeatedly that they expected (and were expected) to adapt or assimilate into NES communication styles, indicating stark inequality. Farah indicated "Chinese ESL speakers usually adapt themselves to communicate with NESs based on NESs' communicative ways," which she allowed meant they sensed there was no need to guess or worry over the hidden implications of NESs' spoken words. Bailey seemed less readily acquiescent: "Since I am in the U.S., I have to cope with [NES] culture, following their communicative styles, but I will still let them understand my culture."

Anglo-American English is often considered a sort of global lingua franca, though researchers (e.g., Alptekin, 2002; Badger & MacDonald, 2007; McKay, 2010) argue this point when it comes to using English norms in conversation with ESL speakers. Broadly speaking, some (e.g., Quirk, 1989) assert that Anglo-American communication norms should be followed when Anglo-American English is used. Others (McKay, 2010; Pennycook, 2003; Yano, 2003) term "English as an international language" (McKay, 2010, p. 95), with "pan-human or universal socio-cultural norms" (Yano, 2003, p. 29) and "a fluid mixture" of cultures (Pennycook, 2003, p. 10). Still others (Alptekin, 2002; Phillipson, 2003) propose using a localized English to respect individual culture and norms, but globalized English as a common communicative tool. Each but the last argument overlooks the ways that language fluency goes beyond vocabulary. Native English speakers are fluent at English linguistic skills, and so they understand proper sociolinguistic usage to convey specific ideas in their local society. Meanwhile, the Chinese graduate students I interviewed were used to gaining communication clues by reading implicit context. The data indicated that in intercultural communication conversations in the U.S., the ESL speakers followed the Anglo-American norms, which conflicted with their own culture, to get their messages across. This finding, which Shi-Xu (2010) cites in calling for discursive equality, again underscores intercultural communication as a power issue. The dominant group holds disproportionate sway in the course of intercultural encounters, such that Chinese advanced ESL graduate students described not only following the Anglo-American norms they observed but also mindfully adopting the dominant group's direct ways of sociolinguistic expression (regardless of whether the expression conflicted with their cultural values).

Theme 3: We found it difficult to relay our own inner feelings to NESs, and they could not understand our inner feelings and concerns due to different cultural values.

Although it was easy to communicate with NESs because they were frank and honest, restrained Chinese ESL speakers had a hard time speaking up for themselves and felt upset by NESs' frank self-centered words. My participants seemed sure that NESs simply could not understand their inner feelings and embarrassment in these direct conversations. Bailey mentioned that she initially thought her NES professors on the U.S. campus "were mad because they only replied… with two words. Later on, I found that they were just too busy and I got used to the short replies." In fact, she continued,

> The professors said, "I won't reply back if you do not make a clear request." But I always use indirect questions, like "Is it okay? Are you available?" I won't make direct requests or demands of elders or professors—they should be able to find out my intentions through the email, although I do not point those out directly.

A lack of clear, steep hierarchy could also trip up Bailey's communication: "In the U.S., there is no vertical, hierarchy social status. Everyone is equal. By contrast, in Chinese culture, you must show your sincere respect to your senior classmates and professors." Giving an example, she said, "Here, I felt that my junior classmates disrespected me. They rejected or doubted my advice and answers in front of me. I was upset, because I would not tell them the answers if I was not 100% certain!" And when she observed her classmates speaking informally to professors, it was an obvious contrast:

> I will be very polite and first ask whether [the professors] are available to meet me. It turns out, professors will not care about whether you are very polite as long as you respect them. …due to my cultural values, I need more time to adjust, to be casual with my NES professors like my fellow classmates do.

Campuses seemed rife with everyday miscommunications. Time and again, I heard that Chinese ESL speakers self-consciously chose to speak in ways that fit with NES norms and cultural values, especially if they were communicating with an NES they didn't know well. Andrew, Erick, Connor, and Helen all commented on this form of code switching. Helen memorably called this conversation style "formulaic" and a courtesy, while Debby commented bluntly, "Chinese ESL speakers need to adapt to NESs' cultural values. The cultural environment will not change for you."

Over time, students believed they could begin introducing NESs to their cultural values and communication styles. Bailey explained, "I will follow their cultures in order to let them accept me first (I can't insist on imposing my cultural values like an alien!). Later, I will explain why I act differently or what I think due to cultural differences." Ultimately, effective communication, the participants agreed, would mean NESs becoming able to "understand your thoughts" (Andrew), but that seemed a distant goal. Farah cautioned that,"It really takes a long time to resolve the intercultural communication difficulties. We need to use many ways to have them understand our different cultural values." Or, as Erick put it:

> Even though you can use English to express your thoughts, NESs cannot understand why Chinese ESL speakers have such and such concerns, worries, and reactions. For instance, NES friends cannot understand why I borrowed so much money to go studying abroad—I want to hurry up and complete my degree without pausing, and I want to succeed for my parents and close friends.

