Introduction

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Introduction

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Editor-In-Chief

Dear Readers -

The Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education (JCIHE) vision is to diversity authorship as a way to enhance research on innovative topics that deepen the understanding of international and comparative higher education in countries around the world. The two essays and ten empirical articles in Volume 15, Issue 2, 2023, include authors from Australia, Botswana, Canada, Hong Kong, Turkey, and United States who examine topics of interest for JCIHE readership that include cross-border communication between faculty and international students in Australia; identifying obstacles to facilitate integration of local and non-local students in Hong Kong universities, exploring codes of conduct found in top-top universities found in the Times Higher Education World University Ranking list, understanding Chinese student transcultural strategies to navigate identify conflicts and expand their identities through their Hong Kong study experiences; using international student voices in Turkey to develop online support content, targeting challenges and support by using an equity diversity and inclusion lens for international students in Canada, identify challenges of racism and benefits of faculty relationships from the voices of international students in Canada, and outcomes of the COVID-19 Pandemic on creation of the university as an imagined community in Australia and showing how HEIs in Australia will never go back to ‘business as usual’ in the post-COVID-19 Pandemic world.

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 influence higher education. JCIHE has as its core principles: a) comparative research; b) engagement with theory; and c) diverse voices in terms of authorship.

Three broad themes are represented in the articles in the 15(1) issue: student learning strategies, faculty and student learning interactions, and institutional contexts for pedagogical changes.

Student Learning Strategies

Coşkunserçea & **Eriştib** detail how international students help to identify the content for an online system to support international students in Turkey. **Xia** & **Cheng** shift the focus of acculturation to identify the experiences that involve an integration strategy as a way that Chinese students to make transcultural choices while studying in Hong Kong. **Jacobi** examines how online supplemental instruction can provide academic support for international and domestic students. **Wang, Kwong, Beygi, So, Hung, & Wang** focus on how diversity of students and staff can enhance intercultural engagement despite language barriers and political ideologies differences.

Faculty and Student Learning

MacNeill, Li, & McIntosh examine how faculty interaction impacts internationalization in the classroom and how students from diverse learning cultures influence faculty learning that in turn, identifies power relationships within imagined communities.

Institutional and Pedagogical Contexts

Zakharchuka & **Xiao** identify gaps between what the university prioritizes as needed support in the academic domain during the COVID-19 pandemic and what international students identify as essential social needs. **Howe, Ramirez, & Walton** use the lens of international students to identify institutional strengths, such as relationship with faculty and identify persistent barriers such as racism and equity issues with recommendations on institutional reforms. **Lyken-Segosebe, Donald, & Braxton** compare the types of codes of conducts found in undergraduate universities listed in the top 100 ranked in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. **Marangell** examines how international students respond to university internationalization and teaching and learning approaches. **Guiaké** & **Félix** examine how the COVID-19 pandemic altered student mobility trends to and from China and resulting

institutional responses. Finally, **Krautloher** recommends that in the post-COVID world, HEIs follow the example of industry in terms of mergers and collaborations to sustain operations for the future.

Essays and Articles

ESSAYS

Kate MacNeill University of Melbourne, Australia, **Dongmei Li** University of Melbourne, Australia, **and Megan McIntosh** University of Melbourne, Australia. *Cross-border Communications: Rethinking Internationalization During the Pandemic*

This essay challenges commonly held assumptions about cross-cultural learning. The article shares reflections from faculty and their international students in a class during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Within the internationalization at home program, four themes guide cross-cultural learning: the university as an imagined community, globalization, home not as a metaphor, and a journey toward humility.

Amita Krautloher, Charles Sturt University, Australia. *21st Century Universities: Campuses Or Business Parks?*

This essay explores how the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the higher education sector in a way that higher education institutions may never go back to "business as usual." Using the aviation business industry sector as an example, the author forecasts shutdowns, mergers, and collaborations to sustain operations for the future.

EMPIRICAL ARTICLES

Dawn E. Lyken-Segosebe Botswana International University of Science and Technology, Botswana, **Christopher R. Donald** Vanderbilt University, USA, & **John M. Braxton** Vanderbilt University, USA. *Codes of conduct for undergraduate teaching in the top-400 universities on the Times Higher Education World University Rankings*

This study explores how an ethnics infrastructure is important for universities to raise teaching standards and promote academic integrity. Examination of publicly posted codes of conduct for undergraduate teaching was done to 100 universities ranked among the Times Higher Education World University Rankings top-400 institutions. Findings show tepid isomorphic pressures to publicly post teaching codes of conduct in top universities, while lower-ranked universities posted different codes that identified students as clients whose ethical rights have legal ramifications, such as not harassing students or teaching while intoxicated from alcohol or drugs.

Saihua Xia Murray State University, United States and **Winnie Cheng** Murray State University, United States. *Chinese Students' Transcultural Strategies: Intentions to Navigate Identity Conflicts and Expand Their Identities Through Hong Kong Study Experiences*

This study examines Chinese international students' acculturation strategies and their pragmatic intentions to address identity conflicts while studying in Hong Kong. Conflicts and stressors are seen as indicators of active commitments to enhance the process of engagement.

Likewise, strategic, goal-oriented intentional investments are a way to better selves. An alternative definition of "integration strategy" is proposed to better capture students' transcultural choices and decolonize the view that students are expected to conform to the host culture.

Ozan Coşkunserçea (Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, Turkey) and **Suzan D. Eriştib** (Anadolu University, Turkey) *Developing the Content of an Online Support System for International Students Using a Participatory Designer Approach*

This study examines a collaborative effort between university staff and international students studying in Turkey to develop content for an online system. The goal of the collaboration is to enhance content with the purpose of aiding in the acculturation and adaptation of international students to their new environment. Some of the topics that the students found of interest are Turkish culture and problems with adaptation to the Turkish culture and environment.

Edward R. Howe Thompson Rivers University, **Gloria Ramirez** Thompson Rivers University, **and Patrick Walton** Thompson Rivers University. *Experiences of International Students at a Canadian University: Barriers and Supports*

This article examines the academic and social experiences of international students studying in Canada through the lens of the students. Findings show that writing and mathematics skills and relationships with faculty and students are key factors for success. Persistent barriers are racism, assistance, access, diversity, and equity issues. Recommendations to universities include offering bursaries to international students from underrepresented regions, developing intercultural awareness of faculty, and providing program-specific student support centers with peer mentors.

Samantha Marangell The University of Melbourne, Australia. *Exploring Students' Experiences of an Internationalized University Through a Person-in-Context Lens*

This study examined how international students respond to university internationalization and teaching and learning approaches. The study uses Person-in-Context lens to learn from the students about their experiences. Using Volet's person-in-context adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development, the findings show the importance that students place on intercultural interaction.

Nataliia Zakharchuk University of Saskatchewan, Canada & **Jing Xiao** University of Saskatchewan, Canada. *Investigating the Social and Academic Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on International Students at a Canadian University*

This study explores the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international students in a Canadian university using equity, diversity, and inclusion lens. Findings show challenges as well as supports in academic, financial, health and well-being, socialization, and housing/accommodations. There were, however, gaps between student academic and social needs and institutional support and the university prioritized academic support while students

identified social challenges as significant. Some students were not even aware of the spectrum of institutional services that they could use.

Kubert Tianhang, Wang The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, **Theresa, Kwong** Hong Kong Baptist University, **Babak Hassan Beygi** The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, **Mike Ka Pui So,** The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, **Percy Ho Tim Hung** The Hong Kong Polytechnic University & **Man Sang Wong** The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. *Obstacles to Fostering Integration of Local and Non-Local Students in Hong Kong Universities amid Political Turmoil and the COVID-19 Pandemic*

This study explores the diversity of students and staff as a tool to gain meaningful intercultural engagement in the Hong Kong higher education environment. Findings show that language barriers and opposing political ideologies enhanced challenges to engage with others who were culturally different from themselves. The need to adaptable cross-institutional framework for meaningful intercultural learning is thus needed.

Laura J. Jacobi Minnesota State University Mankato, United States. *Shifting Gears in a Pandemic: The Impact of Online Academic Support for International and Domestic Students*

This study explores how United States students during the COVID-19 pandemic turned to peer-facilitate academic support through supplemental instruction (SI). An experimental design was used to assess the impact on online SI focusing on results for students of color and white students and other characteristics. Findings show that students of color and white students, students with higher mean GPAs and pass rates were found for all subgroups studied.

Mathias Guiaké University of Yaoundé I, Cameroon & **Mounton Njoya Félix** Zhejiang Normal University, China. *Reflection on the Impact of COVID-19 on International Student Mobility from and to China*

This study explores how the COVID-19 pandemic can affect future trends of study mobility to and from China. There is a declining interest of Chinese students to study abroad and the steps taken to reassure international students to consider China as a protective destination for a future study plan.

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Cross-border Communications: Rethinking Internationalization During the Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

In this essay, we set out to explore the ways in which our approaches and assumptions around internationalization, and the experiences of international students, have been challenged. We draw on our experiences as academics in Australia, teaching in an international environment through the years of the pandemic. We have chosen to approach this through a series of reflections related to internationalization at home. Inspired by the concept of groundedness, we reflect on four themes: the university as an imagined community, globalization, home not as a metaphor, and a journey toward humility. In our reflections, we try to share a journey of how members in the academic community of higher education, students and teachers, traversed these changing times with a focus on relations between us and home, and between students and teachers, leading to the discussion toward a culture of humility.

Keywords: equality, globalization, internationalization at home, international students, teaching and learning

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The last two years have presented immense challenges for all of us, and our higher education institutions have not escaped the pressures brought on by this global pandemic. Indeed, it has been a challenging time for students and equally challenging for staff. In this essay, we set out to explore the ways in which our approaches and assumptions around internationalization and the experiences of international students have been challenged. We have chosen to approach this through a series of reflections relying on four themes that have emerged from our reflections during the pandemic.

The concept of being grounded inspires this essay, where our own internationalised existences have become constrained through an inability to cross borders or even leave our homes over the last 24 months. By groundedness, we do not only refer to the disrupted mobility of academics and students, but also that we are reflecting on our teaching and learning experience over the last two years with a fresh-eyed and open-minded grounded approach. Before COVID we saw ourselves as citizens of the world, researchers and scholars who not only investigated and wrote about internationalization, but lived lives that were characterized by residing, working and moving across borders. As members of a team of academics focusing on internationalisation, we also hail from three different continents and have always brought these experiences to our work at a global university. However, the last two years have brought lockdowns and closed borders which has grounded us and left us looking more closely at our immediate environment and the idea of internationalisation in the broader higher education community. Our teaching and learning practice over the last two years has been significantly unlike what we were used to. In many ways, there are no connections between now and before. The grounded approach offers us an opportunity to reflect anew on our practice as we investigate in the generation of a new knowledge system in internationalisation. We consider this essay as one of our first steps of the grounded learning process as an institute and as a community. The question we ask here is what does it mean by "being international" and have we ever been truly international. Thus, our notion of groundedness also expands to our approach in undertaking this reflection where we employ a grounded theory approach to ask "what is" rather than "what if" questions (Glaser, 2003, p. 15).

We draw on our own experience of teaching in 2020 and 2021, and our experiences as academics focused on the logistics of delivering teaching during those years. More importantly, we note the ways in which we as academics started to introspect about our drifting role in the classroom and our relations with students, setting the tone of professional reflection on our practice of teaching and learning through these uncertain and challenging times. We would like to think that some of our experiences resonate with colleagues beyond our institution.

We do not pretend that the delivery of teaching over this period was an overwhelming success. All evidence from the Australian context suggests that the lack of the on-campus teaching and learning so anticipated by our students left them understandably less than satisfied with their university experience, especially where engagement and interaction is concerned (Martin, 2020). However, we can make some observations about the revelations that came with online delivery of our teaching and the ways in which we managed to learn about our students in a more nuanced way.

Rather than presenting these ideas within any overarching theoretical framework, we draw selectively from writings in the field of internationalisation and intercultural engagement and use these as stepping-off points for discussions that we hope will be ongoing.

First, we suggest that the pandemic has revealed to us the extent to which the University has long operated as an "imagined community"(Anderson, 2006). Second, and emergent from the notion of

'imagined community', we consider how the pandemic has illuminated that perhaps 'we have never been global'. Following this, we turn to look more closely at the experiences of our students over the past two years and use the phrase 'when home is not a metaphor' as a way of opening up the particularities of our students' learning during the pandemic. Finally, we focus on the relationship between academics and students and the ways in which we have met on different terms. Indeed, our personal and professional lives blurred as our interactions with students took place in our personal space where our homes filled with family, pets and other interruptions became our lecture theatres. We also navigated our own unease with new modes of teaching mediated by technology with which our students were often more comfortable. These realities at times produced shifting power dynamics and vulnerability, which for us led to 'a journey toward humility'.

The University as an Imagined Community

Like many other research-intensive universities, our university is predominantly a campus-based higher education institution. It prides itself on its grounds, its proximity to the city of Melbourne, its culture, its gardens, its coffee and eateries. The rhetorical framing of the university experience is based on campus life, finding your community, and in so doing finding yourself. This version of university life is somewhat utopian. It aligned itself with the transformative experiences of a residential college, of leaving home and transitioning to adulthood, of finding your tribe, your networks, your lifetime friends. It is as if University is a liminal space, an immersive experience, a rite of passage.

The term "imagined community" comes from Benedict Anderson's (2006) work on the invention of tradition as a key aspect of nation building. The use of "imagined" is to acknowledge that this is to some extent a fantasy, but a fantasy that nonetheless persists and is reinforced through the traditional practices of university life, images of the University's campus, snapshots of communities of students learning collaboratively, and of academics and students engaging in scholarly discourse. Indeed, as Taylor (2002) suggests, people imagine their surroundings "in images, stories, and legends" (p. 106). These become part of our imaginery and that of students, and through the performativity of academia, we become part of the perpetuation of a notion of the University as community - as convocation. One key traditional demonstration of the University as community is that of the graduation ceremony, held until 2019 at the historic Melbourne exhibition buildings.

If traditions can be invented, they can also be reinvented. In 2020 we introduced a new tradition – in the form of a commencement ceremony, also at the historic Exhibition Buildings. Excited first-year students came together, witnessed by their parents, and symbolically entered the doors of the University – the imagined community. The symbolism of transformation is profound, as in three years or so these students would leave the same building as graduates.

By February 2020 we already knew that so many of our students could not enter the country, let alone the campus. A large amount of work went into web casting the commencement ceremony to those unable to attend, as we tried so hard to create a sense of "being there" and fulfilling the imaginery we have long created as a shared notion of the university experience. However, "being there" was not going to be a reality for the next two years. In the absence of these traditions and the imagined community of the University campus, we had to recognize that our students occupy very different worlds. We could no longer maintain the fiction that our students seamlessly enter "our imagined community" when they commenced their studies.

We Have Never Been Global (Nations)

So now we want to reflect on what this imagined community looked like, and importantly what type of monoculture we might have been perpetuating. There may never have been a shared experience – an inclusive community, however imaginary. And as Kathleen Manning (1994) observes while "traditions play important role in building community on campus", and "they are not neutral", and "can reinforce campus monoculturalism" (p. 275). Van Jura (2010), building on Manning's work observes that "traditions play a pivotal role in either welcoming marginalized groups into the greater community or further alienating these students" (p. 112). Part of this community was its imagined global student body: coming together in one place, providing exciting opportunities for intercultural exchange, a veritable United Nations of global citizens in the making. We focused on different styles of learning, adopted pedagogical practices and talked about intercultural competencies, as we, largely, Anglo academics sought to learn about "the other" (Patel & Lynch, 2013).

The challenges of teaching and learning during the pandemic have been far more quotidian. As an on-campus university, we privileged synchronous learning, and this was the basis of building our timetable. We were not global when we maintained the same timetable during the pandemic, a timetable that expected students to be in the same place, at the same time. While many asynchronous learning activities were adopted, synchronous classes required large numbers of students to set the alarm at a ridiculous hour in the morning, or to stay up late to attend a class. The best efforts of staff to engage more fully with students, by adding drop-in sessions, would have very little impact when scheduled at 9 AM.

We have never been global when making judgements based on English language proficiency. In conducting on campus classes in English we make all manner of assumptions about the dominance of the English language, the degree of comfort with the language, and then wondered why everyone did not engage in classroom discussion to the same extent. We as an institution, have aimed for shared experiences among our students, transcending language and cultural differences. However, there has been alienation between student groups in multiple areas, primarily through a deficit model associated with "international" students (Bista, 2018; Surtees, 2019). This model accentuates the incongruence between international students' knowledge and institutional cultural norms, implicitly privileging local students.

The emphasis placed on English as the language of instruction and assessment can translate into an implicit prohibition of multilingualism: a silencing of languages other than English in the classroom. A globalised higher education sector is not one of easy communication across language and culture, but frequently enforces a hierarchy of English and "other" languages (Kubota, 2016; Sperduti, 2017). In our online classes in the past two years, we would rotate around the break-out rooms and sometimes hear lively conversations in Mandarin. Was this the same group who occupied the quiet table in tutorial groups in previous years? The "room" was full of lively and engaged conversation, the contents of which were reported back to the class by one of the more confident English (as a second or third language) speaker and reflected a nuanced discussion of themes through shared cultural knowledge. What has changed? Did not being in "our" space empower multi-lingual students to choose their preferred voice and cultural context?

We have never been global in meeting the challenge of national borders, and the complex choices students must make based on their nationality and their study site. Some of these happen routinely - for example the student from Turkey who had enrolled in a PhD in an Australian university prior to COVID. In the second year of her PhD her request to travel to Turkey to undertake fieldwork was initially declined

on the basis of the political atmosphere in that country. She was told that to travel to Turkey represented an unacceptable risk to her. To be told that you are in danger returning to the country of which you are a citizen, in which you have lived your life, in which your family still resides, a country she calls home, is clearly distressing. She did ultimately obtain permission to travel. But then the pandemic descended on us, and she was denied permission to travel back to Australia, as she was now considered a risk to us.

For many of us, the pandemic was the first time that our travel plans, both personal and professional, were disrupted by travel advisories that listed our historically 'low risk' destinations as 'high risk'. The striking nature of Australia's recent designation as 'avoid all travel' by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in early 2022 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.) should give us all a sense of how some of our international students felt prior to the pandemic when their home countries were labelled as dangerous destinations by government advisories issued by other nations. Indeed, the example of the PhD student above is certainly not an extraordinary one as many universities in the global north have policies that place restrictions or lengthy approval processes on students travelling to regions under travel advisories, even it is their own home country, under the guise of risk management (Bhattacharya, 2014; Piccolino & Franklin, 2019).

We have also never been global in the way in which we think of our diverse student body. We became aware that home is often not a singular place for our students or indeed for many of our colleagues who call multiple countries home, these homes are separated by distance but not by connection to the people and things that make them home. For many of our international students, home was in Australia in the last two years, but many of those who chose to call Australia home during the pandemic were stranded with food insecurity (Ross, 2021) and loss of income with no government allowance, and over-crowded housing (Morris et al., 2020), often due to their visa status (Farbenblum & Berg, 2020).

So if we could not maintain the imagined community, what had we become? And if we were not a global university during the period of COVID where were we? Put simply, we were largely at home.

When Home is Not a Metaphor

Where is home – we learnt that international students were not all "going home" to their country of origin, but remained in Australia, having established a home here. Home for many was where we were, be it our shared home, office, room, or bedroom. The University was vacant.

The term "when home is not a metaphor" was used in an article by Gerado Blanco (2021) with the evocative title "Global citizenship education as a pedagogy of dwelling" (p. 433). It struck us that teaching online over the past two years required that we understand the particularities of home for each student. Home was not a metaphor for a country that our students had left, to enter our country, our space, our institution. Home was the place from which we were all speaking, a specific place in which we were situated, and each of us occupied a very different, geographic, cultural, familial, domestic space.

In many cases we were literally inviting ourselves into the homes of our students, and vice versa. This is a bit of a game changer - not quite the imagined community of the University campus - our community, into which students entered. As Kaya (2020) notes "Each international student has a world; not even one world but different individual small worlds that you have to navigate" (p. 124). During online delivery these worlds were being revealed to us, not always through the background of a face on a Zoom screen, but through greater insight into the circumstances of home for each of our students.

In our usual on-campus teaching, we do not confront the practicalities of home as a site of learning. Meeting at this border - or perhaps more accurately crossing the border into the worlds of our students - meant being confronted by the reality of many students' lives.

Our experiences teaching and working with students were illuminating during the last two years for what we learnt about students' homes. The home situations in which many of our students were living, seriously impacted on the likelihood of their success. We were not talking about home countries here, or generalised cultures, we were hearing about very specific domestic experiences and conditions of home.

We certainly know that one of the most fundamental barriers to a successful online learning experience is access to technology, and the degree of comfort on the part of both students and staff with technology (Khobragade et al., 2021; Martin, 2020). We all experienced the heightened anxiety attached to a synchronous teaching activity, with unstable internet connection and a fear that someone else in the household would suddenly draw on what limited bandwidth there was. We know too that this was a real issue for students with unstable internet, or sharing the use of that internet with other members of a household, let alone engaging in online discussion when other members of the household were trying to sleep.

Earlier in the pandemic much was made of the way in which teaching from our home into students' homes created different forms of engagement and indeed a possibility of conviviality. This did occur in some cases, but not all students "invited us" into their homes, many understandably did not want to, and for many it was just an impossibility.

The question of "cameras on" or "cameras off" was one which pre-occupied many of us. Notions of engagement were unpacked (Boardman et al., 2021; Sage et al., 2021), and expectations of students needed to be interrogated (Castelli & Sarvary, 2021; Gherheș et al., 2021). Why were we insistent about cameras on? Did the camera help us to assure ourselves we were somehow replicating the on-campus community? Was our preoccupation with seeing our students somehow part of a privileged expectation that we should know the other? Ultimately, we knew that we could not insist upon students turning on their cameras. This was absolutely within the hands of students. We needed to meet students where they were, and where they were was not always where we expected, and with many students joined our online meetings from workplaces, on transit or from a shared bedroom.

Meeting students where they were, rather than them "being here", in our imagined community, required a significant shift in our sense of self.

A Journey Toward Humility

Thus, as we reflect, we consider that during the pandemic, rather than learning about the other we learnt about ourselves and our institution.

To deliver 100% of our teaching online represented one of the most significant cultural challenges to the University, its sense of self, and our sense of self as academics. It was as if we were stripped of our finery and could no longer draw on the supports of the imagined community, its traditions and conventions. In fact, the delivery of teaching was to be the only measure of the student experience as the on-campus delights of the University, the opportunity to be transformed by an immersive experience in an educational setting, did not exist.

We know that the model of teaching in which the charismatic professor enters the room and provides a spellbinding lecture to swooning students is best left to filmmakers. Nonetheless the physical

teaching environment on our university campuses, especially among Australia's 'Group of Eight' comprising Australia's leading research-intensive universities, in large part still resembles a theatre, with the academic taking the stage. Even in group learning environments, theatres in the round, with tables distributed around the room, we retained agency to move between and among groups of students, keeping our distance or intervening. When teaching online we largely remained stationary and static in front of our screens, further contributing to our sense of immobility and groundedness.

Online was arguably less hierarchical, a more horizontal relationship (Impastato, 2020), flat screen to flat screen. Indeed, we all reached the borders of our technological competence, and tested the boundaries of our technological comfort. Many academics entered a technological zone that belonged more to our students, a digital competence and awareness that wildly exceeded that which we had come to acquire in the course of our teaching, and indeed working lives. Our technological competence was also tried as our Chinese international students educated us on the challenges and uncertainties inherent on relying on Virtual Private Network (VPN), and the inequities associated with accessing our course content without such considerations (Wang, 2022). It was evident that in many ways we were not the experts in this domain, nor have we always been 'global' with how we approach our online communities with our international students in mind.

We were also not experts in meeting students where they were in many locations and homes. We all stumbled around trying to attain varying levels of intercultural competence, based on gross generalizations about largely national cultures (many with their own invented traditions). We as individual educators, and in some cases as a university, wondered whether we needed to be more cognisant of national holidays or particular political events. As we did so it was clear that we were again seeking to know a generalized "other".

Perhaps the most overwhelming experience of the past two years has been a journey toward humility, and here we are drawing on work by Ann Curry-Stevens, in her 2010 article "Journeying toward humility: Complexities in advancing pedagogy for the privileged". She wrote:

"*Any privileged body*, (and we can agree that universities represent a certain type of privilege, and ours are privileged bodies), *even those who work in dedicated ways towards being an ally* (as so many of us in universities do), *building expertise about the 'other' is ripe with arrogance and error*" (p.69).

We like to think that in our ignorance, discomfort and anxiety we had to some extent embarked on a journey toward humility.

Conclusion

With this essay, we would like to contribute to the discussion of starting afresh the investigation of a new epistemic framework of internationalization at the global, institutional and curriculum levels. In our context, we stocktake our experiences over the last two years with internationalization front of mind. We have come to acknowledge the very real role we play as academics in the success of internationalization agendas (Childress, 2010), and realised the way we enact internationalization in the classroom can impact broader institutional level strategic internationalisation policies (Nguyen, 2021). As we reflect in order to move forward, we consider our role in what Castiello-Gutierrez (2019) calls "purposeful internationalization" wherein our actions make meaningful contributions to internationalization focused on the common good rather than market gains for universities (p. 93). Looking ahead, there is still so much to learn about what changes the last two years have brought to us: the interaction in the classroom, students'

learning and socioemotional experience, our role as a teacher, and our relationship with learners. We must also consider how our classrooms may act to privilege English monolingualism as a global academic language (Kubota, 2014) and contribute to the diffusion of Western pedagogical traditions globally (Sperduti, 2017).

When we return to campus, we hope to be able to see the University as so much more than an imagined community. We want to retain the sense that the University is the students, and not only as a class, or a cohort, not as a nationality or linguistic grouping, but also, and particularly, as individuals in and from their own worlds, worlds that we are privileged at times to be able to enter. With the understanding of the University as students, we now also face the challenge of addressing the hegemony of Western pedagogies and of the English language in our classrooms (Beyer, 2022) and broader institutional environments as complicit in generating a global educational regime that is neither neutral nor universally applicable (Begum & Saini, 2019).

Thus, like many of our students coming from diverse learning cultures, in the course of the pandemic, academic staff came to share an experience of being in a completely new territory, one which we needed to navigate our way around. The borders of our knowledge became exposed, we may have been grounded in one place, but we engaged with students in so many places. We crossed borders and re-negotiated the border between academics and students, and in some instances, students took back power.

Of course, imagined communities, invented traditions and the like implicitly hold and perpetuate power. Humility on a personal level may not be sufficient to shake up these conventions, we may need a certain amount of cultural courage to hold open spaces on our campuses, to further unpack “pedagogies of dwelling”, as alternative forms of global citizenship. We put this out as an aspiration, we do not know what it requires of us, or of an institution.

But then one thing we hope we have all learned from the past two years is that not knowing is okay.

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21st Century Universities: Campuses Or Business Parks?

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused massive disruption to business as usual across all industries, including education, and there is a growing consensus that the higher education (HE) sector may never go back to 'business as usual'. While universities are now developing strategies for 2030, several management consultancies are projecting a very challenging HE landscape in the next decade. Suggestions, from the death of the normal university campus to shutdowns, mergers and collaborations are widely predicted including new opportunities for growth. University administrators should develop innovative strategic plans to address the challenges and harness the growth opportunities. Although other industries have faced such disruptions and have coped with responses such as partnerships and mergers, it may be time for universities to reconsider business models for the future. The strategies adopted in the aviation industry have been used to recommend a way forward for universities.

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The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the dialogue on the future of universities, especially the university campuses. The higher education sector has been shaken by the pandemic (Purcell & Lumbreras, 2021), exposing the fragility of its operating model. While there are concerns about the future of higher education, the post-COVID education landscape is anticipated to be one of high growth (Evans-Greenwood et al., 2015; EY, 2021; KPMG, 2020; PWC, 2020). Universities must develop strategic plans by assessing the external environment to address the immediate challenges and to capitalise on the projected growth. A framework of 'mobilise, stabilise, and strategise' as proposed by PWC (2020) is applied to suggest short-, medium-, and long-term strategies for universities. While appropriate short- and medium-term strategies will help stabilise universities, careful planning based on robust 'what if' scenarios is essential for long-term survival and growth. The 'what if' scenarios projected by EY (2021) have been adopted as a base for suggested long-term strategies in relation to the three key areas of a university: teaching, research, and buildings. Although the higher education sector is experiencing this upheaval now, other industry sectors have previously been exposed to similar upheavals and have coped by adopting various strategies. This article draws a comparison between the higher education sector and the aviation industry in extrapolating potential operating models for universities. The switch to new operating models may be the key to the survival and progression of many institutions.

Strategic Management Theory

Strategic management has been defined by Nag et al. (2007, as cited in Jasper & Crossan, 2012) as the initiatives to enhance organisational performance in the external environment. In recent years, Australian universities have experienced several challenges that were further exacerbated by the effects of the pandemic, creating an imperative for universities to examine strategic and operating models. The process of developing strategies follows three basic steps: environmental appraisal, strategy formulation, and strategy implementation (Jofre,

2011). Managers can use various tools such as SWOT, PEST, and competitor analysis to conduct environmental scanning. Based on the intelligence gathered, multiple strategies are formulated at corporate, business, and functional level. Finally, the chosen strategy is implemented (Jofre, 2011). For the purposes of this article, focus is mainly on the first two steps of the strategic management process instead of applying any of the strategic management theories. The Political, Economic, Social and Technological (PEST) tool is adopted to assess the threats and opportunities in the HE environment. Corporate level strategies are suggested to address these challenges and exploit the opportunities, based on 'what if' scenarios. These are expected to provide direction to university administrators to conduct further detailed analysis based on the preferred strategic management theories, such as Resource-based theory or Agency theory (Hitt et al., 2021).

The higher education environment in Australia

The PEST (Sammut-Bonnici & Galea, 2014) analysis of the factors impacting the higher education sector highlights a range of issues that were plaguing the sector before the pandemic. Politically, on the domestic front, the sector has been impacted by the reduction in funding from the federal government, caps on student places, and the Australian government's new Job-ready Graduates Package, supporting some disciplines over others (Howard, 2021). Externally, the relationship between Australia and other countries impacts the sector in the form of the number of international student enrolments, as already seen in the U.S. because of domestic politics and the trade war with China (Ghosh et al., 2021). This is one factor of concern, especially considering the current tensions between Australia and China, where most international students come from (Thatcher et al., 2020).

Economically, the flow-on effect of the reduction in funding has been the rise in the cost of delivering undergraduate and post-graduate courses, impacting the cost of university degrees for domestic and international students (Ghosh et al., 2021), which has triggered students to look for alternatives.

Socially, the traditional demographics of university students (Rubin, 2013) have changed, with a higher number of mature age students undertaking university study. This trend is only expected to rise. We are already seeing the trend of anytime, anywhere access to education that needs to fit around students' lifestyles.

Technologically, there has been a massive disruption to the traditional business model of universities with the advancements in telecommunications and internet technologies (Rubin, 2013). Content is freely available for users to consume, anytime, anywhere, via multiple devices, based on their interests and objectives. Several educators are developing Open Education Resources (OERs) (OER Commons, 2021) for teaching courses and/or modules that are shared with students, and are freely available to other institutions. There has also been a movement toward Zero Textbook Costs (ZTC) (CUNY, 2021) helping to alleviate education costs for students (OERu, 2021), which according to Ghosh et al. (2021) is an important factor for students and their families. Over the last decade there have been new delivery models such as the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) that offer free content and charge only for certification. These types of platforms are only expected to grow.

The new strategic documents and plans released by universities focus on improving student experience and other aspects of university functions; however, it is not clear whether universities are shifting towards a new operating model. This article aims to bridge that gap by suggesting some corporate level strategies that could be considered by universities to future proof from similar shocks. The focus of the article is on public universities involved in teaching and research.

Impact of COVID-19 on the Higher Education Sector and the Australian Economy

As part of the strategy development process, businesses must scan the external environment for opportunities and threats with the aim of exploiting the first and eliminating or minimising the latter (Hitt et al., 2021). The major threat to the HEIs because of the COVID-19 pandemic has been in the form of direct and indirect financial losses. The direct financial losses resulted from the travel restrictions causing a drop in international student enrolments, a major source of income for universities. According to Hurley and Dyke (2020, as cited in Thatcher et al., 2020), the sector is likely to experience a cumulative income loss of AUD 19 billion by 2023. An indirect impact on the sector is anticipated in the form of reduced philanthropic donations (Croucher & Locke, 2020) as businesses suffer income losses due to the pandemic. Thatcher et al. (2020) predict that this may result in reduced research output because of the lack of public and private funding.

They also raise concerns over the post pandemic funding allocation priorities of the Australian government because of the exclusion of the sector in various support packages offered.

Traditional Operating Model in Crisis

In the 20th century, the higher education sector experienced exponential growth owing to the economic justification of 'human capital theory' and social justification of equal opportunity, underpinned by the growth of the middle classes (KPMG, 2020). An investment in individuals through formal education (Nerdrum & Erikson, 2001) was linked to economic growth (KPMG, 2020). This led to the growth of fee-paying international students from countries that lacked high quality education facilities into Australia, Canada, UK, and the U.S. (KPMG, 2020). However, this has changed markedly in the last decade with consistently shrinking funding, and the new focus on job-ready graduates funding package. Thus far, the gap between the funding and costs has been bridged by the income generated from international students. The reduction in funding, coupled with rising costs of delivering degrees, inefficient administration, and the inability to scale a face-to-face delivery model are contributing to the financial crisis highlighted by the pandemic (Thatcher et al., 2020). Another factor plaguing the sector is the Baumol cost disease syndrome (KPMG, 2020), where the increase in staff wages is not correlated to an increase in productivity. COVID has exposed the financial vulnerability of the sector, highlighting that the traditional operating model of universities is in crisis (KPMG, 2020).

Post-COVID Education Landscape

Although COVID has wreaked havoc in the higher education sector, scholars project that there will be several growth areas requiring skilled personnel, as well as opportunities for upskilling, reskilling and retraining people who lost jobs during the pandemic (Evans-Greenwood et al., 2015; PWC, 2020). There is expected to be a focus on vocational courses (KPMG, 2020) with a high likelihood of jobs at the end. There will be more interest in shorter courses and degrees. Stackable qualifications (Evans-Greenwood et al., 2015; EY, 2021) are anticipated to become popular where students would only study a subject or two at a time instead of enrolling in a whole degree. Students may keep coming back as and

when they require a new skill resulting in a more ‘just-in-time skill’ approach to education (Evans-Greenwood et al., 2015). This would also mean a rise in micro-credentialling (Evans-Greenwood et al., 2015; EY, 2021; KPMG, 2020; PWC, 2020). As an outcome of these anticipated changes, the income for universities would be more fragmented rather than a chunk for each student completing a qualification.

Proposed Model

The strategic plans and models proposed for the next few years will be the key to the success or failure of institutions. Several management consultancies and scholars (Howard, 2021; KPMG 2020; PWC, 2020) have proposed scenarios to develop robust strategic plans. The one discussed in this article is aligned with the framework proposed by Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) called “Mobilise, Stabilise, and Strategise” (PWC, 2020) in relation to the short-, medium- and long-term strategies.

In the short-term, the focus is on survival by addressing immediate challenges (Hitt et al., 2021) and as such the sector mobilised to cope with the impact of the pandemic by swiftly pivoting to online delivery and streamlining operations by reducing employee costs that account for about 57% of the total expenses (Thatcher et al., 2020).

The medium-term goal for universities would be to stabilise (PWC, 2020) positions which have been affected by revenue decline due to the pandemic (Hitt et al., 2021). The lack of stability due to the exclusion from the federal support package was compensated for by the state governments. For example, the New South Wales (NSW) government offered commercial loans to the universities to address COVID related challenges (Thatcher et al., 2020).

Moving forward to further stabilise its position, the sector would need to diversify the international student pipeline, as currently most of the students arrive from five countries, where China is one of the biggest markets (Thatcher et al., 2020). However, based on the current tension between China and Australia there is a likelihood that not as many Chinese students will be coming to Australia for higher education. Also, countries such as China and India are aiming to retain students domestically by improving higher education facilities (KPMG, 2020).

With the changes in the funding model, there is a need to look for alternative sources of income (PWC, 2020) as well as improve operational efficiencies. Over the years, universities have changed methods of operation by acting like corporations (Howard, 2021) with students as customers, and as such, need to further streamline operations to improve efficiency, just like any other industry (Howard, 2021; Thatcher et al., 2020).

For the long-term, universities need to strategise (PWC, 2020) to adapt to the 'new normal' post-pandemic (Hitt et al., 2021). Any robust strategy should be based on good 'what if' scenarios (Verity, 2003) imagining a variety of future situations and preparing for it. That way organisations are prepared for good as well as bleak future scenarios. In the current unstable environment, several management consultancies have projected a range of extreme scenarios for which universities should prepare.

'What If' Scenarios

To develop a robust long-term strategy, it is essential to question the age-old assumptions and develop some 'what if' scenarios. To date, universities have depended on the previous good times continuing (KPMG, 2020). EY (2021) have projected the following scenarios:

1. ***What if the demand for international education may have already peaked?***

As vaccinations increase and restrictions decrease, international students will be able to come to Australia, which is what the sector is lobbying for. However, the projection is that the numbers may never return to the pre-COVID levels or as projected by Li and Haupt (2021, as cited in Chan, 2021) take years to recover. The demand for international education may have already peaked.

2. ***What if the demand for traditional education has already peaked?***

The linear nature of education may also be coming to an end, where students went from high school to university to a job; instead, students may be taking a job straight after high school instead of investing in a 3–4 year degree.

3. ***What if the traditional classroom is 'dead'?***

Digital native students are already consuming content differently compared to the previous generations. It is anticipated that future students will be consuming content online rather than sitting in face-to-face classes, impacting the traditional 'classroom' model.

4. What if the workplace is the new university?

If students choose to take a job straight after high school, it would be up to the employers to provide training, as required.

5. What if the government funds the students directly?

What if the federal government funding goes to students directly, instead of to universities, how would the sector cope with that?

Areas of Focus

The sample 'what if' scenarios outlined in the previous section are key when developing a robust strategy for the future and protecting the sector from future shocks. There are three key areas that must be considered when developing long-term strategies. The core purpose of universities is to train the future workforce of the country, as such, teaching (Rubin, 2013) is one of the key focus areas for any university. This is followed by research (Rubin, 2013), which is essential for generating new knowledge for the benefit of society, and global rankings. Followed by the capital assets, such as, buildings. Moving forward, a clear strategy is required for each area.

Teaching

Teaching encapsulates the dissemination of old and new knowledge to society (KPMG, 2020). The key factors impacting this area are the 'students as customers' mentality, limited domestic and international student pipelines, the limitation of face-to-face delivery models to increase the reach and market share (KPMG, 2020), and the emergence of new student mobilities (Ghosh et al., 2021).

To ensure survival, universities must attract students, because if there are no students there are no universities. This closely links with the projected 1, 2, 3 'what if' scenarios. Some key factors to consider when developing a strategy for this area are the changing demographics of university students, attracting students from more varied sources, embracing technology-based models to scale up delivery, and re-look at new delivery models as suggested by Ghosh et al. (2021) to address student mobility challenges.

In teaching the future generations, it is important to note that we are now in the 'age of customers' (KPMG, 2020), changing the age-old power dynamic between a university and its students. Thus, student experience would be a key differentiating factor to attract enrolments (KPMG, 2020). The 'what if' scenario

5 where, potentially, the government may fund students directly, can only be addressed by excellent student experience. This is evident in the strategic plans proposed by several universities, where the student experience is at the core of its operations (Macquarie University, 2020).

Simultaneously, it is important to diversify the domestic and international student pipelines (KPMG, 2020). The 'widening participation' (Bradley et al., 2008) agenda is contributing towards it on the domestic front. In relation to international student enrolments, a new strategy is required to address the over-reliance on a few countries. Another recommended approach to international education is the Transnational Education (TNE) where institutions and academics go to the students instead of students travelling overseas (Chan, 2021; Schüller, 2020; Ghosh et al., 2021) thereby making education affordable.

Technology driven models to scale up education must be embraced (KPMG, 2020). The new generation of digital natives (Kesharwani, 2020), who have grown up with social media, choose to consume content differently from the previous generations, for example, Tik Toks, or Netflix types of business models. Technology platforms such as Straighterline and Udemy (Gallagher & Palmer, 2020) are already capitalising on these new models. And just as technology opens the market reach by allowing universities to reach remote students, conversely, it increases exposure to competition from international providers, which means universities would have to make extra efforts to stand out.

Research

Historically, universities have been responsible for generating new knowledge via research and progressing society (EY, 2021). Research has been the key factor in achieving high global rankings that have a flow-on effect of attracting international students and funding (KPMG, 2020). This area relates to 'what if' scenarios 2 and 4.

In the post-COVID landscape, research will be important to drive innovation and the growth of the nation (PWC, 2020). However, the new Job-ready Graduates Package is aimed only at funding the cost of teaching (Howard, 2021). This creates a gap for funding research that may be addressed through sponsorship from industry partners (EY, 2021). Universities would need to be more self-sustaining, thus, any in-house innovations would have to be commercialised to gain financial returns. Universities could set up innovation hubs and incubation

centres to promote innovation, especially in regional areas (EY, 2021). Strong university-industry partnerships will be helpful to address 'what if' scenarios 2 and

Buildings

The main reason that the sector missed out on a support package from the federal government is because universities are asset rich; however, these assets are not contributing towards income for the universities (Howard, 2021). These assets have been the cornerstone of competitive advantage for universities, however, now pose a challenge in view of redeployment and can become a liability (Hitt et al., 2021). Therefore, it is essential to re-evaluate the use of the buildings, which means either selling or repurposing. Although, there will still be a need for face-to-face teaching and an on-campus experience for students, it may not be in the traditional form. Also, future students are more likely to study online and only come to campus for short stints. Thus, massive campuses would have to be re-imagined away from traditional places to learn. Universities could develop partnerships with industry to share spaces. The rooms and buildings could be repurposed for industry and community involvement (Howard, 2021; PWC, 2020) with the aim of "transforming communities" (Ofoyuru, 2018 as cited in Bekele & Ofoyuru, 2021).