Although NESs had difficulties understanding Chinese ESL speakers' cultural values, the latter continuously worked to elucidate their cultural thoughts through NESs' cultural lens. Andrew used a Chinese expression as an example, saying,

> NESs may not be able to understand why Chinese people assert that a person should be like a human being not an animal. In order for them to understand this, Chinese ESL speakers need to… help them understand our cultural values through an NES lens or thinking pattern.

Andrew added that "English cannot be used to thoroughly express Chinese cultural values," suggesting that fellow ESL students employ "many historical stories" to clarify and relate to NESs. As Farah said, "we can tell them our cultural backgrounds to let them know how and why Chinese people think things in certain ways." Beyond adapting their style to fit NES communication patterns, ESL students positioned themselves as responsible for first hiding, then later teaching others about their own cultural values and forms of expression.

Bicultural participants also reported sensing that Caucasians did not want to take the time to get to know their inner feelings and complex identities (Toomey, Dorjee, & Ting-Tommey, 2013). In what Ting-Tommey (2005) named the process of identity negotiation, individuals like these international students make efforts to introduce their identity, negotiate cultural differences, become influential during interactions, and reach intercultural agreements over time and across contexts. Because bicultural people in this study were bilingual and had at least two cultural perspectives, they may have been better equipped to meet intercultural challenges. Dervin and Gross (2016) further argued that "IC [Intercultural

Communication] should thus help its users to deal with these unfair phenomena and to question them in order to move to a higher level of engagement with others" (p. 4). In terms of the participants' suggestions on how NESs should respond for effective intercultural communication, Kumaravadivelu (2008) similarly asserted "A critical awareness of the complex nature of cultural understanding" may help NESs open themselves to "alternative meanings and alternative possibilities," thereby restraining their rush to "stereotype the Other" (p. 64).

Theme 4: Effective communication takes effort on both sides.

The fourth major theme in my participants' narratives of cross-cultural communication with NESs was their tacit acceptance that they were responsible for creating effective communication—not only by adapting to NES norms, but also by teaching their cultural values to NESs over time. But that meant NESs had to be ready to learn. Andrew stated that "Intercultural communication is like a married couple's communication [when] each dislikes the other's habits. Trying to understand the other's perspective is a more effective way to communicate than forcing the other person to change to the way you like."

Helen felt working together made for good communication, but doubted that most NES people would invest their efforts:

> Effective communication relies on both sides to say what they think, explain their own culture, and tolerate each other's differences. We need to understand each other. If the other side can *understand* but not *accept* your culture, then you have to discuss how to tolerate the differences. It seems that Chinese ESL speakers have been tolerating NESs… because NESs are too proud of their own culture to see things from other cultures' perspectives.

International students may never plan to emigrate, though the Chinese ESL students I met will be on this U.S. campus for years as they pursue graduate degrees. Kim (2001) finds that migrants tend to acculturate successfully when they have sufficient internal cultural knowledge, a positive attitude, and external supportive communities in their host country. Ting-Toomey (2005) also underlines the importance of the receiving context for immigrant incorporation: "any effective intercultural cross-boundary journey, members of the host culture need to act as gracious hosts …Without collaborative efforts, the hosts and the new arrivals may end up with great frustrations, miscommunications, and identity misalignments" (p. 221). The students seem to have intuited this missing cooperation in their acculturation experiences.

From cultural information to cultural transformation learning, international students' funds of knowledge, cultural awareness, and adaptability often enrich the content of intercultural communication. They "are far ahead in their efforts to come to grips with how people live and express their lives in cultural contact zones" (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 179). Should NESs start to see international students as cultural informants, they may even become able to reflect on their "own cultural roots with a different, critical eye" (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 180).

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this narrative research study was to reveal Chinese advanced ESL graduate students' interculturally communicative experiences with NESs in a university setting in the U.S. Four main instructive themes emerged from their interview data and suggest ways to improve intercultural communication. Specifically, participants felt misunderstood when NESs failed to understand that Chinese ESL speakers' words were not literal or that their selfless words were self-centered decisions; they indicated that Chinese ESL speakers ought to adjust their communication approaches to be more direct and intimate, like NESs'; and they insisted that truly effective intercultural communication would require effort from both Chinese ESL speakers and the dominant NESs on their host campuses.