The strategies for research and buildings together will help forge university and industry partnerships. This will help to address 'what if' scenario 4, where universities could train the staff of industry partners and have an arrangement for students to be employed with those partners.

Possible Strategies – A Comparison With the Aviation Industry

The goal for universities would be to stabilise in the short-term and strategise to capture a decent share of the post pandemic growth market; however, the question is whether each university can develop and action the above-mentioned suggested strategies, independently, within a short time. The speed with which universities react would determine who survives and thrives, becomes more niche, or perishes. The top-ranking universities are expected to manage owing to its 'brand' value (Bradley, 2020). However, the institutions in the lower and middle band (Lester, 2018) should evaluate the ability to forge ahead independently or look for alternatives. This may require more entrepreneurial strategies (Hitt et al., 2020, as cited in Hitt et al., 2021) at corporate level, such as "strategic alliances, mergers, and acquisitions" (Jofre, 2011, p. 39). Alliances among universities have

already been seen in the form of global alliances, as well as domestically when applying for research grants (Lester, 2018). It may be time to envisage alliances domestically in delivering qualifications.

Some potential strategies for the HE sector have been identified from what happened in the aviation industry. In the 1990s, the major airline companies, aka 'legacy carriers', faced challenges including increased compliance costs and competition from low-cost 'no-frills' carriers (Croucher & Locke, 2020; SIA Partners, 2018). This scenario is comparable to what the large, established universities are experiencing in the form of reduced government funding (Howard, 2021), higher compliance requirements after the establishment of the new Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (Baird, 2013), increased costs of delivery, and competition from low-cost digital delivery options such as the MOOCs (KPMG, 2020). Some of the strategic alliances that evolved among the airline companies have been outlined below and envisioned as to how those models could relate to universities.

Interlining

A commercial agreement between two airlines, servicing a leg of the journey each, where passengers move from one to the other without having to transfer luggage or re-check in (SIA Partners, 2018). Similar collaboration between universities could be seen where students could switch from one provider to another without having to transfer or re-register, ensuring a smooth experience for students while partners manage technicalities in the background. It could also be imagined that one university would deliver content while the other administers assessments. There are similar arrangements seen when expanding overseas with local partners, such as the recent growth in the 'microcampus' concept (Ghosh et al., 2021); however, this may become more common on the domestic front.

Codeshare

A commercial arrangement between two or more companies to share the same flight. It improves the choice of flights for customers, and enhances market reach for organisations (SIA Partners, 2018). Similarly, a conglomerate of universities could deliver a qualification or multiple qualifications offering a broader choice for students. A future where a qualification is delivered via a platform where each member contributes a share of students and delivers various

parts of the course. A movement in that direction is already seen in the courses offered via MOOCs (Lester, 2018).

Joint Ventures

Joint Ventures have been successfully used by airline companies to overcome barriers to entry in new markets by sharing the capital and risks (SIA Partners, 2018). This is also seen in the HE sector when it comes to global alliances for expanding into new markets. Domestically, it is seen in the case of speciality qualifications, for example, the joint medical program offered by Charles Sturt University and Western Sydney University (Charles Sturt University, 2022). We could anticipate similar joint ventures when offering a range of qualifications, not just specialist ones.

Value alliance

The previous strategies mentioned were adopted by the legacy carriers when faced with competition from low-cost flight companies. However, now the 'no-frills' carriers have also developed a model for improving efficiency called the 'value alliance' focused on distribution and sales. It allows partners to connect sales platforms to sell ancillary services from any of the airlines' websites. Ancillary services have been stated to cost up to 25% of the turnover of a company (SIA Partners, 2018).

Many organisations, including higher education providers, are moving towards a matrix organisational structure to improve efficiency and reduce administration costs. Can a 'value alliance' be envisaged across universities for a further reduction in administrative costs? If universities move towards adopting any of the above strategies, a 'value alliance' would seem like a natural progression.

Mergers/shutdowns

There is already a concern raised by many that the higher education sector in Australia is suffering from oversupply (Bradley, 2020; Howard, 2021). It is expected to result in mergers (Howard, 2021) consolidating the market. However, there may be some institutions that may not survive the financial crisis and shutdown (Evans-Greenwood et al., 2020), like what was seen in the aviation industry.

Limitations

Although a comparison of the higher education sector and that of the aviation industry is presented here to recommend potential strategies based on the commonalities between the two sectors, it is acknowledged that there are some key differences. The main difference is that the aviation industry is driven by the Neo-liberal Market Model (NLMM) where the focus is on commercialisation and shareholder profit whereas the higher education sector is driven by the New Public Management (NPM) model where the sector has intrinsically been about the public good and therefore not impacted by the same factors (Marginson, 2013). This is acknowledged as the weakness of the analysis presented.

Conclusion

A review of the challenges facing the higher education sector shows that these are an outcome of a range of issues, and not just the impact of the pandemic. HE institutions have experienced exponential growth in the last century and have overcome financial challenges through international education; however, the sector is now undeniably on the cusp of massive change. While COVID has exacerbated the challenges, it has also created a great opportunity for growth and a chance of redefinition for universities. Carefully crafted strategic plans based on strong 'what if' scenarios are essential for individual institutions to survive and thrive. The strategic plans based on the model recommended by PWC (2020) of 'Mobilise, Stabilise, Strategise' has been suggested to develop short-, medium-, and long-term strategies, along with the 'what if' scenarios suggested by EY (2021). The best way for the sector to cope with this upheaval and come out stronger would be to look at the strategies adopted by other sectors. The strategies adopted in the aviation industry have been recommended in this article as a way forward. However, there are other industries the sector could imitate to ride this wave of extreme change. Whatever approach universities adopt to cope with these challenges, it is certain that future universities will not look like what we have been used to, but rather are expected to be thriving industry and community hubs, defining a new chapter in higher education.

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Codes of conduct for undergraduate teaching in the top-400 universities on the Times Higher Education World University Rankings

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ABSTRACT

Teaching codes of conduct form part of the ethics infrastructure of universities seeking to raise teaching standards and promote academic integrity. This study investigated the existence of publicly posted codes of conduct for undergraduate teaching in a random sample of 100 universities ranked among the Times Higher Education World University Rankings top-400 institutions. Based on DiMaggio &

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Powell's model of institutional isomorphism, we posited the Times Higher Education World University Rankings top-400 institutions as an organizational field. Findings reveal tepid isomorphic pressures to publicly post teaching codes of conduct among the top universities. Lower-ranked universities post codes with tenets very protective of students as clients and whose ethical infringement have legal ramifications, such as not harassing students or teaching while intoxicated from alcohol or drugs. Since a code of conduct may increase faculty members' sensitivity to ethical issues but not actually promote ethical behavior, we recommend reinforcement activities for faculty members.

Keywords: codes of conduct, faculty ethics, professional standards, teaching behaviors

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College and university faculty members possess and exercise significant autonomy in their teaching practice (Braxton & Bayer, 1999). There are at least two bases for this autonomy. The symbolic expectation for academic freedom, one of the core principles of the academic profession (Finkelstein, 1984), provides one such basis. The disciplinary and subject-matter expertise of faculty members (Baldridge et. al., 1978; Finkelstein, 1984; Scott, 1970) constitutes the other basis. Autonomy in their teaching role affords faculty members the freedom to make informed, professional judgements and choices regarding their performance of this role (Braxton & Bayer, 1999). These choices pertain to teaching practices such as course preparation and sequencing, criteria for assessing student coursework, classroom engagement with students, treatment of students in class, remaining current in their field and generally enforcing student academic codes of conduct (Braxton et al., 2002; DeAngelis, 2014). However, research shows that the academic and intellectual development of US undergraduate college students is negatively influenced by certain teaching choices made by faculty members (Braxton et al., 2004). These questionable teaching choices include those delineated by Braxton et al. (2002) such as neglecting to provide an adequate course syllabus ("course design and planning"), behaving with condescension or disrespect towards students ("in-class interactions with students"), and employing criteria other than academic performance to assign grades ("grading criteria").

These harmful choices by faculty members in their teaching role performance demonstrate the need for formal teaching codes of conduct.

Teaching codes of conduct form part of the ethics infrastructure of colleges and universities that seek to raise teaching standards and promote academic integrity or "compliance with ethical and professional principles, standards and practices" (Tauginienė, 2016; Tauginienė et al., 2018, pp. 7–8). While in general, codes of conduct establish "expectations and standards for behavior" for individuals within institutions (Tauginienė et al., 2018, p. 13), teaching codes specifically provide guidelines to deter faculty members in colleges and universities from making choices in teaching that negatively affect the academic and intellectual development of students. By stipulating "quality professional standards for teaching" and indicating the "fundamental ethics that inform the work of faculty members," these codes of conduct apprise faculty members of expected teaching behaviors and provide a clear framework for the professional choices that faculty make about their teaching role performance (Lyken-Segosebe et al., 2018, p. 290). Through this delineation of expected teaching behaviors, formal teaching codes of conduct become a framework of professional conduct that assist faculty members to serve students as clients. This professional obligation, known as the ideal of service, means that teaching faculty make choices based on the needs and welfare of students (Goode, 1969). In this sense, codes of conduct for teaching also safeguard student welfare in the classroom by providing guidance to faculty as they make choices in their teaching role and limiting those choices that negatively affect students as clients (Braxton & Bayer, 1999). Teaching codes of conduct therefore balance the autonomy of faculty members and the need for professional self-regulation with the protection of students as university clients (Lyken-Segosebe et al., 2018).

Promoting teaching codes of conduct lies with individual colleges and universities (Braxton & Bayer, 2004). In their Guidelines for an Institutional Code of Ethics in Higher Education, the International Association of Universities and the Magna Charta Observatory go further to state that these institutions also have the responsibility "to raise awareness in society of the decisive role that they [Codes] play in promoting ethical values and integrity" (IAU-MCO, 2012, p. 2). Colleges and universities can exercise these responsibilities by publicly posting

their codes of conduct for teaching, thus communicating to internal and external stakeholders their affirmation of good teaching practices.

Research studies have found that colleges and universities within the United States and across various institutional types—community colleges, baccalaureate colleges and universities, masters' colleges and universities, and research universities of very high research activity—publicly post formal codes of conduct for undergraduate teaching on their websites (Lyken-Segosebe et al., 2012; Lyken-Segosebe et al., 2018; Rine et al., 2021). However, there is a dearth of research literature on whether universities outside the United States promulgate similar codes to safeguard the welfare of one of their principal clients, the undergraduate student. This deficiency in the research literature motivated the current study, which utilized a proposed code of conduct for undergraduate teaching (Braxton & Bayer, 2004) to ascertain the incidence of publicly posted codes of conduct for undergraduate teaching at universities globally.

Specifically, we focused on universities included in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings top-400 institutions (Times Higher Education, 2020). Given that countries may apply various terminologies to distinguish their in-country types of colleges and universities, this study applied a universal distinguishing factor—their international Times Higher Education ranking—for cross-country comparison of colleges and universities. This distinguishing factor provides a measure of the international stature of these institutions. The findings of this study demonstrate the degree to which English-speaking universities ranked among the top 400 institutions of the world strive to safeguard the welfare of their undergraduate students through the existence of publicly posted codes of conduct for teaching undergraduate students. The findings of this study contribute to the further development of the literature on this line of inquiry on teaching codes of conduct in institutions of higher education. Specifically, it adds an international perspective to the US-based research of Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2012), Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2018), and Rine et al. (2021).

Literature Review

Public Posting of Codes of Conduct for Undergraduate Teaching in US Colleges and Universities

Higher education institutions do not share a common formal teaching code of conduct. Within the extant literature, guidelines and recommendations are available to colleges and universities for developing codes of academic ethics. These include the International Association of Universities and the Magna Charta Observatory's *Guidelines for an Institutional Code of Ethics in Higher Education* and the *Statement of Professional Ethics of the American Association of University Professors* (AAUP, 2009; IAU-MCO, 2012). However, Braxton and Bayer's (2004) proposed code of conduct for undergraduate teaching is the only known fully specified teaching code of conduct presented as a model for higher education institutions. Its ten tenets originated from their research study that surveyed 949 faculty members at a variety of institutional types in the USA (research universities, comprehensive colleges and universities, liberal arts colleges, and two-year colleges) about inappropriate behaviors in teaching role performance (Braxton & Bayer, 2004). The norms that formed the basis of the code's original ten tenets were empirically derived from faculty members' perceptions of inappropriate behavior. These inappropriate behaviors resonated with Merton's (1973) definition of norms as prescribed and proscribed behavior patterns. In their delineation of these ten tenets, Braxton and Bayer (2004) employed three principles: the tenets 1) should serve to protect the welfare of students; 2) should be specific so that evidence of the teaching behaviors could be noted and assessed by students and colleagues; and 3) should be derived from empirical research. Moreover, ethical principles (see Table 3) underlie these tenets. Table 1 shows the ten tenets proposed by Braxton and Bayer (2004) and an eleventh tenet identified by Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2012). This tenet, "Harassment," was added when researchers noted that several faculty codes of conduct prohibited more general forms of harassment, distinct from sexual harassment (Lyken-Segosebe et al., 2012).

Given that the responsibility for promoting teaching codes of conduct lies with individual colleges and universities, this raised the question: to what extent do colleges and universities shoulder this responsibility by publicly posting codes of conduct that include one or more of the eleven tenets posited by Braxton and Bayer (2004) and Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2012)? Colleges and universities within the United States across various institutional types—community colleges, baccalaureate colleges and universities, masters' colleges and universities, and

research universities of very high research activity—have been found to publicly post formal codes of conduct for undergraduate teaching that include one or more of the eleven tenets listed above. When Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2012) investigated codes of conduct within US-based four-year baccalaureate level colleges, they found that most of these teaching-oriented institutions (77%) publicly post codes of conduct that include at least one of the above tenets. Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2018) extended the 2012 study by adding three additional types of colleges and universities, namely community colleges, masters' colleges and universities, and research universities of very high research activity. Findings of the 2018 study revealed that the majority of colleges and universities (76%) in their sample publicly posted codes of conduct with one or more of the eleven tenets. Codes of conduct were publicly posted by ninety-five percent (95%) of research-intensive universities. The researchers also found that the extent of posting varied across the different types of colleges and universities and the average number of tenets present in a code of conduct ranged from a low of 3.56 in community colleges to a high of 5.84 in research-intensive universities.

Using the institutional differences in both the existence and number of tenets of publicly posted codes of conduct found by Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2018) as a basis for a third study in this nascent line of inquiry, Rine et al. (2021) centered their attention on publicly posted codes of conduct for teaching in colleges and universities affiliated with the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). These researchers reasoned that colleges and universities with distinctive institutional missions and particular institutional cultures—such as military service academies, Minority Serving Institutions (e.g., HBCUs), and religiously affiliated colleges and universities—might also differ on whether or not teaching codes of conduct were publicly available to faculty members, students and external stakeholders, as well as on the number of tenets included in those codes. Rine et al. (2021) also utilized the proposed eleven tenets of the code of conduct for undergraduate teaching as a template for their analysis. However, while these researchers found that only 27% of the CCCU institutions in their study publicly posted codes of conduct for undergraduate college teaching, most were research-intensive universities.

Table 1: The Proposed Code of Conduct for Teaching Undergraduates

Category	Tenet	Evidence
Course Details	1. Undergraduate courses should be carefully planned.	• Prepare adequate course outline and syllabus. • Order textbooks and course materials in time. • Communicate dates for assignments and exams.
	2. Important course details should be conveyed to enrolled students.	• Communicate class attendance policy, reading assignments, opportunities for extra credit, grading criteria for essays on exams and papers, policy of missed or make-up exams. • Communicate changes in class time or location.
Course Content	3. New and revised lectures and course readings should reflect advancements of knowledge in a field.	• Keep up-to-date with advancements of knowledge in respective academic disciplines.
	4. Grading of examinations and assignments should be based on merit and not on the characteristics of students.	• Do not let grades be affected by personal friendships. • No preferential treatment for late or incomplete work.
	5. Various perspectives on course topics should be presented, examinations should cover the breadth of the course, and scholars' or students' perspectives at variance with the instructor's point of view should be acknowledged.	• Present various perspectives. • Acknowledge students' perspectives at variance with instructor's point of view. • Cover breadth of course in exams.

Treatment of Students	6. Students should be treated with respect as individuals.	• Refrain from treating students in a condescending or demeaning manner. • Respect students' needs and sensitivities. • Refrain from late coming to class. • Refrain from frequent early dismissals. • Be patient with slow learners.
	7. Faculty members must respect the confidentiality of their relationships with students and the students' academic achievements.	• Respect confidentiality of relationship with students. • Respect confidentiality of students' academic accomplishments.
Faculty Availability	8. Faculty members must make themselves available to their students by maintaining office hours.	• Maintain office hours. • Be prepared for student advising. • Be prepared to identify special services to deal with student problems outside faculty expertise.
Moral Turpitude	9. Faculty members must not have sexual relationships with students enrolled in their class.	• No sexual relationships with enrolled students. • Refrain from making sexual comments to students.
	10. Faculty members must not come to class intoxicated from alcohol or drugs.	• No use of alcohol or drugs on campus.
	11. Faculty members must not harass students enrolled in their classes.	• No harassment of students in an oral, written, graphic, physical or other form.

Note. Table reproduced from Braxton and Bayer (2004) and Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2012).

Furthermore, institutions posted an average of 7.5 of the eleven tenets of the code of conduct proposed by Braxton and Bayer (2004) and Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2012).

Taken together, these studies suggest that, with the exception of CCCU-affiliated colleges and universities, a majority of colleges and universities in the United States, and research-intensive universities in particular, take measures to protect the welfare of their students by publicly posting codes of conduct for undergraduate college teaching. Little is known as to whether universities in other countries, and research-intensive universities in particular, do likewise for undergraduate college teaching. We discuss this absence of literature in the next section of this review of literature.

International Literature on Codes of Conduct for Undergraduate Teaching

There is a dearth of research literature that examines whether universities outside the United States promulgate similar codes to safeguard the welfare of their client, the undergraduate student. When Tauginienė (2016) examined codes of ethics in Lithuanian public universities, the researcher found that these universities directed their efforts more to the behavior of students than to the behavior of academic staff. The literature on the international context indicates scholarly concern with the research aspect of faculty members' role performance and institutional quality assurance rather than the teaching aspect. Most literature exploring faculty conduct in the international context relate to ethical behaviors in research, publishing, and/or technology transfer (e.g., Milovanovitch et al., 2018; Reisberg, 2021) and quality assurance processes (e.g., Eaton, 2018). Furthermore, intergovernmental and nongovernmental educational organizations working in the global context focus on the quality of education (e.g., the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD]) and cross-border collaboration, research, and credentialing (e.g., the Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning [ASAIHL] and the Association of Commonwealth Universities [ACU] (ACU, n.d.; ASAIHL, n.d.; OECD, n.d.).

THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) hypothesize that organizations within a given organizational field exist within an environment that includes shared norms and values that influence the actions of individual organizations. Organizations

may be persuaded to comply with the norms and values of their environment through a process of organizational isomorphism. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that over time, organizations in the same organizational field come to share similarities in many different aspects through these pressures of isomorphism. They do so because they "compete not just for resources and customers, but for political power and legitimacy, for social as well as economic fitness" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 150).

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) delineate three mechanisms of institutional isomorphism: coercive, mimetic, and normative. Coercive isomorphism describes the adoption of norms and values by organizations because of compulsory pressures within the organizational field or from governmental or other authorities external to the organizational field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In comparison, mimetic isomorphism involves seeking trust and legitimacy from stakeholders by emulating other organizations within an organizational field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Normative isomorphism is the mechanism by which organizations, influenced by education, values, and practices of professionals and professional associations, gradually acquire the norms and values of their organizational field. In higher education, this form of isomorphism occurs when institutions participate in professional associations of peer institutions or through hiring faculty and administrators from similar institutions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

We posit that universities included in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings top-400 institutions are research-intensive universities and therefore constitute an organizational field. We do so because universities are included in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings by achieving an annual research output of at least 150 articles per year (Times Higher Education, 2021). Moreover, sub-fields may also exist within this organizational field given that the Times Rankings schema arrays universities into ten bands or categories of universities of varying degrees of institutional quality. We provide further information on the Times Rankings schema in the methodology section of this article.

Applying the formulations of DiMaggio and Powell (1983), international universities included in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings will resemble each other in the existence of publicly posted codes of conduct as well as the number of tenets included in their publicly posted codes of conduct for

undergraduate college teaching because of the pressures of institutional isomorphism. Although it is beyond the scope of this article, either mimetic or normative isomorphism may constitute the two most likely mechanisms of institutional isomorphism because of the international context of the universities in this study, which makes coercive pressures from public policy or larger society unlikely.

Our conceptual framework yields three research questions. These questions are as follows:

1. How many universities in the top-400 institutions on the 2020 Times Higher Education World University Rankings publicly post faculty codes of conduct with Braxton and Bayer's (2004) and Lyken-Segosebe et al.'s (2012) tenets, and do differences in the rate of public posting vary by the universities' international institutional stature?
2. Does the number of tenets proposed by Braxton and Bayer (2004) and Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2012) that are specified in a given code of conduct, vary by the universities' international institutional stature?
3. Among universities with publicly posted codes of conduct with tenets, does the incidence of the specific tenets grouped by faculty teaching practices vary by the universities' international institutional stature?

Research Method

Sample and Data Collection

Our sample comprised 100 institutions from the 2020 Times Higher Education World University Rankings top-400 institutions (Times Higher Education, 2020). The World University Rankings assess research-intensive universities across all their core missions—teaching, research, knowledge transfer and international outlook—using thirteen calibrated performance indicators grouped into five areas: Teaching (the learning environment); Research (volume, income and reputation); Citations (research influence); International Outlook (staff, students and research); and Industry Income (knowledge transfer) (Times Higher Education, 2020).

Cluster sampling was utilized to randomly select samples of fifty universities with English language websites within each of two tiers of the top-400 rankings (Ranking 1-200 and 201-400). Data collection was undertaken over a six-

month period (October 2020-March 2021). We defined a code of conduct as a document in which the institution outlines expected behaviors for faculty members. Some of these documents found outline would explicitly state the tenets proposed by Braxton and Bayer (2004) while others would not. To ascertain whether these universities publicly post codes of conduct for teaching, we undertook content analyses of their websites using the key words "faculty handbook," "faculty guide," "faculty manual," "employee guide," "code of conduct," "code of ethics" and "faculty policies."

Following the research of Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2012), Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2018), and Rine, et al. (2021), we used the tenets of the proposed code of conduct posited by Braxton and Bayer (2004) and Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2012) as the basis for the content analysis of the websites of the 100 universities in our sample. We sought evidence for these eleven tenets using the contents of Table 1 as a template for the construction of the variables described in the next section.

We used the code of conduct for undergraduate teaching proposed by Braxton and Bayer (2004) and extended by Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2012) for four reasons. The first reason related to the comprehensiveness of this proposed code. Its eleven tenets encapsulate a wide range of activities of central importance to college and university teaching such as course details, course content, treatment of students, faculty availability and moral behavior. Second, each of its eleven tenets resonate with literature-based ethical principles (Table 3 lists these ethical principles). Third, as previously indicated, ten of the tenets of this proposed code index empirically derived norms for undergraduate teaching that proscribe highly inappropriate teaching behaviors. The fourth reason relates to the use of this proposed code of conduct in three previous studies (Lyken-Segosebe et al., 2012; Lyken-Segosebe et al., 2018; and Rine et al., 2021) that focused on publicly posted codes of conduct for undergraduate teaching. We likewise used it to maintain consistency among the studies in this line of inquiry. Such consistency in the use of research methods enables researchers to make comparisons between their findings and those of other studies. Such comparisons also contribute to the development of the literature on this line of inquiry on teaching codes of conduct in institutions of higher education in the United States and internationally.

With regards to our sample profile, our sample consisted of 100 universities. Fifty universities were randomly sampled from within each of two

tiers (Ranking 1-200 and 201-400) of the top-400 rankings. Ninety-three (93) were public universities and seven (7) were private universities. Four (4) universities were small with an enrollment of fewer than 2,500 students; one (1) university was of medium size with an enrollment of between 2,500-4,999 students; two (2) universities were large with an enrollment of 5,000-9,999 students; and the bulk of universities in the sample (93 universities) were very large with enrollment sizes of 10,000 and more students. Independent t-tests reveal that universities within the 1-200 and 201-400 ranks were, for the most part, not statistically different in terms of institutional control, enrollment size and region of location. As Table 2 indicates, both groups of universities were on average public, large with enrollment sizes of 10,000 and more students, and located in Europe.

Table 2: T-Tests of Baseline Sample Characteristics

Baseline characteristics	**Times Higher Education Ranking**		**T-Statistic**
	1-200 (N=50)	**201-400 (N=50)**	
Public	0.90	0.96	-1.17
Size	3.88	3.8	0.63
Region	4.76	4.74	0.05

Note. *p. <0.025; **p.>0.01 ***p.<0.001

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis, t-tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) using Stata software were utilized to investigate the existence of publicly posted codes of conduct for undergraduate teaching in the sample of universities ranked among the Times Higher Education World University Rankings top-400 institutions. Prior to executing AVOVA, the homogeneity of variance assumption was tested using Levene's Test of Homogeneity. Following statistically significant main effects from the Analyses of Variance, appropriate post hoc mean comparisons were conducted.

Variables

There were four variables of principal interest in this study.

International Institutional Stature. International institutional stature was based on the ranking of institutions in the 2020 Times Higher Education World University

Rankings and coded as 1 = 1-200, 2 = 201–400, with those universities in ranked 1-200 of a higher rank than those ranked 201-400.

Code with Tenets. This variable identified whether a code of conduct existed based on the presence of one or more of the eleven tenets proposed by Braxton and Bayer (2004) and Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2012) as shown in Table 1. It was represented by a dummy variable coded as 0 = code of conduct not found or none of the eleven tenets posted on the institution's website, and 1 = one or more of the eleven tenets posted on the institution's website. We used this variable to address the first research question of this study.

Counts of Stated Tenets. For this variable, we calculated the total number of the tenets shown in Table 1 that were specified in an institution's code of conduct. This variable offers a measure of the comprehensiveness of publicly posted codes of conduct. The values of this variable ranged from 1 to 11. This variable addressed the second research question of this study.

Faculty Teaching Practices. This variable categorized faculty teaching practices by their pertinent tenets in a code of conduct into six categories of teaching practices that correspond to the types of choices faculty members can make regarding their teaching practices. This variable addressed the third research question of this study. Table 3 below shows the categories of faculty teaching practices matched with their corresponding tenets and the ethical principles that underlie each tenet. The values for Course Planning, Course Currency, and Treatment of Students range from 0 to 2. For Grading Criteria and Faculty Availability the values for these variables are either 0 or 1. The values for Moral Behavior range from 0 to 3.

Table 3: Specific Faculty Teaching Practices Organized by Tenets

Faculty Teaching Practice	Tenet	Underlying Ethical Principles
Course Planning	1. Undergraduate courses should be carefully planned.	Responsible instructors plan courses prior to their start. (Cahn, 2010)
	2. Important course details should be conveyed to enrolled students.	Students learn best when they know a course's design and direction. (Markie, 1994)
Course Currency	1. New and revised lectures and course readings should reflect advancements of knowledge in a field.	Course content should be updated between offerings to ensure it is current. (Markie, 1994)
	2. Various perspectives on course topics should be presented, examinations should cover the breadth of the course, and scholars' or students' perspectives at variance with the instructor's point of view should be acknowledged.	Professors have an obligation to assume a tolerant, open, and neutral posture that fairly presents differing perspectives representative of the wider field. (Baumgarten, 1982; Churchill, 1982; Kerr, 1996)
Grading Criteria	1. Grading of examinations and assignments should be based on merit and not on the characteristics of students.	Relevant, objective criteria should be used to assess student learning. (Smith, 1996; Strike, 1994)

Treatment of Students	1.	Students should be treated with respect as individuals.	Students should be respected as individuals. (Reynolds, 1996; Svinicki, 1994)
	2.	Faculty members must respect the confidentiality of their relationships with students and the students' academic achievements.	Trust is an indispensable element of the faculty-student relationship. (Murray et al., 1996)
Faculty Availability	1.	Faculty members must make themselves available to their students by maintaining office hours.	Student advising is an inherent developmental function of the faculty role. (Kerr, 1996; Murray et al., 1996)
Moral Behavior	1.	Faculty members must not have sexual relationships with students enrolled in their classes.	Faculty-student sexual relationships represent an egregious abuse of power. (Murray et al., 1996; Svinicki, 1994; Cahn 1994)
	2.	Faculty members must not come to class intoxicated from alcohol or drugs.	Faculty must never show personal disrespect or disregard towards persons. (Smith, 1996)
	3.	Faculty members must not harass students enrolled in their classes.	Faculty should give equal consideration and respect to all students. (Reynolds, 1996; Svinicki, 1994)

Note. Table adapted from Rine et al. (2021), Braxton and Bayer (2004) and Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2012).

Results

Findings are organized according to the three research questions that guided this study.

Research Question One: How many universities in the top-400 institutions on the 2020 Times Higher Education World University Rankings publicly post faculty codes of conduct with Braxton and Bayer's (2004) and Lyken-Segosebe et al.'s (2012) tenets, and do differences in the rate of public posting vary by the universities' international institutional stature?

Fifty-two (52) percent of the 100 universities in the study sample possess a code of conduct with one or more of the eleven tenets proposed by Braxton and Bayer (2004) and Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2012). Table 4 shows that of these 52 universities, 19 universities (or 37%) are in the highest ranking (1-200) of universities while most of these universities are ranked between 201 and 400. We find the existence of such codes does indeed differ across the two groups of rankings in a statistically significant way (chi square of 7.85, $p < .01$). Thus, universities of lower international institutional stature are more likely to have codes of conduct that include one or more of the 11 tenets than universities of a higher international institutional stature.

Table 4: Status of Universities - Codes of Conduct with One or More Tenets

Code	Times Higher Education Ranking		Total
	1-200	201-400	
Code with none of the 11 Tenets	31	17	48
Code with at least one of the 11 Tenets	19	33	52
Total	50	50	100
Pearson chi2 = 7.85 (p = 0.005)			

Research Question Two: Does the number of tenets proposed by Braxton and Bayer (2004) and Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2012) that are specified in a given code of conduct vary by the universities' international institutional stature?

As indicated in Table 5, the number of tenets varies by international institutional stature. The mean number of tenets for universities within the rank of 201-400 (mean=6.9) exceeds those of universities in the rank of 1-200 (mean=4.2). Stated differently, the codes of conduct of universities with lower levels of international stature exhibit a greater degree of comprehensiveness in the coverage of their codes of conduct than universities with higher levels of international institutional stature. Prior to executing the analysis of variance, the homogeneity of variance assumption was tested using the Levene's test of homogeneity, and heterogeneous variances were detected. The one-factor analysis was conducted using the .025 level of statistical significance to reduce the probability of committing a Type I error.

Table 5: Number of Tenets by International Institutional Stature

F-Ratio for International Institutional Stature	**Mean**		**Post-Hoc Mean Comparison**
	Ranking = 1-200 (N=19)	**Ranking = 201-400 (N=33)**	
*8.89***	4.2	6.9	201-400 > 1-200

Note. *p. <0.025; **p.>0.01 ***p.<0.001

Research Question Three: Among universities with publicly posted codes of conduct with tenets, does the incidence of the specific tenets grouped by faculty teaching practices vary by the universities' international institutional stature?

Independent t-tests reveal that universities within the 1-200 and 201-400 ranks are, for the most part, not statistically different in terms of the mean number of tenets for the faculty teaching practices on their websites. However, as Table 6 indicates, universities ranked 201-400 tend to display a higher number of tenets related to Moral Behavior, that is, faculty members must not have sexual relationships with students enrolled in their classes; faculty members must not come to class intoxicated from alcohol or drugs; and faculty members must not harass students enrolled in their classes.

Table 6: T-tests of Faculty Teaching Practices by Institutional Stature on the Times Higher Education World University Rankings

Faculty Teaching Practices	Times Higher Education Ranking 1-200 (N=19)	201-400 (N=33)	T-Statistic
Course Planning	0.89	1.27	-1.33
Course Currency	0.47	0.91	-1.85
Grading Criteria	0.74	0.57	1.15
Treatment of Students	1.00	1.15	-0.57
Faculty Availability	0.37	0.42	-0.39
Moral Behavior	0.84	2.51	-7.41***

Note. *p. <0.025; **p.>0.01 ***p.<0.001

Discussion

In conjunction with the findings of Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2018), our findings indicate that from a cross-national perspective, most international English-speaking research universities and those in the United States publicly post codes of conduct that include one or more of tenets of the eleven tenets of the code posited by Braxton and Bayer (2004). However, the proportion of these international research universities (52%) that post such codes lags substantially behind research universities in the USA given that ninety-five percent (95%) of US research universities publicly post such codes (Lyken-Segosebe et al., 2018). The moderate degree (mean=5.6) of the comprehensiveness of the coverage of the codes of conduct in international universities partially compensates for this sizable lag in their public posting, being relatively close to the average number of tenets in the codes of conduct of US research-intensive universities (mean=5.84) as found by Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2018).

The formulations of our conceptual framework provide the basis for the discussion of our findings as well as the three conclusions we subsequently offer. First, we found that universities of lower international institutions were more likely to publicly post teaching codes of conduct. Our findings suggest that universities with lower international institutional stature (rankings 201-400) exist in a shared organizational field in which isomorphic pressures exist for the public posting of codes of conduct for undergraduate teaching and for codes containing tenets

proposed by Braxton and Bayer (2004) and Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2012). The source of these pressures may be status related. Heyneman (2012) posits that having an institutional ethical infrastructure constitutes an important element of the reputation of a university, especially world class universities. He lists a code of conduct for faculty as an aspect of an ethical infrastructure. As a consequence, in order to maintain or enhance their international institutional stature, lower ranked universities publicly post more comprehensive codes of conduct than their higher ranked counterparts. In turn, mimetic and normative isomorphic pressures prevail for comprehensive codes of conduct for faculty teaching in the organizational field of English-speaking universities of lower international institutional stature. To elaborate, mimetic isomorphic pressure emerges from an initial group of universities of lower international institutional stature that publicly post comprehensive codes of conduct followed by normative pressures that develop over time as additional lower-ranked universities post such codes of conduct.

Initial mimetic and later normative isomorphic pressure to publicly post codes of conduct for undergraduate teaching may arise from regional socio-political and cultural influences. Taking into account that universities with lower international institutional stature are mostly European and North American institutions, the tendency to publicly post codes of code may reflect institutional group adherence to guidance against faculty misconduct provided by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) to protect the interests of faculty members and as espoused in the association's Statement on Professional Ethics (AAUP, n.d.). Publicly posted codes of conduct may also reflect individual European Higher Education Area (EHEA) country's efforts to harmonize their higher education institutional policies regarding values such as academic integrity and public responsibility, and promote inter-regional and international student mobility and other goals of the Bologna Process.

Theoretically and for the European countries in our sample, policy convergence theory may explain our finding that universities of lower international institutional stature (rankings 201-400) exist in a shared organizational field in which isomorphic pressures exist for the public posting of codes of conduct for undergraduate teaching. The theory rests on the notion of societies over time developing "similarities in structures, processes, and performances" (Kerr, 1983,

p. 3) and processes that shape "social structures, political processes and public policies in the same mould" (Bennett, 1991, p. 216). Research studies (e.g., Dobbins & Knill, 2009; Drezner, 2001; Heinze & Knill, 2008) have found that policy convergence is likely to be effective among countries with similar cultural backgrounds (i.e., those that share linguistic, religious, historical or other cultural linkages), institutional configurations and socioeconomic characteristics. Dobbins and Knill (2009) link policy convergence among signatories to the Bologna process to DiMaggio & Powell's (1991) notion of mimetic and normative isomorphism given the voluntary nature of the adoption of the inter-regional agreement.

The pressure to post codes may also exist because universities of lower international institutional stature may emphasize teaching alongside research. This is in comparison to universities of higher international institutional stature which may primarily emphasize research. Furthermore, universities of lower international institutional stature, with a dual emphasis on teaching and research, may experience a more significant number of problematic teaching behaviors practiced by their faculty members. The greater prevalence of these problematic behaviors enhances these institutions' vigilance regarding teaching role performance by faculty. Consequently, universities of lower international institutional stature develop and publicly post codes of conduct to convey to internal and external stakeholders the teaching behaviors of faculty desired by their university, as well as to deter and detect the problematic teaching choices of faculty members at their university.

Secondly, we found that universities of lower international stature in the Times Higher Education rankings tend to display a higher number of tenets related to moral behavior: that is, faculty members must not have sexual relationships with students enrolled in their classes; faculty members must not come to class intoxicated from alcohol or drugs; and faculty members must not harass students enrolled in their classes. This suggests that these institutions are more likely to display tenets where the ethical infringement has legal ramifications, in order to protect their students as clients.

Infractions of the tenets of teaching codes of conduct exhibited in Tables 1 and 3 negatively affect the welfare of students and quality of teaching and, therefore, constitute faculty misconduct in teaching role performance (Braxton &

Bayer, 2004). Faculty violations of tenets evoke a need for institutional mechanisms of social control (Braxton & Bayer, 2004; Braxton et al., 2004) that deter, detect and sanction such violations (Zuckerman, 1988). Therefore, we recommend that those universities without codes of conduct that are publicly posted develop, implement and promulgate them in order to deter and detect faculty violations and their negative consequences for students. This recommendation pertains particularly to the 31 universities within the category of the higher rank (1-200) of the top-400 universities of the Times Higher Education World University Rankings for which none of the 11 proposed tenets were found. In making this recommendation, we echo a similar recommendation advanced by Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2018). DeAngelis (2014, p. 216) notes that having a code of ethics may increase faculty members' sensitivity to ethical issues but not actually promote ethical or discourage unethical behavior. We therefore also recommend reinforcement activities such as periodic training of faculty members and reinforcing mentoring sessions on academic integrity, ethical principles regarding teaching and students, parameters of faculty misconduct and proactive measures that can be undertaken to avoid such misconduct (Kelley, Agle, & DeMott, 2005; Whitley Jr. & Keith-Spiegel, 2001). These measures complement the functions of a code of conduct in an institution's ethics infrastructure. In addition, where universities participate in inter-regional agreements to harmonize higher education systems, we recommend teaching codes of conduct that clearly define misconduct within wide parameters and that recognize the existence of within- and between-country differences on what constitutes unethical academic behaviors even among culturally similar countries (Altbach, 2012; Denisova-Schmidt, 2018).

Complementary to the above recommendations for institutional action, we also offer some recommendations for future research. One such recommendation concerns the extent to which individual faculty members across the different top-400 universities adhere to the tenets of codes of conduct posted by their university in their teaching practice. Future research should examine the incidence of tenets of codes of conduct among universities ranked below the top-400 universities. Such a study will determine whether these institutions display similar features to those among the universities of lower international stature (in the 201-400 rankings) in this study. Another recommendation pertains to whether those

universities that publicly post codes of conduct display and implement sanctions for faculty violations of the tenets of such codes of conduct. If known and publicly communicated, sanctions may deter wrongdoing (Ben-Yehuda, 1985; Tittle, 1980). We also recommend that future research examine the existence of institutional arrangements for the reporting of faculty violations of tenets of the codes of conduct. Without such institutional arrangements, their detection and possible sanction are unlikely (Braxton & Bray, 2012).

Implications and Conclusion

We offer three conclusions that we derive from the pattern of findings of this study. These conclusions are as follows:

1. We posited that universities included in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings top-400 institutions constitute an organizational field. A little more than half (52%) of the top-400 institutions on the Times Rankings publicly posted codes of conduct that contain one or more of the eleven tenets proposed by Braxton and Bayer (2004) and Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2012). Consequently, we conclude that tepid isomorphic pressures prevail for the public posting of such teaching codes of conduct within this organizational field.
2. Within the organizational field of universities ranked among the top-400 institutions of the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, those universities ranked lower (201-400) constitute a sub-organizational field with isomorphic pressures to post comprehensive codes of conduct for undergraduate teaching. Put differently, universities of lower international institutional stature form a sub-organizational field.
3. A mixed picture of isomorphic pressures prevails for the teaching practices that pertain to tenets of the code of conduct. Within the broader organizational field of universities included in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings top-400 institutions, isomorphic pressures tend to exist for all these teaching practices but those pertaining to moral behavior. Within the sub-organizational field populated by universities of lower institutional international stature, isomorphic pressures present themselves for the three teaching practices pertinent to moral behavior.

The increasing globalization of higher education places isomorphic pressures on its institutions. Through intergovernmental agreements and non-governmental organizations, international universities are encouraged towards practices like cross-border academic collaboration, consistency in credentialing, and implementation of quality assurance processes. It seems inevitable that these isomorphic tendencies will lead to greater particularity and granularity in defining and assessing quality—including faculty members' performance of the teaching role—and that codes of conduct for undergraduate teaching and the tenets described by Braxton and Bayer (2004) and Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2012) will be a critical part of identifying and assessing teaching quality in higher education.

Codes of conduct for undergraduate teaching present a way for institutions to balance and preserve the rights of stakeholders while ensuring desired outcomes. Faculty autonomy is critical to the academic work of research and teaching. And yet, respectful treatment of students as clients demands clear articulation of prescribed and proscribed behaviors. The manner of promulgating such a code of conduct may be critical to its success. A code of conduct developed by faculty members with broad-based input and feedback would likely be more accepted than one imposed by university administration or governmental authorities. And, as noted above, the public accessibility to the teaching code of conduct, along with clearly stated sanctions for violation and processes for reporting violations would be vital for its acceptance by students and other stakeholders. Regardless of these details, a code of conduct for undergraduate teaching helps faculty members understand the parameters of their autonomy and establishes mutual expectations for students and faculty in teaching role performance.

Limitations

There are at least four limitations that temper our conclusions and recommendations. The first limitation relates to the restriction of our sample to universities among the 2020 Times Higher Education World University Rankings top-400 institutions. It could be that universities not included among the top-400 universities exhibit a different pattern of findings than that found in this study. The second limitation relates to our random selection of universities. Randomness resulted in findings for single-digit numbers of universities within particular

regions, thus limiting our analysis. For example, our sample comprised of one university in the Africa region that possessed a code of conduct with tenets.