It is worth noting that Chinese graduate students' cultural identity formulation is multi-contextual (Kumaravadivelu, 2008), informed by global contexts (multicultural awareness, tensions, and cultural commodity within the global market), national contexts (a nation's cultural orientation), social contexts (social, community, and family events), and individual contexts (background, belief, education, encounters). As the Chinese graduate students in this study move within U.S. society, they must undergo the formation

of a new cultural identity and develop intercultural communicative competence so as to communicate effectively in the host society. Certainly, intercultural communication between Chinese ESL speakers and NESs is improved when everyone endeavors to understand and respect diverse core cultural values for equity and democracy. It is not an easy task to grasp a different cultural perspective, and language and its uses are often deeply entangled with cultural identity, social status, ethnic ideology, and power issues (Alim, 2010). As such, effective intercultural communication requires mindful skills and learning from both sides.

Implications and Contributions

Intercultural communication scholar Holliday reminds readers to "consider the instrumental efficiency or moral implications of a particular cultural practice" (2011, p 15). Chinese ESL speakers' core cultural value—privileging social harmony over self-interest—speaks to sustaining social order. And this is rational; countries with rare natural resources discourage citizens from pursuing self-interest in order to preserve harmony (Hsu, 2004) and self-restraint is a respectable virtue. On the other hand, resource-rich countries need not be single-minded—they can afford to encourage people to pursue self-interest and happiness based on fair competition. Thus Holliday would suggest the purpose of the Chinese cultural value of selflessness is to maintain harmonious order for a big population with scarce resources. With colleagues Hyde and Kullman, Holliday (2016) writes "rather than reject the way other communities live and the values they have learnt to subscribe to, another way forward is to try to understand and learn what one can from these different cultural outlooks" (p. 286). Should NESs understand that Chinese ESL speakers' indirect communication styles are a way of building a long-lasting, mutually beneficial relationship, perhaps it would shift their perspective.

Compared with previous research (Gudykunst & Lee, 2003; Hofstede, 1980, 2001, 2010; Kim & Papacharissi, 2003; Kim, Coyle, & Gould, 2009), the present study not only plumbs Chinese ESL speakers' in-depth perspectives, but also explains the reasons behind their modes of expression and the related challenges that arise during intercultural communication. 'Intercultural' has been refined from anti-essentialism, constructivist perspectives, to critical reflection on unbalanced power relations, Dervin (2016) argued "there is no real consensus on the proposed shifts and aims." However, Chinese ESL speakers' compromise on their core cultural values and their true voice as an underrepresented group, hidden cultural struggles encoded in language that is not immediately evident, are revealed for critical intercultural communication scholars (e.g., Adrian Holliday, Ingrid Piller, Kathryn Sorrells) to further the consensus discussion in the field of intercultural communication. This discovery, which emphasizes the need for every cultural perspective involved in an intercultural communication to work toward understanding, holds significant promise for establishing equity in applied intercultural communication.

Limitations of the Study and Recommendations

The study includes two limitations. The first is its reliance on convenience sampling, and I addressed it by asking all participants to share both their own experiences and stories and those of other Chinese ESL speakers in their social circles. It is, therefore, possible that 17 interviews and a large focus-group provided information about a much wider set of Chinese ESL speakers, perhaps even a closer picture of the general phenomenon. The study's second limitation is also a strength: it foregrounds the experiences and perspectives of Chinese ESL speakers in communication with NESs. Put differently, just as NESs failed to understand nuance in the ESL speaker's speech patterns, the ESL interviewees' perspectives toward NESs in this study may not match NESs' *real* cultural values and intentions. Indeed, culture is complex and layered, and the ethnic diversity of the United States further complicates any effort to identify common, immutable cultural features. Nevertheless, through these findings, NESs can gain insight into Chinese ESL speakers' cultural values and perspective, thereby enhancing intercultural communicative knowledge and practice.

The data infers that speakers-both NESs and NNESs may not be equipped to communicate interculturally and effectively. To effect this change on diverse college campuses in order to pursue equity and inclusion, it is recommended to higher education institutions that there should be level-appropriate multicultural education curricula and in-depth, guiding dialogues for international students and NESs that explore communication styles, encourage curiosity, flexibility, and mindfulness, and ask participants to

consider power dynamics in interpersonal communications. They need to learn through each other, which culture is evolvingly constructed (Dervin, 2016). Otherwise, essentialist views, stereotypes, and even inequalities will be sustained and reinforced. Banks (2015) reminded us that individuals' IC development varies from Stage 1: Cultural Psychological Captivity (acknowledging feelings of a self-cultural group) to Stage 6: Globalism and Global Competency (developing a global identity based on social justice and equity). And the international graduate students may be at a more advanced stage. Also, while ways of expression can be adapted for the purpose of effective communication with NESs on a host campus, core cultural values in each cultural group, either an underrepresented group or a dominant group, should be equal and respected mindfully based on the nature of multiculturalism and equitable and actual intercultural communication thus occurs.