The third limitation relates to the information that a university makes available on its website. While policies about undergraduate teaching reflecting the tenets proposed by Braxton and Bayer (2004) and Lyken-Segosebe et al. (2012) may exist at a given university, these policies may not appear on their websites or are accessed only in a password-protected section of the websites. The keywords used in the search process presents a fourth limitation as they may not match the languages or terminologies used by the universities in the sample.

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Chinese Students' Transcultural Strategies: Intentions to Navigate Identity Conflicts and Expand Their Identities Through Hong Kong Study Experiences

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates Chinese international students' acculturation strategies and pragmatic intentions to address identity conflicts in Hong Kong study experiences through a developmental lens. We treat conflicts and stressors as indicators of active commitments and the process of engagement as strategic, goal-oriented, intentional investments to become better selves. Undergraduates (N = 95) enrolled in a Hong Kong university participated: 85 completed a Cultural Practices Questionnaire about daily activities; 10 completed semi-

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structured interviews on their acculturation strategies, identity conflicts, and justifications. Mixed method data analysis highlighted strategies rooted in goals, choices, consistency, and commitment. Several pragmatic intentions were also identified. Participants considered academic study, language learning, club activities, communicating with friends, volunteering, and interacting with diverse people as fundamental active commitments. An alternative definition of "integration strategy" is proposed to better capture students' transcultural choices and decolonize the view that students are expected to conform to the host culture.

Keywords: acculturation strategy, Chinese international students, identity conflict, identity expansion, integration, intention

Introduction

"*I come to experience, not to integrate!*" One Chinese international student expressed this intention when being interviewed about acculturation strategies chosen during his Hong Kong (HK) study experience. The current generation of Chinese students constituted one of the largest international student groups on Western campuses, including in HK (He & Hutson, 2018; Leong, 2015). Textor (Nov, 2021) reported about 703,500 Chinese students studied overseas in 2019; China was the largest country of origin for international students in the world. During 2020/21 academic year, "China is still the leading source of international students in the U.S. education market with over 317,000 [taking] courses." The majority of these students aim to achieve educational goals through international higher education rather than to immigrate to the host country. To realize their objectives, they apply "acculturation strategies" to intentionally and strategically choose daily "contact and participation" (Berry, 1997, p. 5; 2015, p. 349)—namely "cultural practices" (Kim, 2008, p. 363)—in the host culture.

Many researchers (Jackson, 2011, 2013; Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008; Leong, 2015; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Wei et al., 2007, 2012) have studied Chinese students' acculturation practices (e.g., efforts, coping strategies & participation) from cultural, psychological, and linguistic perspectives. Scholars generally agree Chinese students' coping strategies are ineffective, even labeling them "disengaging," "avoiding," or "self-segregating." They attributed these

deficiencies to students' linguistic limitation, home-culture negative impact, or mental stress. They interpreted students' imperfect adaptation according to research focusing on "dominant-group" (Berry, 2015, p. 349) colonization, wherein students are expected to "assimilate" or "integrate" (Berry, 2015) into the host culture. In this case, the host culture is the norm against which students' contact and participation (e.g., priorities for cross-cultural practices) are evaluated. By contrast, we assume a decolonized student perspective in this study, which respects students' choices of transcultural adaptations and their own navigation to identity expansion rather than impose host-culture-norm expectations upon them. This perspective is clearly exemplified in the current decolonizing education-abroad view (Woolf, 2021) that recognizes history and emphasizes process, situational learning, multidimension of the colonized society such as Hong Kong, a colony of the British Empire for over 155 years and it lies at the crossroads of the east and the west in terms of cultures, values, systems, and languages. The perspective also invites alternative voices and perspectives by applying colonization as means of understanding power imbalance and discriminating attitudes and behaviors (p. 197). Therefore, we specifically adopt a developmental lens in treating students' challenging adaptations as indicators of intentional and active commitments to navigating identity conflicts, meaning overcoming linguistic and cultural challenges while expanding selves to become better selves. We argue students' strategies should no longer be deemed "acculturation strategies" in relation to host-culture expectations; rather, be considered "transcultural strategies," optimizing choices in practices that blend multiple cultures and facilitate personal goals and better selves.

Allowing students to make sense of their own practices can also expand understanding of "hidden agenda" (Dai & Garcia, 2019) -- pragmatic intentions and identity conflicts. This perspective enables a developmental investigation of sources of stress and disengagement identified in prior literature. This study frames the process of Chinese international students' host-culture engagement as strategic, goal-oriented, and intentional investment (Norton, 1995, 2000; Norton & McKinney, 2010) in extending the self and surmounting obstacles to construct a "transcultural identity" (Rogers, 2006; Vauclair et al., 2014, p. 12) rather than as a passive, stressful, host-culture alignment journey. Students exercise *agency* (van Compernolle & Williams, 2012) through *intention* (Bach, 1987; Clark,

2003; Kecskés & Mey, 2008; Korta & Perry, 2020), *control* (Kim, 2008), and *investment* (Norton, 1995) in transcultural practices. They deliberately choose strategies and commitments to fight through "identity conflicts" (Bodycott, 2015, p. 246), including "intragroup conflicts" (Bodycott, 2015, p. 252), in the host society to expand their identities and become better selves.

Literature Review

Acculturation Strategies

To achieve educational goals, *international students including Chinese students in the present study*, defined as students who pursue education degrees or participate in degree related exchange programs rather than short-term study-abroad programs on a Western campus, e.g., an American campus and those in the other developing countries across the globe or campuses influenced by western values, languages and systems—including in HK (Yu et al., 2019), a colonized society—must interact in this setting via contact, participation, and acculturation strategies. Berry's model (1997, 2015) for investigating acculturation emphasized attitude (i.e., acculturation preferences) and behavior (i.e., actual activities). The value of maintaining a relationship with students' cultural identity and the degree of involvement in the host culture affects their choices of four acculturation strategies: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Assimilation means interacting solely with the host culture without maintaining their cultural identity. Maintaining original culture and avoiding interacting with others is separation. Integration means maintaining original culture and engaging in daily interactions with other groups. Finally, if students show little interest in cultural maintenance and relations with others, they become marginalized. Assimilation and integration are recommended for managing acculturation stress.

Berry's model (1997, 2015) underpins our study given the power of relationships among attitudes, behavior, and strategies in international education experiences. However, this model does not address the developmental power of identity conflicts which can directionally drive these relationships. The four strategies take host-culture expectations (Swarts et al., 2021, p. 190) as a key norm with little regard for students' actual intentions, goals, and strategies in choosing what and how to learn though Berry was aware of the "dominant group

influence" in the mutual acculturation process (2015, p. 350). We therefore assume a student perspective in applying Berry's acculturation framework. In particular, we investigate students' attitudes by examining their intentions, goals, and choices to reveal the developmental driving power of identity conflicts. We further explore students' behavior by examining cultural practices—daily activities within and outside classes—to overcome identity conflicts and grow. However, we relabel *acculturation strategies* (Berry, 1997, 2015; He & Hutson, 2018; Kim, 2008) as *transcultural strategies.* Doing so emphasizes students' intentional choices, which is absent from the current framework, along with students' participation and contact during multicultural practices to realize their goals in international education. This framing contrasts the typical treatment of students' journeys as a default alignment with the host-culture expectations.

Transcultural Identity Conflict and Development

International students must treat identity conflicts strategically to promote "identity expansion" (Byram, 2008; Jackson, 2011). They must also selectively engage in contact and participation in the host culture, which entails an intentional, self-extending, and strategic process that further reflects the "fluidity, diversity and hybridity" characteristics of post-millennial transcultural learners (Schmitt & Rogers, 2020, p. 177). Kim's (2008) study of acculturation and identity supports this proposition, describing "acculturation [as] a process over which each individual has a degree of freedom or control, based on his or her predispositions, pre-existing needs and interests" (p. 363). Students' identity expansion emerges from interactions among goal-oriented practices, battles over conflicts, strategic investments, and intentional choices based on their "degree of cultural integration" and "degree of freedom or control" (Kim, 2008, p. 363) in the process. Regarding learning gained through this process, Kim argued that "as new learning occurs, *deculturation or unlearning* of at least some of the old cultural elements has to occur"; indeed, "no construction [can happen] without destruction" (p. 363). These assertions reflect the struggles of transcultural learning but overlook the value of maintaining one's original identity and choosing strategies to select host-culture integration. New learning is thus treated as a deculturation or "unlearning" process rather than an evolving journey—yet learning must come from somewhere.

Wei et al. (2012) analyzed survey responses from 188 Chinese international students to assess their avoidance coping strategy as well as identification with heritage culture, acculturative stress, and psychological distress. The researchers found when students feel strongly about their original culture, they cannot use avoidance to alleviate any level of stress. Students' integration into the host culture thus becomes unpredictable. Accordingly, the expectation of the alignment "integration" (Berry, 1997, 2015) is called into question: few students will not identify strongly with their original culture. In 2014, Pan and Wong conducted a comparative study by applying Berry's acculturation strategies' model and investigating acculturation stressors experienced by 606 Chinese international graduate students studying in Hong Kong and Australia. They found that academic work and marginalization are the two significant stressors for both groups. Comparatively, cultural difference is a bigger stressor for the participants in Hong Kong and assimilation is a bigger stressor for participants in Australia. These findings continue to emphasize acculturation stress but ignore the value of investigating intentions behind chosen strategies to reveal sources of stress and avoidance, including "self-segregating" (Leong, 2015, p. 468) and "strengths for success" (He & Hutson, 2018, p. 87) in particular.

Bodycott (2015) examined intragroup conflict among three HK-born Chinese students during a 14-week study abroad in Canada and pinpointed several types of identity conflict (e.g., task conflict). This small sample enabled exploration of deep internal conflicts each student experienced in their program. Although we agree with the supposition that "identity conflict in study abroad occurs when new experiences oppose or cannot be integrated into the student's existing way of thinking" (p. 246), we question the suggestion that "to deal with conflicts, students often turn to co-national groups or others in their host culture for support" (p. 246). Students may turn to their cultural group, but it is not a default avoidance strategy as "often" implies. Instead, it could be an intentional choice, such that students either adapt or reject new experiences based on intentions underlying specific activities; not all conflicts are resolved through cultural avoidance without intention.

To investigate Chinese students studying in Hong Kong universities, Yu et al. (2019) surveyed psychological and academic adaptations based on a sample

of 2,201 while Vyas and Yu (2018), applying surveys and interviews, examined 202 Chinese graduates' acculturation experiences. Both studies reviewed the historic aspects of cultural and political connections and tensions between Hong Kong and Mainland China. Hong Kong was a British colony for over 155 years and it was returned to China in 1997. Currently, Hong Kong is under the governance of the "one country, two systems" framework. Both Hong and China share a Confucian heritage, but values, languages, and systems used in Hong Kong universities mix Chinese and more Westernized influences. Since 1997, Hong Kong has been experiencing ongoing decolonization (i.e., leaving British colony's influences and gaining independence) and her reunification with China is characterized by the accommodation of differences rather than a whole-hearted embrace (Yu et al., p. 2). Both studies found perceived discrimination experienced by Chinese students in Hong Kong; for example, English and Cantonese proficiency positively supported academic and acculturation adaptations in Hong Kong. The former study recognized the methodological limitation of survey reports and invited mixed method including interview studies to understand the causal path to positive psychological and academic experiences while the latter focused on graduates other than undergraduates from a stressful experience perspective. Both studies' review of the backgrounds justifies the context of the present study and their findings highlight the value of the present mixed method study of transcultural strategies and identity conflicts on undergraduate Chinese students in Hong Kong from a decolonization perspective that treats Chinese students' transcultural experiences active, constructive, positive rather than purely adaptive and conforming to the norms during this decolonization period of Hong Kong.

We define *transcultural identity* as students' "dynamic and fluid" (Vauclair et al., 2014, p. 12; Wei, 2011) process of constantly reidentifying who they are and who they want to be by relating to the self, others, and contexts. Better selves emerge from intentionally chosen multicultural practices and commitments expressed in daily activities.

Intention and International Education

Research on college students' international education participation has examined multiple factors affecting intention (Bandyopadhyay &

Bandyopadhyay, 2015) and the development of intention through sociolinguistic abilities to perceive others' intentions in social settings (Lasan & Rehner, 2018). All aspects that Bandyopadhyay and Bandyopadhyay (2015) proposed as influencing students' participation in study abroad point to one key indicator: intention to participate. Meaningful variables (e.g., personal growth) were investigated; however, the notions of identity and conflict—as major predictors that can shape students' intention to participate—were not addressed. One's intention to participate is not a dependent variable as their study indicated but an independent variable that can predict students' attitudes and behavior. Lasan and Rehner (2018) studied the effect of (extra)curricular contact on 38 French second-language learners' abilities to perceive and express identity and intentions in French. Questionnaires and interviews were used. Extracurricular contact was operationalized as eight factors (e.g., year of study). Findings suggested the longer students studied in the target-language context, the greater their abilities to perceive and express identity and intentions. Students' number of "active commitments" (e.g., self-imposed risk taking engagements to promote target-language exposure and use) was a key indicator of intercultural competence. These results help explain sociolinguistic competence development in context. However, we argue learners' attitude toward the target language that was not operationalized could also be a critical factor affecting the number of active commitments.

To uncover Chinese students' "hidden agenda"—a type of intention related to complexity of adaptation and intercultural learning—Dai and Garcia (2019) examined seven Chinese college students' adjustment and intercultural learning in the Chinese and Australian contexts through interviews. They found students experienced a U-shaped learning curve with a stressful beginning, ongoing negotiation, a sense of disempowerment when adjusting in the new system, and finally a complex sense of belonging through adjusted attitudes and multiple strategies. Several students reconstructed their identities throughout this U-shaped journey. Yet the authors missed the "hidden agenda" concept at length. Additionally, although identity conflict could have made students feel "disempowered" (Dai & Garcia, 2019, p. 378) without continuity in the new system, neither was explicitly addressed.

Intention reflects desires driving one's thoughts and behavior. Korta and Perry (2020) defined intention as "a kind of mental state, like belief and desire … From the point of view of the mental cause theory of action, intentions cause actions" (Spring 2020 Edition). Kesckés (2014) described the "dialectical relationship between a *priori* intention (based on individual prior experience) and *emergent* intention (based on actual social situational context)" (p. 7). Accordingly, we define intention as a state of mind that causes actions and disactivates actions driven by contextual factors: identity conflicts or specific goals. Actions manifest as "cultural practices" (Kim, 2008) and "active commitments" (Mougeon & Rehner, 2015, p. 433) reflecting one's purposes, beliefs, attitudes, and desires. Such drives are rooted in the internal system of their brain to optimize trade-offs between "stability" (no change) and "flexibility" (change) according to Badre's neuroscience scholarship "On task: How our brain gets things done" (2020, p. 66), which informs students' degree of commitment and chosen practices to surmount challenges, through which they grow into better selves.

Overall, scarce research has investigated active transcultural strategies the new generation of Chinese students apply in daily cultural practices during study-abroad programs. Similarly, few studies have examined their positive pragmatic intentions to navigate identity conflicts including a decolonized developmental understanding of Berry's "integration strategy" (1997, 2005). Therefore, three research questions (RQs) are proposed:

1. What transcultural strategies do Chinese students choose to develop transcultural identities during HK study experiences?

2. How do Chinese students' strategies express pragmatic intentions to navigate identity conflicts and grow during HK study experiences?

3. How do Chinese students' strategies redefine the recommended "integration strategy" to grow during HK study experiences from a decolonized student perspective?

Research Method

To investigate answers to the research questions, this study has adopted a mixed research methodology that collected data from participants by utilizing a 23-item Cultural Practices Questionnaire and in-depth interviews. The analysis of

the collected data has triangulated the reporting features of quantitative as well as qualitative research techniques with the support of a corpus linguistic analysis tool.

Participants

Mainland Chinese (MLC) undergraduates (N = 95) enrolled in a comprehensive HK university participated in this study. Slightly less than half (48%) were from northern China, while 52% were from the southern part of China. Students were recruited via email lists provided by campus offices and through participants' recommendations (i.e., snowball sampling-- applied for recruiting interview participants only, Perry, 2017). Of the 95 respondents who completed the Cultural Practices Questionnaire, 85 (47 Males, 38 Females) were included in this analysis. Participants studied in HK for 7.53 months on average and they were between the ages of 19 to 25. They were studying in various programs such as engineering, computer science, construction and environment, business, health, or humanities. Roughly half (51%) established study goals before departing to HK; the others did not. Another 10 undergraduates (4 Males, 6 Females) completed semi-structured interviews with the first author. Among them, six studied engineering; three majored in English; and one studied optometry; they studied in HK for 31.5 months on average.

Data Collection

The first instrument was a 23-item Cultural Practices Questionnaire (see Appendix A). Participants reported frequency of activities in which they participated within and outside classes, including length of participation, demographics, and social media use. Questions (Qs) 1–6 concerned participants' demographics (e.g., study goals); Qs 7–12 elicited daily activities and length of participation based on reference days (e.g., "yesterday," "last Saturday") to ensure the accuracy of reporting. The extent and consistency of participation was identified by frequency (e.g., daily or weekly). Qs 13–15 referred to investment in communicating with people from other cultures. Q 23 asked commitment to learning Cantonese, a local language in HK. Qs 16–22 regarded social media use; responses to these items, along with three staff interviews conducted as part of a larger study, will be reported in another article. This part of the project was self-

sponsored. The second part, which collected staff data on students' reported strategies, was sponsored by Murray State University CISR Grant, Grant ID: CISR14-15. The entire project was approved by MSU IRB.

A Google Forms link to the questionnaire was distributed to 1100 MLC undergraduates via a university office. Students were given two weeks to complete it; engaging participants soon after receiving the questionnaire was intended to increase participation and avoid conflict with upcoming events scheduled by the office. Ninety-five students responded (i.e., 8.64% response rate). Approximately 95% of the responses were written in English; about 5% were in Chinese.

Semi-structured interviews were then conducted (see Appendix B). Themes identified from questionnaire responses guided this interview design. All interviewees spoke in Chinese. Interviews ranged between 75 and 95 minutes and were recorded with consent and transcribed by a bilingual research assistant. The interview protocol contained 10 semi-structured questions eliciting interviewees' demographics, activities, socialized cultural groups, perceptions of MLC students' reluctant participation in cultural practices, and strategies based on Berry's four categories (2005). Participants were also asked to justify their answers.

Overall, we have chosen a mixed methodology to conduct this study first due to the nature of this study on participants' transcultural strategies defined by participation commitment, frequency and consistency, and also because triangulation of data sources is repeatedly recommended by research methodology literature. The 10 interviewees were not from the 85 participants in the questionnaire based on the rationale that an independent sample, meaning an alternative form of reliability (Perry, 2017, p. 144) can help validate the correlation or convergence of interpretations between the investigated focuses collected from both sources: the questionnaire and the interviews.

Data Analysis

Questionnaire responses were initially analyzed using the report feature in Google Forms. Data were exported into Excel for cleaning, and missing responses were carefully considered. Regarding imputation methods, Jans et al. (2008) suggested addressing missing questionnaire values/responses by applying

either mean, subclass mean, or observed values for "donor" individuals (p. 2). We analyzed missing responses for Qs 9–10 and Qs 13–15, eliciting activities by frequency. Some participants may have responded previously and had nothing new to add; others may have had no reportable activities or simply did not want to answer. However, given that we elicited verbal responses and had a reasonable volunteer sample (Perry, 2017), we reported results based on the actual number of responses to questions eliciting examples and confirmation of activities reported in Qs 7–8. The base response number for Qs 9–10 and Qs 13–15 thus varied. We suggest readers consider response trends in these latter questions rather than focusing on variation in the number of responses.

Chinese-language answers were translated into English. Responses were first holistically examined using Google Reports before being manually sorted and color-coded in Excel to highlight "recurring themes" (McKey, 2010, p. 45) reflecting constructs in RQs 1 and 2. Constructs included "active commitments" (i.e., self-initiated activities participants completed with intention, consistency, and frequency; adapted from Mougeon & Rehner, 2015, p. 433) and strategies. A corpus linguistics tool (AntConc 3.5.8, 2019) was applied to facilitate identifying themes, patterns, and activity types based on frequency. The tool generated *Word List* of reported activities for each question. For Qs 7–12, high-frequency verbs and nouns were identified through the *Word List* analysis and low-frequency verbs and nouns were manually examined to discern word-type tokens. Identified nouns and verbs were associated with emerging types of activities and commitments for each question. Finally, the 10 interviews were coded using the grounded theory approach to identify cross-case patterns and "critical incidents" (Perry, 2017, p. 59). Trends in strategies and activities observed from the questionnaire were also considered during coding. The results are summarized below by question, answering RQ1 in full and RQ2 in part. Interview findings revealed participants' contextual struggles, choices, and definitions of "integration" in navigating conflicts and expressing intentions, thus answering RQs 2 and 3.

Results

RQ1: What transcultural strategies do Chinese students choose to develop transcultural identities during HK study experiences?