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The Quest to Increase Diversity at the University of Oxford

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, an understanding of how an elite institution pursues diversity initiatives is explored. Research afforded a better understanding of strategies adopted for recruitment and retention whereby positive results were reported after implementation. Removing barriers that may prevent marginalized populations from enrolling were critical towards these efforts. Oxford has taken steps to increase diversity, and it appears they are having modest success. One method that has been an asset is to invite students to spend time on campus through residential programs. Additional efforts underway to increase diversity include an intensive urban recruitment initiative and securing school/parent/community buy-in. Venturing into private partnerships with non-profits and fostering better community relationships with inner-city London neighborhoods are a few of the steps being taken to increase representation from first-generation, minority, and socio-economically disadvantaged students. This new approach to diversity will hopefully lead to more students applying and ultimately enrolling into the prestigious institution.

Keywords: abroad, diversity, recruitment, United Kingdom

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INTRODUCTION

Postsecondary institutions are seeing a more diverse student population than in previous years. Creating an environment that embraces such diversity has been of importance lately as higher education officials have sought to adopt policies and enact programs that reflect and communicate their institution's commitment to equity and inclusion. For example, many institutions have responded by forming a committee comprised of various constituencies to address diversity needs, developing and implementing an action plan to achieve improvements in diversity, or adopting a specific goal for more diverse student enrollments or faculty.

Diversity can be defined as being varying forms of human difference with distinct characteristics (Smith, 2015). Because diversity encompasses a broad context to include race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, to name a few, it is necessary to narrow the definition in the context to what the higher education authority in the United Kingdom, the Office of Students, uses. In this instance, diversity is referred to as socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, age maturity, disability, and care leaver (Office of Students, 2018).

Incidents related to diversity have been a fixture in the news. At the University of Oklahoma, former president James Gallogly was embroiled in what seemed to be a never-ending episode of racial insensitivity that ultimately contributed to his early departure. At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the students protested, removed, and insisted that the Confederate affiliated statue "Silent Sam", not be returned to campus. These events only underscore the need for diversity to be included in institutional policy and have academic leaders who will take charge and ensure diversity initiatives are implemented throughout the organization.

The purpose of this paper was to explore institutional efforts to increase diversity at an elite institution in the United Kingdom (U.K.). Examining how this institution pursues diversity initiatives afforded a better understanding of strategies adopted for recruitment and retention. For the researcher, exposure to institutional diversity efforts has been limited to the United States. Prior travels abroad only consisted of Calgary, Canada and research narrowly focused on diversity at American institutions. The experience of visiting another country and spending time on campus collecting data on diversity-related planning efforts was invaluable as if allowed for cross-country collaboration with colleagues internationally.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Pierre Bourdieu (1973) draws attention to the intergenerational inequality resulting from educational systems through his theory of social reproduction centered on three tenets that have implications for upward mobility; economic, cultural, and social. If higher education is to be more equitable in the distribution of social, cultural, and human capital, it must lend itself to internal structural changes that include amended admission practices, targeted recruitment, and financial assistance (Bourdieu, 1977; Rubin, 2011). Increasing the college participation rate from underserved populations has been on the front lines of social justice (Delors, 1996).

In the U.K., the focus became a major policy priority in the early 21st century (David, 2012). In recent decades, the U.K. enacted widening participation efforts such as the Higher Education Act of 2004 and creating the Office for Fair Access (David, 2012). "Disparities in student demographic profiles persist between institutional types for several mutually reinforcing reasons" (Hinton-Smith, 2012, p. 10). "Disadvantaged students both self-select and are selected out of elite institutions, undermining social mobility" (Hinton-Smith, 2012, p. 10).

LITERATURE REVIEW

College students who hail from non-traditional backgrounds are often perceived by institutions and state funding entities alike as being high risk (Leatherwood & O'Connell, 2003; Hinton-Smith, 2012). Crawford, Dearden, Micklewright, and Vignoles (2016) suggest that when it comes to expanding access for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, "universities should be incentivized to adopt contextualized admissions policies" (p. 153).

Pressure to Increase Diversity

In England, there has been public criticism of the lack of diversity at elite postsecondary institutions, namely Oxford and Cambridge. Public outcry over a perceived diversity shortage hit a fever pitch when it was reported by a British Broadcasting Company (BBC) newsfeed that in 2009 only one Black student was admitted to Oxford. Commenting on the news, then British Prime Minister David Cameron blasted the dismal enrollment number by stating, "I think that is disgraceful, we have got to do better than that" (Vasagar, 2011). It was later reported by the university that the one student enrollment figure pertained to Black Caribbean student enrollment and that there were a total of 27 Black students admitted that year (Vasagar, 2011).