Strategy 1: Establish Academic Goals and Transcultural Expectations

Roughly half (51%) of participants established goals before departing for HK. Seven goal types were coded, with an ultimate goal being coded if participants mentioned two or more goals in one response: 16.28% wanted a higher GPA and 30.02% planned for advanced studies. Overall, 46.30% of participants cited academic goals (e.g., GPA and advanced studies) as their primary objective. Additionally, 11.63% respectively mentioned fitting in in HK, gaining practical skills, or further study-abroad. Fewer participants (4.65%) wanted to improve English skills, whereas 13.95% sought personal growth. Except participants (46.30%) who held academic goals as their major aim, 53.70% wished to realize identity expansion and personal growth. The rest 49% who did not establish goals may have had no agenda or may have been more adaptable to new experiences, especially as these students develop.

Strategy 2: Commit to Self-Selected Academic and Transcultural Practices

Table 1 lists the types and duration of participants' active commitments during weekdays (Q7) and weekends (Q8). Following McKey (2010) that open-ended survey results can be reported in a summative manner reflecting typical participant responses, we first coded responses by activity types (Column #3; examples in parentheses) and then by themes comprising relevant types (Column #2).

Table 1

Weekday & Weekend Activity Commitments: Themes, Types, & Length (N = 85)

Reference Day	Commitment Themes	Activity Types	%	Total Hours	Mean Hours	Total Mean Hours Per Theme
Weekday	*Academic*	Academic study	94.12	360	4.24	4.24
	Transcultural	Studying language (Cantonese)	7.06	9.50	0.11	0.41
		Volunteering	5.89	8.5	0.10	
		Club activities (dance)	7.06	17	0.20	
	Personal	Exercising	7.06	5.5	0.06	0.06
Weekend	*Academic*	Academic study	74.11	134	1.58	1.58
	Transcultural	Volunteering	9.4	17	0.20	0.83
		Club activities (dance)	7.1	25.5	0.30	
		Studying language (Cantonese)	3.5	5.5	0.07	
		Field trip (Ocean Park)	5.9	22	0.26	
	Personal	Reading (novels)	7.1	14	0.16	0.48
		Watching (movies)	8.2	17	0.20	
		Exercising	8.2	10.8	0.12	
	Virtual	Interacting (social media)	12.9	30.5	0.36	0.36

Most (94.12%) weekday activities were academic with participants devoting 4.24 hours on average to such practices. Learning Cantonese, club activities, and volunteering were coded as "transcultural commitment" because all involved interaction with people and other cultures. Participants spent 0.41 hours in a typical 8- to 10-hour study day on transcultural activities, which is not negligible.

About three-quarters (74.11%) of weekend activities were academic, totaling 1.58 hours per participant; students studied 2.66 fewer hours on average compared with weekdays. Meanwhile, the total mean number of hours invested in transcultural activities more than doubled from 0.41 to 0.83 and exceeded the average amount devoted to personal commitments (0.48 hours) and virtual commitments (0.36 hours). Participants learned Cantonese, did club activities, and volunteered or took field trips on weekends, representing forms of interaction featuring contextually relevant "intention" and "action" (Bach, 1987; Kecskés, 2014; Korta & Perry, 2020). Participants similarly prioritized academic activities,

transcultural activities, and investing in personal growth when comparing the total mean hours per theme devoted to weekday and weekend activities. Self-selected academic and transcultural activities thus demonstrated consistency and "agency."

Strategy 3: Co-Develop Transcultural Identity with Friends

Word List analysis of the weekday activities (Q7) (373 word types, 1428 word tokens) identified: #1 content verb consisted of tokens of *studied* (frequency: 36; rank: 22); #1 content noun was *class(es)* (frequency: 41; rank: 8); *friend(s)* had a frequency of 8 (rank: 119–120). Analysis of weekend activities (Q8) revealed 283 word types and 959 word tokens. The #1 content noun was *friend(s)* (frequency: 18; rank: 12) except for the token *friend* (frequency: 3).

Combined results of Qs 7–8 highlighted *friend(s)* as the #2 content noun (frequency: 25; rank: 18; *friend* – frequency: 4; rank: 149) among the 504 word types and 2387 word tokens. *Friend(s)* was beside *class(es)* (*class* frequency: 35; rank: 13; *classes* frequency: 11; rank: 28). Participants seemed valuing the meaningfulness of *friends* nearly equally to academic activities. They also appeared co-developing transcultural identities through daily interaction and negotiation with friends.

Strategy 4: Treat Identity Maintenance and Expansion as Fundamental Commitments

We identified daily activity types (Q9) by analyzing top-frequency verbs and nouns generated via *Word List* (162 word types, 493 word tokens) analysis.

Table 2

Daily Activities (Q9, N = 65)

Commitment Themes	Activity Types	FRQ	%
Academic	Academic study	45	69.23
Identity Maintaining & Expanding	Communicating with friends/family (WeChat)	19	29.23
Transcultural	Learning language (Cantonese)	3	4.62
	Club activities (dance)	5	7.69
Personal	Reading (novels)	3	4.62
	Exercising (gym)	2	3.08
	Playing instruments (Xiao)	2	3.08
Virtual	Gaming/Browsing	4	6.15
	Watching (YouTube)	2	3.08

Academic study was most common, reinforcing the findings in Q7 on weekday commitments. Of daily activities, 69.23% were academic, which is unsurprising because participants primarily came to HK for education. The second most common commitment was communicating with friends and family. Participants considered interacting with loved ones as fundamental to maintaining and extending "who they are." This type of daily practices, however, does not suggest participants "unlearn" or "destruct" old cultural elements (Kim, 2008), rather, they revise the old by adding new elements to become better selves through the commitment.

Strategy 5: Invest Regularly and Deeply In Self-Selected Cultural Activities

Fifty-three students responded to Q15 about daily out-of-class activities. When considering one major activity per student, 21.18% participated in other culture–related activities (e.g., Arabic culture workshops). About one-quarter (24.7%) attended club activities (e.g., choir), interacted with diverse people, and volunteered. Collectively, 45.89% participated in daily activities outside classes, strove to communicate with diverse people, and gained new learning for self-development. Although this percentage is imperfect (i.e., the remaining 55.11% did not report relevant activities), it suggests regularity and opposes the "disengagement" reported in other literature on Chinese students.

Table 3 indicates participants shared more weekly commitments versus activities completed daily or on weekdays.

Table 3

Weekly Activities (Q10, N = 55)

Verbs (Actions)	FRQ	Nouns (Focuses)	FRQ
Attend	36	Classes/class/school	37
Go	11	Cantonese/French/English	19
Do	9	Badminton/soccer/basketball	8
Play	8	Friend(s)	8
Read	4	Exercises/fitness/walk/gym	5
Study	4	Club/dance/picture/books/cooking	5
Watch	4	Library	4
Dance/draw/paint	3	Games	4
Write	2	Bible study/missionary/Christianity	4
		Movie(s)	4
		Internet/online	4
		Diary/homework	4
		Shopping	3
		Drums/piano/ukulele	3
		Choir	3
		Volunteer	2

Note. *Word List* revealed 160 word types; 450 word tokens.

Participants' top two weekly commitments were academic activities and language learning, confirming the results of Q7 on weekday commitments. Meeting friends and exercising were the next two most common activities. This order of commitments reflects the goal-oriented intentions underlying participants' transcultural journeys: *achieving academic goals*, *learning language*, *meeting friends*, and *staying fit*. These commitments also convey students' fundamental needs in international education. The variety of activities in the noun list varied in 16 categories. We observed fewer verbs than nouns, which is unsurprising given that categories were labeled by nouns.

Strategy 6: Maintain Frequent Contact with People from Other Cultures

Qs 13–14 elicited information about the cultural backgrounds of people involved in participants' daily and weekly communication. Fifty-six participants responded. Slightly less than three-quarters (71.4%) interacted with people from multiple countries/areas (i.e., Mainland China & HK/Taiwan: 51.8%; HK & others excluding Mainland China: 8.9%; HK, Mainland China, & others -- Thailand/Korea: 10.7%). The other 28.6% reported interacting with MLC people only, countering the perception that most Chinese students only interact daily with their own group in host cultures. Regarding weekly frequency (Q14), 8.9% of participants interacted solely with MLC people. The majority (91%) engaged

with people from a mixture of cultures (i.e., HK only: 23.1%; Mainland China & HK/Taiwan: 23.2%; HK & others excluding Mainland China: 19.6%; HK, Mainland China, & others -- Italy/United States: 25%). The 23.1% of participants who communicated only with people from HK implies immersion in the host culture with weekly investment.

RQ2: How do Chinese students' strategies express pragmatic intentions to navigate identity conflicts and grow during HK study experiences?

Study in a Conflicting Context Yet Invest in Learning the Local Language

Q23 reflected participants' efforts to learn Cantonese. When participants could use Chinese and English in HK with few academic or communication barriers, 74% invested in learning Cantonese. This proportion suggests a purposeful intention to surmount specific identity conflicts (i.e., struggles between Mandarin vs. Cantonese or Mainland Chinese vs. HK people due to historical, cultural, and political tensions since HK became part of China in 1997) and expand the self. The finding fully accords with interview data on the same question: all interviewees reported devoting extensive time and effort to learning Cantonese. Learning the local language is not a rejection of HK culture but an active expansion of "limited common ground" (Kecskés, 2014) in the conflicting context. Participants' investments represented "active commitment" (Mougeon & Rehner, 2015) to better navigating language conflicts between Mandarin and Cantonese.

Interact with Diverse People; Prepare to Be Better Selves

Qs 13–14 focused on routine interaction (daily or weekly) with diverse people. Most (71.4%) participants deliberately interacted with people from two or more cultures daily. On a weekly basis, 23.1% were immersed in HK culture and 67.8% communicated with people from multiple cultures. Multicultural interaction composed a substantial proportion of participants' regular interaction, suggesting intentional preparation to become better selves by activating the "preparatory principle" (Clark, 2003, p. 260) (i.e., turning intention into action) through keeping diverse people in their social circles.

Redefine "Who I am" in Relation to "We VS. They"

Interviewee #1 (S1; male, studied transportation engineering for 36 months) is a critical case (Perry, 2017) of activating intention through redefining

"who I am" in relation to "we vs. they" as indicated by his strategies, choices, and commitments.

Regarding Cantonese learning, he stated, "I learned Cantonese in four classes. But students from Beijing generally held an attitude: I'm from Beijing; There is no value for me to learn Cantonese."

On negative perceptions of MLC students' transcultural participation, he remarked "I'm not participating in what *they* think are active activities" and justified:

I stay with MLC students to keep my identity. I hang out mainly with MLC students because we live in the same dorm. We share new sets of vocabulary, making it easy for us to communicate with taboo words [e.g., shen jin bing, meaning "insane"]. Locals do not live on campus, which limits our interaction. MLC students have greater academic abilities than local students. Our motivation is different from theirs. We intend to do advanced studies.

S1 used "we" and "our" (vs. "they" and "theirs") and "MLC students" (vs. "locals") to redefine "who I am" in relation to "we" and "they." His chosen pronouns and nouns appeared to be intentional "lexical choices in production" (Kecskés & Mey, 2008, p. 4) in which he indicated "intergroup and intragroup conflicts" (Bodycott, 2015, p. 252). The theme of negotiating "we vs. they" repeatedly emerged in the interview data, illustrating participants' "intentions and goals as pre-existing psychological entities that are later somehow formulated in their language" (Kecskés & Mey, 2008, p. 2) of identifying who they are in the stated relations. Furthermore, this negotiation may reflect that the student was intentionally "self-segregating" (Leong, 2015, p. 468) from non-MLC students but his justification in the quote can partially justify the source that differences in residence and academic goals may have contributed to the segregation.

RQ3: How do Chinese students' strategies redefine the recommended "integration strategy" to grow during HK study experiences from a decolonized student perspective?

Eight of the 10 interviewees responded adopting an "integration or assimilation" strategy after being presented with Berry's (2005) four strategies. The other two (S1, S6) discussed a component of integration but distinguished their strategies analytically. This finding looks contradicting to but actually

advances the result identified by Swarts et al. (2021, p. 196) that " the integration strategy was the least accessible strategy due to perceived social barriers constructed by the Belgians" after investigating six South African postgraduates' acculturation strategies in Belgium, because each interviewee articulated various conflicts, analytical practices, and justifications to redefine the strategy when asked for elaboration as shown below.

Table 4

Cross-Case Analysis of Interviews

Inter-viewee	Identity Conflicts	Integration Redefined	Transcultural Growth
S1	See Above	See Above	HK's Western culture/education component benefited me more than expected, with almost 100% satisfaction.
S2	I talk to HK people regularly but no in-depth discussions are involved. I don't like teachers comparing MLC and HK in classes.	I've been here for 5 years. The society is so diverse. I don't have to integrate. I can't have a deep discussion, not because of language.	I learned Cantonese and English. I became more mature. I developed [critical] thinking.
S3	I like the cultural shock and diversity. I was lost when the political conflicts happened in the first 2 months.	Language barrier is a direct reason, but not the fundamental reason that affects HK peers' and MLC students' integration.	I become more independent. I experienced diversity. I gained adaptability, collaborative skills.
S4	I'm clearly aware of the hostile emotions towards MLC students from HK and Taiwan peers.	I want to integrate into the culture though I'm from Beijing. Local students don't live with us. It's easier for us to stay with my group.	I become more independent. I noticed HK and Taiwan's hostility against Mainland China. I understand when I think from their perspective.
S5	I strongly feel the difference when completing class activities with HK peers. That kind of difference doesn't come from language. I won't participate in activities like memorializing June 4, 1989 Incident.	There is the line I cannot cross no matter how long I stay here. I don't have the intention to integrate. I just come to experience.	I became more confident and open. I learned how to collaborate. I really like being a volunteer, staying with elderly people/kids.
S6	When teachers can't make themselves understood, they deliberately use Cantonese to elaborate. Why not use Mandarin to elaborate as half of the students speak Mandarin in class? I don't feel comfortable when teachers compare China and HK.	I come here to experience, not to integrate. In classes we are well integrated, but in the dorm, it's hard to integrate.	I developed social competence, improved English. I understand HK people have their own views about HK and Mainland China.
S7	I'm still different from the locals. I won't give up some values from Mainland China that I really like.	I like the kind of in-betweenness. I have not tried to change but I did try to improve.	I'm willing to know different views. I became more independent. I began knowing who I am.
S8	It's hard to share deep emotions. I can't joke with them. Language is different but not a barrier.	It doesn't mean MLC students are not able to integrate, but I don't want to. We all live in the residence hall and have more contact. I don't reject	I became more open-minded. I constantly made new friends. I really like HK.

		doing academic work with HK peers.	
S9	Our personality is more reserved comparing to Western and HK peers—plus the language barrier in a new environment.	I don't intend to not integrate into the local culture. Cultural and personal upbringings limit our choice of activities.	I became more accepting of different views; more expressive. I developed time management skills.
S10	We have different popular vocabulary. Some HK people are very judgmental and think we are rednecks. I think the fight between HK people and MLC is like the fight between Whites and Blacks in America.	I learn HK culture, but I don't fully integrate in the culture. I want to be myself and accept all cultural differences.	My personality became more agreeable. I'm more mature. I care more about people around me.

Table 4 lists interviewees' identity conflicts including language conflicts. Interviewees questioned attitudes towards learning Cantonese (S1) and teachers' use of Cantonese to illustrate difficult problems (S6) such as "Why not use Mandarin to elaborate, as half of the students speak Mandarin in class?" Others lamented they could not joke with peers or have deep conversations. However, participants did not treat these challenges as language barriers; several contended the differences did not arise from language (S8, S3). S10 compared conflicts between HK people and MLC to those between Whites and Blacks in the United States when expressing uncomfortable emotions. Multiple interviewees shared similar discomfort (S2–S6, S8).

Column #3 illustrates how interviewees redefined "integration." It was defined by learning-oriented intentions and actions such as "I come to experience, not to integrate"; "I did not try to change, but I did try to improve"; "I don't have to integrate" or "I don't want to integrate." Academically, interviewees explained "we are well integrated", but in the dorm, their integration was limited by the residence difference between them. Differences in time management, cultural personalities, popular vocabulary use, and the areas from which students hailed in Mainland China further influenced their extent of integration. The last column in the Table describes interviewees' transcultural growth. During their average 31.5-month journey in HK, interviewees struggled and felt stressed. However, they did not surrender to conflicts but thrived as they grew: they came to acknowledge diverse views; empathized with others; and

became more collaborative, mature, open, and competent linguistically, culturally and developmentally.

Discussion

Following the theoretical framework, acculturation strategies and transcultural identity and the mixed methodology adopted, we verified our results' accuracy by asking participants to recall activities in which they had participated yesterday and the prior Saturday (Table 1). Top activities identified (e.g., academic study, studying language & club activities) were consistent with students' top daily and weekly activities (e.g., attending classes, learning Cantonese & club activities; Tables 2 & 3). Interacting with friends and family notably contributed to participants' daily activities. However, we observed a discrepancy between students' prioritizing volunteering between reference days (Table 1) and weekly activities: it was ranked third on weekdays and second on weekends yet ranked low among 16 weekly activities (Table 3). Volunteering may therefore represent event-based activities rather than weekly or daily activities.

The intention hidden behind most (74%) participants' consistent commitment to learning Cantonese suggests non-rejection of HK culture and dedication to developing the linguistic competence necessary for richer transcultural experiences. The identified regular and fundamental transcultural commitments (i.e., learning Cantonese, doing club activities, meeting diverse people, and event-based volunteering) contradict earlier negative evaluations (Khawaja & Dempsey, 2007, 2008; Leong, 2015; Wei et al., 2007, 2012) of students' transcultural behavior, overemphasizing stress, passivity, and disengagement while neglecting their active commitments and selective integration. Popular daily strategies of *conducting academic study, learning local languages, making friends, communicating with diverse people, and volunteering* seem paramount to a productive transcultural learning experience.

Another interesting finding is that participants co-developed identities with friends. Friends (i.e., friendship, Leong, 2015; Swarts et al, 2021) reflected a sustainable commitment alongside academic study and learning Cantonese—participants' top three weekly commitments. Friends can foster open-mindedness and appreciation of cross-cultural communication (Williams & Johnson, 2011).

We presume participants' daily interactions with friends aided them in co-fighting stressors and co-developing identities, including linguistic competence. Meaningfulness of friends in international education programs appears much deeper than in other contexts. Making friends is difficult (Leong, 2015; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Swarts et al., 2021), so stakeholders should consider designing curricula to facilitate friendship (e.g., creating extended field trips for diverse students).

The cross-case analysis reinforces the position of "I come to experience, not to integrate" as a decolonized alternative definition of the recommended "integration strategy" (Berry, 1997, 2005), emphasizing experiential and selective integration. Interviewees suggested their experiential journeys were not intended to change their identity but to maintain and enhance their sense of self. Participants who studied in HK for 5 years shared this practice, echoing prior literature (Lasan & Rehner, 2018). This finding substantiates the notion of "identity expansion" (Byram, 2008; Jackson, 2011, 2018) but counters the assumption that students "unlearn" (Kim, 2008) what they already know.

Interviews suggested participants took a "we vs. they" approach to negotiate who they were, the groups to which they belonged, and the conflicts they confronted. Participants considered "we" to maintain their original cultural selves and sense of belonging but pondered "they" to identify differences and growth opportunities. This perspective suggests an intentional process that fuels transformation rather than impedes growth. Participants' illustrative transformation (see Table 4) indicates they became more competent, open-minded, confident, collaborative, and independent. These changes imply self-development, identity expansion and execution of intentions via the identified strategies. Our findings extend the acculturation outcomes of psychological and sociocultural adaptation (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Swarts et al., 2021) by showing that transcultural identity expansion is developed via intentions, self-selected strategies, constant relational negotiations, and identification of "we vs. they."

The findings identified from the cross-case analysis further reflect the historic and political tensions, struggles and conflicts experienced by Chinese students when exploring their transcultural identities in Hong Kong that is governed by a "one country, two systems" ideological framework. The recent

challenge to the framework in the media due to the differences in defining the independence of Hong Kong has made the tension between the two systems become more complicated. Such tensions participants experienced and the education including the patriotic education they received in Mainland China may partially justify the avoidance strategy the participants adopted when they faced conflicting political issues (e.g., memorizing June 4 incident) in order to transform and grow. Meanwhile, although participants have confirmed their cultural and academic growth and transformation via Hong Kong study experiences, yet their community encounters and justifications seem clearly exemplify a conflicting experience of a welcoming as well as discriminating journey, which justifies one major source of the "sense of discrimination" identified in earlier research (Yu et al., 2021; Vyas & Yu, 2018) and further highlights the decolonizing and mutual adaptation tension between the two groups of people.

Finally, the findings and discussions just presented in relation to the research questions are hoped to have reassured that the focus of this study is on MLC international students who have studied in Hong Kong in undergraduate degree programs, their transcultural strategies that are defined by actual commitments, intentions, consistencies, and participated activities; and their selective integration strategy that recognizes individual choices, commitments, and intentions from a decolonization perspective. It emphasizes their positive strengths and active investments to succeed, to grow, to fight through conflicts, and to become better selves through their extended Hong- Kong study experience. Numerical presentation of the students' self-reported commitments, participated activities, and frequencies in the transcultural experience with best minimal interpretations seems to be more objective in demonstrating their consistent strengths, investments, and choices to offer educational implications for this group of students, comparing to the potential interpretations suggested in the manuscript reviewing process from political perspectives. Therefore, the current paper has not focused on the latter but observed the objectivity of a mixed method research to reveal the strategies, intentions, and choices identified with the best minimal interpretations.