Things weren't any better for Cambridge as Black students spoke with the BBC about their negative experiences at the esteemed institution. These revelations about failures in diversity recruiting and institutional climate led to a public rebuke from a prominent politician. Speaking to the news publication, *Eastern Eye*, British Parliament member David Lammy stated Oxford was a "bastion of white, middle class, Southern privilege" and did a poor job when it came to diversity (Codling, 2018). He likened the impact of the dismissal admission percentages of Black students as "you don't get in, then none of the other kids apply the following year" (Codling, 2018). Member of Parliament (MP) Lammy was among over 100 MPs who called for leaders of both Oxford and Cambridge universities to increase efforts to diversify its campuses (Bulman 2017). Of particular concern to MP. Lammy was the dismal 1.5% acceptance offers from Oxford and Cambridge universities that went to Blacks of British origin and held A-level status in 2015 (O'Sullivan & Winters, 2017). This public criticism led both institutions to step up their diversity recruitment efforts.

Since the airing of low Black student enrollment at Oxford in 2009, the university has taken steps to bolster its diversity through a series of initiatives endorsed by the Office of Students (University of Oxford News, 2019). For example, there has been an increase in applications from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students with the highest admission coming in 2018 at 18%. Additionally, admission of undergraduate students from state schools rose to an all-time high of 61% (University of Oxford News, 2019).

Effective Recruitment Strategies

There is a need for college recruitment strategies to include equity-minded and inclusive comprehension regarding diversity (Hakkola, 2019). Oftentimes, college admission strategies fail to account for the diverse characteristics of those seeking admission into the institution (Pippert, Essenburg, & Matchett, 2013). When it comes to college enrollment, those students from low-income and/or minority high schools tend to be more likely to pursue higher education when given access to programs that relay information about college entry (Institute for Higher Education Policy 2010). It is important that this information is presented to them repeatedly as they finish out their secondary level enrollment (Institute for Higher Education Policy 2010). For colleges and universities, the emphasis on diversity is critical for successful recruitment (Ihme et. al., 2016). To have an effective recruitment plan that targets diverse students, institutions should:

1. Create a diverse recruitment team
2. Establish relationships with community members in the state
3. Establish buy in with community members on campus
4. Rethink your campus dialogue
5. Host multicultural events
6. Provide financial and student support (Stark-Magana, Garrett, & Sanders, 2019).

Oftentimes, strategies used to increase successful transition from high school to college have been target recruitment, financial incentives, bridge opportunities, and a comprehensive application review. High school content, academic counseling, college outreach, and other programming need to reflect the rigor of college study so that students are clear about what it takes to succeed in college, including community college (Venezia & Jaeger, 2003).

The Office of Students for the U.K. Education division has listed as its strategy for diversity "We aim to ensure that every student, whatever their background, has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives and careers" (Office of Students, 2018). Key objectives for the strategy include the following:

- Objective 1: Participation
  All students, from all backgrounds, with the ability and desire to undertake higher education, are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education.

- Objective 2: Experience
  All students, from all backgrounds, receive a high quality academic experience, and their interests are protected while they study or in the event of provider, campus or course closure.

- Objective 3: Outcomes
  All students, from all backgrounds, are able to progress into employment, further study, and fulfilling lives, and their qualifications hold their value over time.

- Objective 4: Value for money
  All students, from all backgrounds, receive value for money (Office of Students, 2018).

Those groups identified as being underrepresented where gaps in equality exists include:

- Those living in areas of low higher education participation or from lower household income or socioeconomic status backgrounds
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic students disaggregated by individual ethnic groups
- Mature students
- Disabled students (those in receipt of DSA and those who have declared a disability but are not in receipt of DSA) disaggregated into disability type
- Care leavers (Office of Students 2018).

Today's college campuses are lightning rods for campus unrest and bigotry such as pro-white stances and demonstrations, as well as anti-religious tolerance towards persons of Muslim and Jewish faith (Chun & Feagin, 2020). Much of the turmoil can be linked to the changes in demographics within the student body appearing on college doorsteps (Chun and Feagin 2020). A demographic whereby newly admitted traditional age college students are considered to be "the most racially diverse generation" (Chun & Feagin, 2020; Geiger, 2018, p. 17).

The University of Oxford has listed within its strategic plan that they seek to "To attract and admit student from all backgrounds with outstanding academic potential and the ability to benefit from an Oxford education" (Oxford Strategic Plan, 2018). Accordingly, the institution is putting forth initiatives to increase diversity. Bourdieu (1977) theoretical lens of social, cultural, and human capital to generational upward mobility casts a shadow on higher education as equitable access is hindered by affordability, admissions criteria, and residencies. This paper reports on some of those initiatives and the progress made thus far in increasing diversity.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore how an elite institution in the U.K. was implementing efforts to increase diversity. A case study approach was utilized to understand the impact and perceptions about diversity. Merriam (1998) noted that it is appropriate to utilize the case method as a result of the "uniqueness for what it can reveal about a phenomenon" (p. 35). To ensure triangulation (Patton 1990), data was collected utilizing interviews, observation, institutional website review, archival data, and examining program recruitment and admission literature.

Participant Selection

The interview sample included three current employees of the institution who worked directly on Oxford's diversity initiatives, including a senior director, admission's office recruiting representative, and a diversity outreach specialist (see Table 1). These individuals were chosen through an institutional website search of diversity offices because of their ability to provide historical and ongoing efforts by the institution to increase diversity.

Table 1

Data Collection Breakdown

Interviews	Document Analysis	Archival Data	Observation
Admissions Rep.	Office for Students Access & Participation Plan	Oxford Archives	Recruitment Days
Director of diversity office	Oxford Strategic Plan	News Archives	Target Oxbridge residential program
Outreach specialist	Oxford Enrollment Data		Admissions session
Informal student input and feedback			Campus life

After sending an introductory email and invitation to participate, a suitable date and time for the interviews were arranged.

Data Collection and Analysis

Participants included an admissions representative, director of a diversity office, and a diversity outreach specialist who were able to offer insight into the planning and operational aspect of diversity initiatives. Pseudonyms were assigned for the participants. Interviews were semi-structured, recorded, and lasted approximately 30-60 minutes in length, depending on each interviewee's depth of responses to questions. The research questions that guided the interviews were:

- What does diversity look like at Oxford?
- What strategies are in place to promote diversity?
- What are perceptions and attitudes towards diversity at Oxford?

A constant comparative method was utilized for the analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Interviews were then transcribed, analyzed, and open coded, whereby a set of themes were uncovered to report the data. Specific quotes to institutional activity, climate, and attitudes related to diversity were categorized and grouped into themes in accordance to deductive coding (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

In addition to the interviews, a series of documents were analyzed, including institutional recruitment literature, diversity statements, and programming literature provided by the participants. In addition, the Oxford University website was reviewed for diversity related materials such as strategic plans utilizing the search box found on the main site and typing in the keyword diversity. Materials obtained from the website were reviewed with participants for trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

FINDINGS

In this paper, two themes that emerged as key findings are highlighted: barriers and programs having an impact. The findings reveal an intense push to increase diversity.

Barriers

Removing barriers that may prevent marginalized populations from enrolling at the University of Oxford was a resounding revelation. In identifying those who may be considered excluded from Oxford, Joan is an admissions representative who would define diversity at Oxford as being:

> Anyone from a sort of non-traditional background, so any underrepresented groups. That can include BME students, or black or minority ethnicity, people who come from schools that don't have good results, people who come from postcodes that don't have high progression rates to higher education.

Joan noted the "massive pressure from the media, from the government, from everywhere". Oxford has had some success increasing the diversity of its incoming classes between the periods of 2014-2018. For example, the proportion from state schools rose from 56.3% to 60.5% (University of Oxford Annual Admissions Statistical Report 2019). In addition, the proportion identifying as Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) rose from 13.6% to 18.3% (see Table 2) during that same period (University of Oxford Annual Admissions Statistical Report, 2019).

Table 2

BME Enrollment 2014-2018

Year	Applications	Offers	Admitted
2018	3,097	551	457
2017	2,899	519	446
2016	2,547	492	411
2015	2,332	407	367
2014	2,131	395	345

The proportion from socio-economically disadvantaged areas rose from 9.3% to 11.3% as shown in Table 3 (University of Oxford Annual Admissions Statistical Report, 2019).

Table 3

Socio-economically Disadvantaged Enrollment 2014-2018

Year	Applications	Offers	Admitted
2018	1,872	379	289
2017	1,660	349	269
2016	1,351	272	216
2015	1,351	252	221
2014	1,286	288	241

The proportion from areas of low progression to higher education rose from 10.3% to 13.1%, while the proportion declaring a disability rose from 6.0% to 9.2%. In 2017 and 2018, more women were admitted than men (University of Oxford Annual Admissions Statistical Report, 2019).

Part of the reason Oxford has had limited enrollment from diverse populations is that students simply do not apply in the first place. Another reason is they do not have the needed grades or test scores for entrance. This is particularly unique for those from disadvantaged backgrounds and schools, which makes it harder to get the grades needed, thus giving the need to implement admissions flags to identify those who may fall into this category but demonstrates potential in other areas. In this case, the university may admit a student who meets certain criteria for a Foundation Year which adds a year to the degree, however, with the right intensive education, foundation students can catch up. To increase diversity in the recruitment process, Joan commented:

> …what we do look at is, you get flags if you've got any of these disadvantages. If you've grown up in care or spent up to three months in care, if you come from a school that has bad GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) results, … if you come from a postcode which is an area which is considered financially stretched, if you come from a school that has below average A-level results, so that's your school leaving qualification. If you come from a postcode where the residential postcode has low rates of people going off to university.