Limitation and Future Direction

The first limitation of this study is the variation in the baseline number of responses to several questions (i.e., due to non-responses) and the survey sample size is small. Also, survey reports are subjective. Additionally, the identity conflicts participants experienced can be explored more such as the political education participants have received in Mainland China. Other recent theoretical frameworks can also be applied to investigate the same problem. Finally, our research setting represents another constraint; future work could examine MLC students in other destinations (e.g., the United States), to determine whether their strategies, intentions, and identity conflicts are similar. Such research could further uncover how context affects students' chosen transcultural strategies.

Conclusion

Our study advances the research on acculturation in the field of comparative and international higher education (Bano & Xia, 2019; Bodycott, 2015; Leong, 2015; Swarts et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2019) through a mixed methodology supported by corpus linguistic analysis that is rarely applied in this field. It offers empirical evidence on Chinese students' quality of transcultural strategies and commitments defined by frequency, consistency and justification to become better selves. It further offers empirical implications to better assist Chinese students by respecting their goal-oriented investments, intentions, and strategies chosen to expand identity even in conflicting social cultural contexts like Hong Kong. The study adds a decolonized view that the host culture expectation is not the default norm to evaluate international students' transcultural behaviors and that it would be better recognize international students' transcultural choices, commitments, and especially individualized degrees of integration based on their own international education goals.

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APPENDIX A: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Qs1-6 about demographics: gender, program of study, length of stay in HK, goal of studying, where they are from in China etc.

7. Can you write down all the activities you participated in yesterday from morning (8 am) until the end of the day (12 midnight) by indicating the name of the activity and the length of the activity?

8.Can you write down all the activities you participated in last Saturday from morning (8 am) until the end of the day (12 midnight) by indicating the type of activity and the length of each activity? e.g. I talked to 2 Hong Kong friends for 20 minutes.

9. Please write down all the activities you have participated in every day since September. e.g., I attend classes every day
10. Please write down all the activities you have participated in every week since September. e.g., I attend Cantonese classes every week.
11. Please write down all the activities you have participated in twice a week since September. e.g., I go to the gym twice a week.
12. Please write down all the activities you have participated in three times a week since September. e.g., I go to my study group three times a week.
13. For people you talk to daily in Hong Kong, what areas or countries are they from? e.g., Area: Hong Kong, Taiwan; Country: Japan, Korea
14. For people you talk to weekly in Hong Kong, what areas or countries are they from? e.g., Area: Hong Kong, Taiwan; Country: Japan, Korea
15. For the daily outside-class activities you participated in, which ones involve people from other cultures (e.g., Hong Kong culture or any of the western/other Asian cultures)?

Qs 16-22 about social media use and that is not the focus of this study, so questions not attached.

23. Have you made efforts to study Cantonese since your study at this university?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Demographics: major, length of study

What class activities do you choose to participate? Why?

Which of the following do you usually choose to be your group members in class activities? Why? How about after-class activities? Why?

a) MLC peers
b) HK peers
c) Peers from cultures other than (a) and (b)
d) HK and MLC students
e) All
f) I don't care

What after-class activities do you attend regularly? Why?

What weekend activities do you really enjoy? Why?

What activities do you really not like to attend? Why?

Have you scheduled time to learn Cantonese? Why?

How do you see yourself fitting into HK culture so far? Which of the following describes you? Why?

(a) Fully involved in HK culture
(b) Have become part of the culture and also differentiated myself from the culture
(c) Differentiate myself without participation
(d) Don't care at all about HK culture

MLC students are observed to be not as active as other students on campus. What do you think?

How have you changed since you came to HK?

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Developing the Content of an Online Support System for International Students Using a Participatory Designer Approach

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to develop, with the participation of international students, the content of an online system that these students could use in the process of acculturation and adapting to a new environment. The action research with a participatory design approach was selected as the research model from among the qualitative research methods and was implemented. Within the scope of the study, the topics that the students were interested in with regard to Turkish culture, problems of adaptation to the Turkish culture and environment, and their expectations of the content of the online system to be developed were determined. These data were used to determine the main content heading of the online system. Later, the content development activities of the online system were carried out with the active participation of 18 international students in Turkey from Europe.

Keywords: acculturation, cultural adjustment, international students, online orientation, online support, social adjustment, social support.

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Introduction

For a long time, universities have been encouraging more and more students to spend a period of study at an educational institution in another country to ensure that their graduates are competent and competitive in the international marketplace. Many universities are part of student exchange programs and are working to harmonize their systems with each other. Erasmus is the most well-known example of these student exchange programs. Its objectives are as follows: to strengthen education at all levels within the European Union; to ensure the widespread use of little-spoken European languages in particular; to support cooperation and mutual visits during education; to provide cultural exchange; to support innovations in education and to provide equality of opportunity in the education sector (Yağcı et al., 2007). Turkish universities also accept a large number of students from abroad as a result of the student exchange programs they participate in. The number of international students in higher education in Turkey passed 185,000 in the year 2019, and 63,704 of these were new admissions (YÖK, 2020). As of 2019, Turkey attracts the twelfth largest number of foreign students, and these international students have contributed over $1 billion to the Turkish economy (Deveci, 2019).

Along with the increasing number of international students, the problems these students have in adapting have also gained importance. International students may face various difficulties while trying to adapt to the new culture, and they may experience feelings such as fear, loneliness, and anxiety; this process is called culture shock (Oberg, 1960). In addition, these students may experience a degree of academic-related shock if the host country's academic expectations and standards are new and confusing (Ryan, 2005). The many problems experienced by international students can be grouped under a number of headings: language barrier problems, social communication problems, problems related to the new teaching environment, cultural adjustment, and security and well-being (Lau et al., 2018; Roberts et al., 2015). International student support services have been established in universities with the aim of providing counseling and support services to help solve the adaptation problems experienced. The importance of the support services offered by universities to international students for academic success and the general satisfaction of students has been delineated by various researchers (Cho & Yu, 2015; Martirosyan et al., 2019; Perez-Encinas & Ammigan, 2016). However, studies on these support services have found that the majority of international students are not interested in using them, and they are often not even aware of them (Ang & Liamputtong, 2008; Constantine et al., 2005; Kilinc & Granello, 2003; Lau et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2019; Roberts & Dunworth, 2019; Russell et al., 2008). The low rate of use of university support and counseling services by international students is often said to be the result of cultural differences. International students from some countries do not like sharing their problems with strangers because of their culture (Arthur, 2017). In addition, it has been stated that international students are not able to obtain adequate support from these services, because universities cannot allocate sufficient budgets and personnel to them (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008; Sin, 2015).

The unwillingness of international students to apply to university services despite their adaptation problems, and their need for help in solving these problems, have led to a search for alternative ways of providing international students with support (Arthur, 2015; Bektas, 2008; Hsu, 2003; Yoon & Portman, 2004). At the present time, it is inevitable that students prefer technology-based approaches to meet their needs for learning and social interaction in an academic context (McLoughlin & Lee, 2007). International students are more likely to tackle their problems by adapting alone and are more likely to seek help online than domestic students (Nguyen et al., 2019). Moreover, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been recommended that student counseling services be carried out entirely over synchronous and asynchronous media technology (Supriyanto et al., 2020), and that universities pay more attention to online social network and support programs (Edmunds, 2020). The optimal timeframe for providing support services for international students to avoid cultural adaptation problems is just before their arrival in the host country (Dalglish et al, 2011; Garza, 2015; Hsu, 2017; Murphy et al., 2002). In this timeframe, information and communication technologies are the most effective means of delivering support services to international students because students do not have access to face-to-face support services from universities. In this context, the provision of technological systems for overcoming the adaptation problems

experienced by international students, especially those who are trying to adapt to a new culture and academic environment, is particularly vital. The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to provide online support services to international students is likely to help them in solving their adaptation problems. Moreover, in order for the support services for international students to be effective and fulfill their purpose, the academic and personal needs of the students should be taken into consideration in the design of these services (Roberts et al., 2015; Tillman, 1990). For this purpose, the students themselves need to be more involved in the development of support services for international students.

The aim of this study was to develop, with the participation of international students, the content of an online system that these students could use in the process of acculturation and adapting to a new environment. Answers were sought to the following research problems within the scope of the study.

1. What should be the content of an online system that supports international students' acculturation process and adaptation to a new environment?
2. How can an online system that supports international students' acculturation process and adaptation to a new environment be developed with the participation of a large number of international students as "content developers?"

Literature Review

Most higher education institutions have established support services to help international students. Many studies have been conducted on the support services offered to international students in the USA in particular, and the support services identified in these studies have been noted. The most common types of support services offered to international students at universities in the USA are: online reading materials, required check-in at the international student office, international student orientation, and specific cultural events or activities for international students (Madden-Dent et al., 2019). The academic support and student services programs offered to international students at the top 20 US universities hosting the most international students are as follows: new student orientation (most widely offered service), advising and counseling, academic tips, workshops, and webinars on US academic life, tutoring, and supplemental instruction (Martirosyan et al., 2019). Most universities in the USA have an office that is dedicated to assisting international students and these offices provide support and advice on immigration, cross-cultural adjustment, housing, English-language proficiency, and opportunities to integrate into the campus and local community (Perez-Encinas & Ammigan, 2016). There are some studies on support services offered to international students in other countries as well. Support services offered to international students in Australia include advice on housing, psychosocial support, libraries, cafeterias, and healthcare, as well as academic assistance services (translation, CV preparation, interview techniques, employment, and article preparation) (Roberts & Dunworth, 2012). The areas that students most often asked to be better developed regarding support services are improving their quality, promoting them better, and making them easier to access (Roberts et al., 2015).

Challenges Experienced by International Students in Turkey

The difficulties and integration problems experienced by international students in Turkey are quite similar to those identified in other countries. University students in Turkey mostly come from European countries with student exchange programs for a certain period or from the Central Asian Turkic Republics for the whole undergraduate education. The main reasons behind international students' preference for Turkey are geographical proximity and religious, cultural, historical, and ethnic similarity, adequate quality of education, the cheapness of living and education, scholarship opportunities, and suggestions by family or friends (Özoğlu et al., 2015). The main issues that international students in Turkey struggle with are communication, accommodation, the environment, cultural issues, health, and social

interaction activities (Gebru & Yuksel-Kaptanoglu, 2020; Ilhan et al., 2012; Titrek et al., 2016) and not getting enough information and support during the pre-and post-arrival process (Özoğlu et al., 2015). The social initiative, stability, emotional, open-mindedness, and cultural empathy were determined as meaningful predictors of adjustment of international university students in Turkey (Kağnıcı, 2012). Sonoubar and Celik (2013), stated that the main source of adaptation problems experienced by international students in Turkey is the cultural differences and language barrier.

Support Services for International Students in Turkey

Since the integration problems experienced by international students in different countries are mostly the same, similar support services should be provided at universities in Turkey. There are also some studies on the support services offered to international students in Turkey (Beltekin & Radmard, 2013; Cevher, 2016; Güvendir, 2016; Şahin & Demirtaş; 2014; Yardımcıoğlu et al., 2017). When the extent of these support services was examined, it was determined that some universities did not have such an office or center (Şahin & Demirtaş, 2014). In other universities, international students mentioned the existence of centers that helped with their problems (Yardımcıoğlu et al., 2017); however, they were found to be fairly inadequate (Bektaş, 2008). International student centers established to provide support to international students are mostly located in big cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir (Güvendir, 2016). Moreover, international students stated that the number, effectiveness, and continuity of the support services provided were all insufficient (Beltekin & Radmard, 2013; Cevher, 2016). It was also determined that international students perceived social support level was high and their level of loneliness was low in Turkey (Sever & Özdemir, 2020).

Social Media Networks

Social media networks are one of the online technologies that can be used in the adaptation process of international students. These students tend to receive the most support in personal matters from their families and friends while using university support services mostly for academic procedures (Ang & Liamputtong, 2008). International students often set up online social networks based on their ethnicity in order to communicate with each other at the educational institutions where they are guest students (Ye, 2006a). In one study, international students who had used online social groups of this kind, and those who reported receiving higher levels of informational support from such groups, experienced lower levels of acculturative stress (Ye, 2006b). Moreover, the use of social media among international students is especially important in order to stay in touch with their family and friends in their home countries (Johnson et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2017). The interaction of international students with online social networks in their home and host countries is associated with perceived social support (Billedo et al., 2019) and perceived social support has a positive effect on the adaptation process of international students (Bender et al., 2019; Geeraert & Demoulin, 2013; Li & Peng, 2019; Mikal et al., 2013; Trepte & Scharkow, 2016). There are various studies stating that online social networks in the host country can also contribute to the educational and cultural adaptation process of international students (Cao & Zhang, 2012; Magro et al., 2009; Pang, 2020). However, the extensive use of social media tools by international students also causes some problems. The students' reliance on social media networks based in their home country may limit their adaptation to the host country (Lee et al., 2011). It has also been determined that international students are a high-risk group in terms of loneliness and smartphone addiction (Jiang et al., 2018). It is understood that social media tools can significantly contribute to the online support services to be offered to international students. For this reason, the Facebook group created with the participant students and the Facebook module added to the online system were used to enrich the content of the online system.

ICT Support Systems

Apart from social media networks, various ICT support systems have been developed at universities to support international students. Some researchers emphasize the scarcity of studies in the literature on the online orientation of international students (Garza, 2015). International students have stated that the online orientation services offered to them at US universities are very useful and provide constant access to the information they need (Güvendir, 2016). In an online orientation program, it is recommended that all resources available to students physically visiting the campus are available to students as online resources (Futch & Guthrie, 2012). Murphy et al. (2002) suggested that content such as "the history and mission of the institution, academic policies and requirements, acceptance procedures, financial assistance, different curriculums offered, the introduction of departments and faculties, list of online courses, technologies presented to students, activity calendar, sports activities, clubs, and organizations" be offered in web-based support systems for international students. Another study examined an asynchronous, online workshop on anti-plagiarism for an international students' workshop (Goodsett, 2020). The Enhancing Student Mobility through Online Support (ESMOS) project supported by the European Commission aimed to increase student mobility with online support and the kind of support offered by universities online to international students was examined for this purpose (Walasek et al., 2007). The importance of online support services to international students is increasing due to the insufficient service provided by international student offices in Turkey. An online system, the content of which is arranged in accordance with the needs of international students and the titles determined in the literature, will significantly support the adaptation problems of international students.

Adaptation studies for international students carried out in the pre-arrival period are very important and ICTs have been applied in some studies for this purpose. Hsu (2017) developed an "online video-based pre-arrival course" to increase Asian students' desire to communicate in the American classroom. In another study, the aim was to inform and advise international students about the university they were going to and the city it was through a DVD containing 19 short videos (Dalglish et al., 2011). An example of an online orientation website prepared for international students who have not yet come to the host country is the website "Prepare for Success" developed by Southampton University. It includes activity-based learning resources to help international students acquire different aspects of academic life in the United Kingdom (UK) and the skills necessary for effective education (Watson, n.d.). International students were found to be very interested in pre-arrival online orientation, and they requested that the website to be prepared contained in formation about accommodation, transport, weather, clothing, food, local area and activities, visa and work regulations, academic and university life, the healthcare system, and cultural activities (Garza, 2015). As can be seen from the studies, the pre-arrival section should be included in the online support services to be offered to international students and should be supported with rich content. Although traditional theories for cross-cultural adaptation call the first days of international students in the host country as honeymoon (Oberg, 1960), it is stated in new studies that this period is quite difficult especially for students who do not receive enough support and do not have experience of international mobility (López, 2021). For this reason, a separate section with the title of "arrival" has been added in the online system and content that can support international students during their arrival in Turkey has been added.

Theoretical Framework

According to a definition provided by Andrade (2006), international students are "individuals enrolled in institutions of higher education who are on temporary student visas and are non-native speakers" (p. 134). The adaptation process of international students to the culture of the host country has been tried to be explained with various theories on acculturation. Redfield et al. (1936) defined acculturation as: "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (p. 149). Acculturation taxonomies can be used to classify the adaptation processes of students who encounter the culture of the host country. In Berry's (1997) model, acculturation is

explained as a bi-dimensional (maintaining heritage culture and participating in new culture) process of adjustment, and the acculturation process is grouped under four categories with the cross-tabulation of these two cultural dimensions: assimilation, integration, marginalization, and separation. In recent years, it has been argued that the bi-dimensional acculturation framework is inadequate to fully describe the acculturation process due to the multicultural nature of the host countries, and the three-dimensional (their culture of origin, European American culture, and African American culture for black U.S. immigrants) acculturation model has been proposed (Ferguson et al., 2012, 2016). The acculturation framework developed by Arends-Tóth and Van de Vijver (2007) was used in a study with international students in the Netherlands. According to the results of the study, host orientation (predicted by high personal growth initiative, Dutch proficiency, and low perceived cultural distance) and expatriate orientation (predicted by low Dutch proficiency) are positively associated with adjustment, while heritage orientation (predicted by low English proficiency) is negatively associated (Taušová et al., 2019). The intense cultural interaction experienced due to globalization also causes globalization-based acculturation. According to Chen et al. (2008), "the central issue for globalization-based acculturation may not be traditional bicultural identities but rather the selective incorporation of cultural elements from the various cultural worldviews and practices to which a person has been exposed during his or her life" (p. 806). In addition, transnational relations also affect the acculturation process. Transnationalism can be explained as "multiple ties and interactions that link people or institutions across the borders of nation-states" (Vertovec, 1999, p. 447). Transnational contact is seen as a third dimension of the acculturation process and is thought to be positively related to cultural maintenance (Van Oudenhoven & Ward, 2013).

Methodology

Research Model

The action research with participatory design approach was selected as the research model from among the qualitative research methods and was implemented. Action research is a research approach that is carried out by a practitioner (such as a manager, teacher, educational expert in a school, engineer, manager, planner, and human resources specialist in other organizations) who is in the practice themselves. It involves systematic data collection and analysis to reveal problems related to the application or to understand and solve a problem that has already arisen (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). Action research emphasizes cooperation between researchers and practitioners.

Participants

All the participants in the two stages of the study were international students from European countries coming to Turkey through international exchange programs. Of the nine students who participated in the semi-structured interviews conducted in the first phase of the study, four were male and five were female. Three students were 21 years old, three students were 22 years old, two students were 23 years old, and one student was 24 years old. Students came from different countries in Europe through the Erasmus student exchange program. Two students each came from Poland, Estonia, and Lithuania. One student was from Hungary, Spain, and Romania. Seven of the students were studying in a Department of Fine Arts in their country and at Anadolu University. One student was studying at a Department of Communication and one at a Department of Pharmacy.

The content development work that constituted the second part of the study was carried out within the scope of the research. During the semester, the content development for the online system, which had been previously designed, was completed with the participation of 18 international students. Four of the students were male and 14 were female. The ages of the students ranged from 21 to 24. Four of the students were 21 years old, five were 22 years old, two were 23 years old and seven were 24 years old. In terms of their nationalities, seven students were Spanish, five were Polish, three

were Lithuanian and the others were Portuguese, Hungarian, and Slovenian. The departments where the students studied in their home countries differed: Three students each were in a Department of Communication Sciences, Department of Journalism, and Department of Business; two students each were in a Department of Educational Sciences, Department of Economics, and Department of Science; one student each was in a Department of Chemical Engineering, Department of Social Sciences and Department of Public Administration.

Data Collection

Due to the fact that the research model was based on qualitative research methods and the research was applied with different processes at different periods, many different tools were used for data collection. In action research, data collection should not rely on a single data collection tool, but data should be collected at different times and in various ways (Johnson, 2019). Semi-structured interviews with students, video recordings of lectures and validation committee meetings, and the students' sharing on the online system and online social networks were used as data sources in the research process.

In action research, initial data originates from interviews with the key and initial stakeholders (Ocak & Akkaş Baysal, 2019). For this purpose, an interview form consisting of 11 questions was used in semi-structured interviews with nine international students at the beginning of the study. During the development of the interview form, the literature was reviewed, and interview questions were formulated in line with the problems experienced by international students. A language and content validity study of the form was carried out by a language and two experts in the field. An interview form consisting of 11 questions was also used in the semi-structured interviews applied at the last stage of the study. During the preparation of the form, a validity study was conducted by obtaining the opinions of three experts in the field.

The validation committee consists of three experts in the field. During the research process, the knowledge and experience of the committee members were consulted in the application of the research model, the design and development process of the online system, and in finding solutions to problems identified in the online system. Audio recordings were taken during the validation committee meetings, and the recordings were later used as data. The audio recordings of each meeting were analyzed, and the decisions taken were reported. At the next meeting, the committee members were informed about the implementation of the decisions noted in the report.