There does exist within the public a perception that Oxford is this elite "Ivory Tower" and unwelcoming towards those who do not meet certain standards. Joan noted "We're in this really beautiful, privileged place, and you might forget what it's like in the outside world". Joan added "…some schools just aren't that interested…the sort of schools we want to target are the ones who don't really send people to Oxford or Cambridge or even to higher education".

In a needs assessment to determine appropriate intervention for increasing diversity, Oxford conducted focus groups and administered a survey. Key findings included (1) Prospective students thought it would be academically challenging; (2) Misconceptions about not having people of their background; (3) They wouldn't fit in; (4) The environment would be too much to adjust. Katrina is Director of a diversity office at Oxford and noted:

> We did a survey with students from African Caribbean heritage. They had the academic potential to apply to Oxford, but they didn't. And we did a focus group with them and some of the reasons for not applying to Oxford where they thoughts academically, it would be too challenging. So these were some misconceptions and they thought there wouldn't be people of their background at Oxford and they just wouldn't fit in. And they thought the environment would be too much for them to make that adjustment.

Programs Having an Impact

Oxford has taken steps to increase diversity, and it appears they are having modest success. One method that has been an asset is to invite students to spend time on campus through residential programs. Joan stated:

> Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are invited up to Oxford for a week or so, and they would have classes here and they would meet students, and just experience a bit of Oxford life. That has been really successful so in the past that's been something that's very proven to improve statistics of applications, but also success rates when they apply.

Joan noted, "I think getting them here and then spending time here seems to work". She added "The withdrawal rate at Oxford is lower than at any other university, so once they get here, they pretty much, there's no problem with keeping people on the course and getting them through".

One such initiative is Target Oxbridge, a five-year University/private partnership that the university has with a private non-profit to booster its diversity. Katrina described the partnership as the following:

> Target Oxbridge is a program that we run with an organization that is part of a company that's called Rare Recruitment. And Rare Recruitment's primary function is getting undergraduates from African and Caribbean heritage into the professions like law, banking, finance, etc.

Key components of the program include residential and mentoring. Katrina noted, "The organization 'Rare' works closely with the students who are still at school and provides them with almost one-to-one mentoring. Provides them with information, advising, guidance about different courses to study at university". Katrina added:

> If they see somebody like them at the place they want to go to, it has an enormous beneficial impact. So if they know somebody from their school has gone to Oxford or somebody who lives down their road or somebody just comes from their community has gone to Oxford, then it just inspires them even more, and they can imagine themselves in these places. So it boosts confidence, academic confidence, as well.

Guidance, advising, and assistance with the application process and course selection are vital to any successful bridge program. Katrina described the relationship with Rare as:

> We do lots of work with the organization 'Rare'. We send our academics and our students down to London, which is where the program is. And so they become familiar with people from Oxford. So that's the first step. And then come springtime, roundabout Easter, we do a residential here at Oxford. So the students come here, they stay for about three nights, and they live in undergraduate accommodation. So they live the life of an undergraduate student to Oxford. And again, when they arrive to when they leave, you see a very big change in their confidence and their ability to recognize actually this place is for them.

Beth is a diversity outreach specialist at Oxford. She noted, "The residency permits opportunity to kind of network not only with people here from the university but also their peers." Opportunity Oxford is the latest initiative implemented to increase diversity. Katrina noted:

> We've started a new program which is called Opportunity Oxford, which will be a bridging program. So with the brand new program, what happens is students will apply through the normal route. They will be made an offer, but we will look at their backgrounds and if they come from a very poor performing school, if they come from an area, whether it's in poor progression to higher education, what we then will say is part of that offer is we want you to attend this bridging program.

A bonus for participating in this program is prospective students are exposed to current students, particularly members of the student organization Student African and Caribbean Society, who often serve as mentors and relay their experiences with adjusting to Oxford. The experience also dispels the Ivory Tower myth by allowing them to spend ample time on the prestigious campus.

Additional efforts underway to increase diversity include an intensive urban recruitment initiative and securing school/parent/community buy-in. Katrina stated:

> We have focused mainly on the students at schools and their teachers. And the next step that we want to sort of roll out is working with parents, guardians, community leaders, and getting to the communities much more so that Oxford becomes normalized through those communities. And we

> become part of their conversation and their discussion, and it doesn't, it's not this sort of ivory tower, which sometimes we can be perceived to be.

In identifying challenges the university still faces, Beth stated:

> Our biggest challenge is counteracting the myths about the university, a university that is over 800 years old. For some communities in this country, it has a reputation of being elitist and being predominantly white or not wanting to diversify and in the 21st century, in 2019, I can comfortably say that every day I meet colleagues across the collegiate body who want to make a difference. They want to see the best minds here, regardless of background, regardless of ethnicity, regardless of sexuality, regardless of religion, regardless of socioeconomic standing. So what we have to do is to engage in a conversation with communities across the country to say, 'Send us your best young people. We will look after them, we will nurture them, we will invest in them and we will make them ready for a changing global workforce.

Beth added, "Perception is also key and outside of Oxford, the perception is that Oxford is not welcoming, is not interested, and is not engaged, and that could not be further from the truth." Student outlook on diversity at Oxford is consistent in that there is a lack of it. Joan noted:

> Students at Cambridge spoke with the BBC about their experiences and commented "a lot of effort has been made to get them there, but when they're there, the subjects that they want to study aren't necessarily available". ……. "…there weren't very many people there that they could relate to that seemed like them". Looking at Oxford, "I don't think there's very much diversity in the faculty".

When asked what a successful diversity strategy at Oxford would look like, Beth suggested:

> Success would look like hitting our target of a quarter of our students coming from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, from diverse backgrounds, by the year, I think it's 2024-25 that the Vice Chancellor (Equality and Diversity) has set. So success would also look like the widening of opportunity for us to have more spaces at undergraduate levels. Right now, we're currently sitting at 3,200 and I think if there were room to expand that. More places mean more opportunity for diverse communities to be here.

There was evidence of some messaging for diversity on the Oxford campus. For example, displayed on a building location signage was the listing of the campus Muslim Prayer Room. Also, on one of the college campuses, Balliol, displayed on a bulletin board at the main gate entrance, was a flyer of the LGBTQ affiliated rainbow color with the statement, "Balliol Chapel, Everyone Welcome. Yes. Really."

Oxford is not without its share of controversy. A few years back, there was a movement called #Rhodesmustfall, which sought to remove any affiliation with South African diamond miner Cecil Rhodes, an Oxford alum, who was believed to be a racist and attributed to harsh working conditions for his African workers and oppressive laws while Prime Minister of the Cape of Good Hope in southern Africa. Students at Oxford in 2014 protested for the removal of a statue of Rhodes at his alma mater on the Oriel College campus. They were unsuccessful in their attempts.

DISCUSSION

Diversity remains a hot-button topic in higher education regardless of country. The public and influential politicians called out Oxford to do more to increase diversity. The U.K. educational entity, the Office of Students, quickly responded with a mandate to all institutions to implement diversity initiatives. As a result, Oxford has taken proactive steps to meet this challenge and, by all accounts, is seeing modest results. Nonetheless, they are positive results in that enrollment percentages for BME and socio-economically disadvantaged have steadily increased for the past five years.

Recognizing that they had a problem with diversity enrollment, Oxford took steps to identify areas for improvement. A self-assessment that included a survey and focus groups around campus yielded data about the institutional climate around diversity and public perception about the institution that wasn't so positive. Stark-Magana et. al. (2019) identified essential elements that needed to be in place to have an

effective recruitment strategy. Rather than denying the obvious or playing the blame game, Oxford enacted its own ramped-up diversity recruitment campaign.

One such action was a private partnership with a non-profit to expose first-generation, minority, and socio-economically disadvantaged students from inner-city London to the prestigious institution in hopes that they would consider applying. Establishing an effective relationship within community entities is critical to making inroads with inner-city recruitment efforts (Stark-Magana et. al., 2019). Several years into the partnership, the results speak for themselves. Not only have admission applications from historically marginalized populations increased but so have the acceptances and successful enrollment. This is a testament that when confronted with a mandate to do more on diversity, institutions will respond and can produce results, even the elite institutions.

Oxford has also instituted multicultural recruitment days and on campus living experiences to better acquaint the campus to those who otherwise would not have visited the institution. This is directly related to demystifying the myth that the elite institution is unwelcoming and unattainable.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Efforts made by Oxford to increase diversity are not new, nor will they be the last to face intense public scrutiny. What makes the Oxford case unique is its position within the higher education landscape as a highly regarded and elite learning environment. Such institutions are revered for their aura of high-quality instruction and superb faculty, not to mention high achieving students.

For an institution known for who they keep out rather than who they let in to have to ramp up meaningful diversity, recruitment has implications for higher education in that no institution is above the throne when it comes to equity and access. Diversity is viewed as an asset rather than a burden, and no institution, regardless of history, prestige, and alumni connections, are immune from oversight and critique.

CONCLUSION

The work on diversity is not yet completed for Oxford. They still have to dispel the Ivory Tower perception and build bridges with parents, teachers, and community leaders in urban areas, which is on their agenda. However, given the success of the initiatives already put in place, their potential to be successful with such endeavors is better than previously, given their progress towards diversity. This article provides an overview of current diversity efforts at Oxford. However, there is an opportunity for further study as it is still unknown as to the level of success Oxford is having with increasing diversity based on the various initiatives implored.

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