In order to examine the content development activities carried out, video recordings were taken, and these recordings were then used as data. At the end of each seminar, the researcher examined and analyzed the video recordings. In addition, a Facebook group was created to obtain students' ideas about content studies and make announcements; all students were allowed to become members of the group. Questions about the content development process were shared on the Facebook group and the answers of the students were used as data in the research. Moreover, the content uploaded by the students to the online system was also used as data within the scope of the research. As the online system was developed based on the Joomla Content Management System (CMS), many users were able to add content as authors. In this process, the researcher provided the students with the necessary training to share content and provided technical support for the problems experienced by the students.

Procedure

The studies carried out within the scope of the research are divided into two parts. In the first phase of the research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine international students. This stage sought to answer the first research question. The semi-structured interviews aimed to determine the problems of international students and what they expected from the online system that would be developed. All the students who had come to Anadolu University in Turkey from European countries with student exchange programs were continuing their undergraduate education.

The second phase of the research tried to answer the second research question. At this stage, the participatory design approach was utilized in the content development studies carried out with the 18 international students in a seminar setting using the action research method. According to the "Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility" (2005), the participatory design approach is an approach that is used in the evaluation, design, and development of technological and organizational systems and actively seeks participation in the design and decision-making processes of the system's users (usually existing or potential users of the system). In the participatory design approach, the researcher, who can also participate as a designer has an important role in managing and facilitating the research process (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). The researcher is expected to guide the participants to contribute to the process, encourage the participants to fully express their creativity and assist when the participants need technical support.

Data Analysis

The second phase of the research tried to answer the second research question. At this stage, the participatory design approach was utilized in the content development studies carried out with the 18 international students in a seminar setting using the action research method. According to the "Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility" (2005), the participatory design approach is an approach that is used in the evaluation, design, and development of technological and organizational systems and actively seeks participation in the design and decision-making processes of the system's users (usually existing or potential users of the system). In the participatory design approach, the researcher, who can also participate as a designer has an important role in managing and facilitating the research process (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). The researcher is expected to guide the participants to contribute to the process, encourage the participants to fully express their creativity and assist when the participants need technical support.

Data Analysis

Validity committee meetings were frequently held during the action research process, and prior to these meetings, a quick analysis of the data collected in the previous weeks was required. For the action research process to be continuous and the necessary decisions to be made, the analysis of the data was mostly conducted in two stages. In the first stage, the video recordings obtained in the weekly seminars and what the students had shared on the website and the Facebook group were transcribed and examined with macro-level descriptive analysis. To do this, a framework for descriptive analysis was first created. In this framework, each design element studied was organized as a separate theme. The opinions expressed by the students and the field expert about each theme were summarized in a report as a result of the descriptive analysis at the macro level. This report was presented to the field experts at the validation committee meetings and decisions were taken in line with these data.

After the data collection process was completed, the second stage of the qualitative data analysis was started, and a holistic descriptive micro-analysis of the studies conducted during the period was made and reported. Within the scope of descriptive analysis, video recordings of the seminars and validation committee meetings and comments made by students in electronic media were collected under themes. For semi-structured interviews, the first stage was skipped, and descriptive analysis was made directly. First, the previously interpreted data was coded and grouped under themes by two researchers. Later, the results of the two researchers were compared, the differences identified were discussed, and a definitive conclusion was made. Finally, the transcripts of the qualitative data and the data related to the problem are presented under the parent themes and sub-themes with direct quotations.

Results

The content development of the online system started with the semi-structured interviews of the nine international students. These interviews tried to determine the topics that the students were interested with regard to Turkish culture,

problems of adaptation to the Turkish culture and environment, and their expectations of the content of the online system to be developed. These data were used to determine the main content heading of the online system and the system was created in line with the interests, problems and expectations of these international students.

Results about the Topics That International Students Were Most Interested In Regarding Turkish Culture

The semi-structured interviews tried to determine the topics that international students were most interested in with regard to Turkish culture. The results of the analysis of the interviews are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1.

Topics in Turkish culture that interested international students

Themes	*f*
Food	6
Clothing and textiles	4
Art	3
Language	3
Music	3
Architecture	3
Habits	2
Religion	2
Human behaviors	2
Culture	1
History	1

As shown in Table 1, six of the students who participated in the interviews stated that they were interested in Turkish foods. One of the students (Interviewee #3), talking about food, stated: “I am interested in Turkish food. I can eat fast food, but when my Turkish friends come back from their homes, they bring food from their mothers and families. These are pretty interesting things.” The international students are interested in Turkish food because it is quite different from their own countries. Interviewee #5 stated: “I am interested in food and religion. Because it is different from my country and nice.” The desire to experience new tastes was found to be the reason for students' interest in Turkish food. In addition, four students expressed their interest in Turkish textile and clothing products. These were the most popular topics among the students with regard to Turkish culture.

Results about the Problems of International Students

The international students’ comments concerning the problems they had experienced were grouped under two sub-headings: daily life problems and academic problems.

Table 2

The problems of international students

Themes	*f*
Problems in the daily life of international students	12
Communication	6
Finding an apartment	3
Getting a mobile phone simcard	1
Security at night	1
Bus times	1
International students' academic problems	15
Course selection	6
Communication with university staff	5
Differences in the grading system	1
Some parts of the university website are not in English	1
Lack of sufficient English content in the courses	1
Filling in forms for permissions	1

As Table 2 shows, six of the students stated that communication was the biggest problem they have in daily life. Interviewee #4 explained: "Language becomes a problem when I go shopping or ask someone something on the street." The students had communication problems due to the fact that the people they communicated with in their daily lives did not know a foreign language. In addition, interviewee #1 stated: "When I first came here, a room was reserved for me, but there was a problem. Someone had put their things in the room, and they said they had nowhere else to put them. This was a big problem for me because I couldn't find a place to put my luggage." Although assistance was provided regarding the accommodation of the students, there were still problems in finding an apartment.

When the students' comments about their academic problems were examined, most comments were made about course selection. Interviewee #7 stated: "I chose some courses at my own university, but when I came here, I found out that the teachers teaching these courses could not speak English and I had to change them." The students found that the courses they had chosen with the aid of their advisors in their home countries were not suitable when they arrived at the university. However, the comments of the students also suggested that these problems were mostly solved by their coordinators at the university.

Results about International Students' Expectations of the Content of the Online Support System

The international students' expectations about the content of the online support system were grouped under the headings of expectations of cultural, social, academic, and individual content.

Table 3

International students' expectations of the content of the online system

Themes	*f*
Students' expectations of cultural content from the online system	13
Foods	4
Habits	3
Turkish language	2
Religion	1
Politics	1
Historical facts	1
Famous politicians	1
Students' expectations of social content from the online system	6
Shopping recommendations in city	1
Tourist attractions in city	1
Information about the city and a map	1
Information about the university cafeteria	1
Information about the fun places in city	1
Information about bureaucratic procedures	1
Students' expectations of academic content from the online system	5
Information about courses	3
Information about the faculty	1
Information about the library	1
Students' expectations of individual content from the online system	6
Quick answers to questions	3
Up-to-date information	1
Friendly design	1
Ease-of-use	1

As can be seen from the Table 3, the cultural content that the students wanted to see most in the online system was about Turkish food with four comments. Talking about this issue interviewee #8 said: “I think it should promote traditional foods, not convenience foods.” There were also three comments about “habits.” Habits mean the general behavior of Turkish people in their daily lives. From these data, it can be understood that the students wanted to get to know more about the daily lives of Turkish people. The most requested academic content in the online system was “information about courses” with three comments. For example, interviewee #1 said: “The level of the course, what it includes, what language is used, how many credits do we get when we choose the course?” When the comments of the students regarding their individual expectations from the online system were examined, the most requested was "quick answers to questions" with three comments. From this result, it can be understood that a small number of students wanted a live “help service” from the online system.

The expectations of the students were then examined at the validation committee meetings, and it was decided that the main sections of the online system should be as follows: “Incoming Students”, “Daily Life”, “Culture”, “Traveling”, “Photos and Videos”, and “Basic Turkish.”

Results Regarding the Content Development Process

Determining which content would be developed by each student was the main concern of the research before the content development process for the online system began. Since the content was to be developed with the participation of a large number of international students, the distribution of tasks among students needed to be well planned, and the topics had to be in accordance with the interests and knowledge of the students. To this end, the students were asked what kind of content they could prepare under the six main sections and to volunteer for specific subjects. Some students volunteered for “clothing” and “cultural sites” under the “daily life” and “travelling” sections, and for “Turkish food” under the “culture” section. At the end of the seminar some of the students agreed to take on responsibility for developing content, but most of them did not express their opinions. Therefore, the students were asked to share their content suggestions for the online system on the Facebook group.

The majority of the students suggested content for many different topics. For example, interviewee #1 said: "I think we should add more information. For example: what documents you need for residence permit, how you can get to the police station, where you can register your phone. Also, we could create new content for our cultural events. For example, concerts, festivals, trips." Interviewee #5’s comment was as follows: "I think it should be a new page with videos about the Turkey (folklore, pop, rock etc.) and other pages with the experience of those who have already done Erasmus in Eskisehir."

The students' content suggestions were discussed in the third week. Their suggestions were repeated as a list and each student took a topic to work on from the list. Some of the suggestions, for example “flats for rent” and “second-hand furniture,” were not selected by the students. Each student's topics are listed in Table 4.

Table 4

Students' content development topics

Participant number	Topics that students wanted to develop content about	Section
1	Traveling	Traveling
2	Suggested places for eating and drinking in Eskisehir	Daily Life
3	Suggested places for buying clothes in Eskisehir	Daily Life
4	Recommended places for social interaction in Eskisehir	Daily Life
5	Turkish culture	Culture
6	Turkish foods	Culture
7	Campus map	Daily Life
8	Museums and cultural sites in Eskisehir	Daily Life
9	Museums and cultural sites in Eskisehir	Daily Life
10	Daily life and sounds in Eskisehir	Daily Life
11	Suggested places for social interaction in Eskisehir	Daily Life
12	Tourism destinations	Traveling
13	Tourism destinations	Traveling
14	Recommended places for buying clothes in Eskisehir	Daily Life
15	Turkish history	Culture
16	Turkish language	Turkish Language
17	Turkish language	Turkish Language
18	Hitchhiking	Traveling

Developing the content of the online system with the collaboration of a group of international students was a different and interesting web-design project. For this reason, many decisions were made during the seminars and in the validation committee meetings to make the design process more effective within the action research process. The action plans formulated during the research process, based on decisions taken at the validation committee meetings, were as follows:

Action Plans on Content Management System

Each student will have an account on the CMS with an editor user type to write new articles and edit existing articles. On the other hand, this user type also gives students the opportunity to edit/delete all previous content. Although the students were given author user type at the beginning, after careful analysis, it was decided to give editor user type to all students and to warn students not to damage pages that do not belong to them.

Action Plans on Facebook Group

There will be a Facebook group for students. The researcher will post questions on each week on the Facebook group and students should reply with a comment. These comments will then be added to the online system as content. Thus, the content of the online system will be enriched even more.

Action Plans on Facebook Module

Students will post comments on the online system with the Facebook comment module on each web page of online system. Each student is responsible for their topic as an administrator, and they will direct other students to add content and comment for their topic. By using the Facebook module, new students will be able to communicate with experienced students, and all students will also be able to share their experiences by commenting.

Results Regarding the Evaluation Process

After the development and publication of the online system, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were conducted with eight international students and they were asked to evaluate the online system. First of all, it was observed that all of the students were aware of the online system and actively used it. Seven of the students (87.5%) stated that they were aware of and connected to the online system through the Facebook student group. All of the students who participated in the interviews found that the most helpful part of the online system was "information". The reason for the interest in the information section is that students mostly need online support before coming to the host city, and after they come, they can get the information they want from their friends and Turkish students with whom they are matched. Three of the participants cited the "before you arrive" article in the online system as the most helpful article for them and this finding supports this view.

When the students were asked about the section they found unnecessary in the online system, it was seen that the answers were not concentrated under a single heading, but different answers were received. In this case, it can be understood that there is no section that students generally find unnecessary. As a result, it is understood that the content development studies of the online system achieved its purpose, and the students did not find a title unnecessary.

Discussion and Conclusion

The main goal of the current study was to develop content, with the participation of international students, for an online system that international students could use in the process of acculturation and adapting to a new environment. In the first phase of the study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with nine international students. At this stage, the aim was to use the data collected to determine the main sections and content of the online system. International

students in Turkey have cited cultural reasons as the main reason for choosing Turkey for the Erasmus exchange program, and stated that they wanted to get to know a different culture and cuisine (Şener & Gün, 2019). They have also stated that cultural proximity was the biggest factor in choosing Turkey for their experience studying abroad (Snoubar & Celik, 2013). The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews with the students were taken as the basis for the design of the relevant sections. For this reason, the first task was to try to determine the topics that international students were most interested in with regard to Turkish culture.

It was determined that the topic that attracted the most international students' attention regarding Turkish culture was food. Other topics that attracted their attention were clothing and textiles, art, language, music, and architecture. In accordance with the present results, previous studies with international students in Turkey have demonstrated that the majority of students had positive thoughts and curiosity about cultural elements such as the "environment, the food, the language, and the people" (Çetin et al., 2017). International students adapt easily to Turkey's rich culture, exotic flavors, eating habits, and food culture (Ozgen & Yaman, 2014). In addition, within the scope of the study, data were collected about the expectations of international students regarding the cultural content of the online system. The content that the students wanted to see most in the online system was about food in Turkey. These results show that the international students had a positive attitude and curiosity towards Turkish food. For this reason, it was decided to provide detailed information about Turkish food under the main "Culture" section in the online system. The willingness of the students to examine the elements of the guest culture and to apply them in their daily lives shows that they are more in line with the concept of integration in Berry's (1997) classification.

In the semi-structured interviews, the opinions of the international students were also sought about the daily life and academic problems they had experienced. The area that the students had the most daily life problems with was communication. These results reflect those of Snoubar (2017), who also found that the most significant problem that international students experienced in daily and social life was to do with communication, as a result of language deficiencies. Many studies have found communication problems to be an important obstacle for the adaptation of international students to the host country (Aydın, 2020; Ibrahimoglu & Yilmaz, 2018; Kılıç et al., 2021; Lee, 2010, Robertson et al., 2000). In addition, it is stated that the inability to effectively accommodate the linguistic needs of international students in western universities is an important adaptation problem (Agostinelli, 2021). The poor English of Turkish students has been shown to be the main reason why international students are not able to make friends (Aydın, 2020). In addition, in the research conducted by Tausava et al. (2019), interest in the native language was found as an indicator of a high level of adjustment to the guest culture. For these reasons, it was decided to create a main section about "Basic Turkish" in the online system, which provided a basic level of Turkish language knowledge in order to facilitate international students' communication. Another reported daily life problem was finding an apartment. This also accords with other observations showing that accommodation is a problem for international students in Turkey (Cevher, 2016; Koçyiğit & Erdem, 2015; Kocabıyık et al., 2019); and that most students choose to live in an apartment (Yilmaz, 2020). Finding an apartment is often a problem for international students when they first enter a host country. Support offices within the universities try to solve this problem, and it is a difficult issue to solve online. For this reason, there was no content on this subject in the online system.

A common view amongst interviewees was that course selection and communication with university staff are the two most important academic problems. In another study, international students in Turkey stated that they tried to reach their advisors when they encountered a problem related to the courses, but their advisors did not help them (Cevher, 2016; Yilmaz et al., 2020). In addition, the relative lack of university services for international students was also stated to be a problem (Kocabıyık et al., 2019). International students often have to drop out of courses because the language of instruction of the courses they have chosen is not English. For this reason, communication problems are also at the root of issues regarding course selection. This was, however, an issue that could not be included in the online system, since it is

entirely the responsibility of the official departments of the university. Therefore, no content about course selection was created in the online system.

Finally, in the semi-structured interviews, data were collected about the international students' expectations regarding the cultural, social, and academic content of the online system. The topic that the students expected the most content about was food. This also accords with our earlier results, which showed that the most popular topic regarding Turkish culture was food in Turkey. As a result, besides the creation of a heading for "food" under the main section of "culture," information was given about eating and drinking places under the main section of "daily life". Other topics that students want to see as content were habits and the Turkish language. The students' expectations for social content were: store recommendations, tourist attractions in the city, information about the city and maps, information about the university cafeteria, fun places in the city, and bureaucratic procedures. Each of these headings received a comment. There was no specific social content that was heavily demanded by students. However, each of the above topics was included as content under the main section about "daily life".

The academic subject that students expected the most content about was information about the courses. However, this subject was not included in the content of the online system as it is information that can only be provided by the official departments of universities. The individual content that the students wanted most was "quick answers to questions". For this purpose, a module was added to the online system that was active on all the pages. Other students would thus be able to answer the questions asked using this module through their social media accounts. This would ensure that questions are answered as quickly as possible.

At the end of this phase, the main sections of the online system were determined to be "Incoming students," "daily life," "culture," "traveling," "photos & videos" and "basic Turkish." Kelo et al. (2010) explained that the support services offered to international students consist of three stages: pre-arrival, on arrival, and during the period of study. Perez-Encinas and Rodriguez-Pomeda (2018) argued that a "reintegration after the mobility period" should be added to these three phases. "Incoming students", one of the main sections planned for the online system, directly included the first of these stages, "pre-arrival", as content. It has been emphasized many times that the best time to give students assistance is before they arrive in the host country (Dalglish et al., 2011; Garza, 2015; Hsu, 2017; Murphy et al., 2002) and online support is a valuable way of giving assistance to students before they travel abroad (Goodsett, 2020; Ye, 2006b).

These results corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous work in acculturation theory. Berry (1980) states that international students experience changes in language, cognitive styles, personality, identity, attitudes, and acculturative stress psychological function areas. In accordance with the language psychological function area, the most problematic issue for students in daily and academic life was communication. International students also want the online system to offer them language-related content. Since participants of the study have come within the scope of the Erasmus program, the time they will spend in Turkey is mostly limited. For this reason, it is thought that the students want to know Turkish culture, but they do not feel the desire to fully adopt Turkish culture. In Berry's acculturation model, the integration section is defined as "there is some degree of cultural integrity maintained, while at the same time seeking to participate as an integral part of the larger social network" (Berry, 1997, p. 9). However, some students may prefer to stay away from the guest culture, it can be said that the students in this situation are closer to the separation part in Berry's model. Due to the imprecise transitions between the sections of the model, some students may be positioned between the two sections. However, since the majority of the students participating in the study expressed their desire to get acquainted with Turkish culture, it is considered more appropriate to include the students in the integration category. Therefore, it can be concluded that the international students participating in the study follow the "integration" acculturation strategy mentioned in Berry's model. Navas et al., (2007) describe seven spheres of acculturation (political, work, economic, social, family, religious, and ways of thinking). Parallel to these topics, it was observed that the students showed interest in topics such as politics, religion, habits, historical facts, and famous politicians and thus tried to

contribute to the acculturation processes. In addition, acculturation occurs at three different levels: behavioral, affective, and functional (Cuellar et al., 1995). At the behavioral level, various types of behaviors such as language development, customs, food, music, and dance are undergoing change. It is understood that the students show interest in the same topics in Turkish Culture in their comments since they are mostly in the process of change at the behavioral level. In addition, the students wanted content suitable for their changes in this behavioral level in the online system.

Transnationalism is seen as an important factor influencing the acculturation process in more recent studies. With globalization and the development of communication opportunities, transnational activities have become easier for international students. It is stated that transnational activities can help individuals in the integration process to preserve their own culture by keeping their ties strong with their own countries (Van Oudenhoven & Ward, 2013). In addition, it is seen that the students participating in the study are able to establish connections with their own countries more easily because they are active social media users, and the use of social media is an important help in reducing the feeling of loneliness (Johnson et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 2017). In the second phase of the study, practical exercises were carried out with regard to developing the content of an online system for international students to help them in the process of adapting to the Turkish culture and environment, and findings were obtained in this context. Work on the development of the content of the online system was carried out with the active participation of 18 international learners who were taking courses in content development studies. The active role of students in the content development process was made possible through an interactive process aimed at structuring the online system on the basis of the target audience.

Usernames and passwords were created with author user type for all students so they could add content to the online system during the course. Users with author rights can add articles but cannot edit existing articles in the Joomla CMS. During the following weeks, the students wanted to make changes in their own articles and add new content to other students' articles. For this reason, the students' accounts were changed to give them editor rights. Granting editor rights to students carries the risk of them editing other students' content. However, students were warned not to change other students' content and no adverse events were encountered during the study period. For this reason, it is recommended that a CMS be used to give participants editorial authority in online content development studies that involve a large number of collaborators. Moreover, for security reasons, it is necessary that content be regularly backed up.

The students' own implementation of content development in a social network-assisted configuration allows them to better adopt participatory roles. The use of Facebook groups in the seminars facilitates the communication and cooperation of students with each other and with the course instructor (İşçitürk, 2017; Keleş & Demirel, 2011; Serhateri & Yıldırım, 2014). Students who have used Facebook before have a positive attitude towards using Facebook as an educational tool and tend to post more in Facebook groups that have a teacher as a moderator (Kayri & Çakir, 2010). The advantages of using Facebook in an educational way are also thought to encourage international students to share content in online systems. This study found that the international students shared their views in the Facebook group regularly over the following weeks, and this sharing was used to enrich the content of the online system. At the end of the content development process, the various subjects outlined above all had sufficient content. The content developed and the studies carried out were regularly evaluated at the validation committee meetings and the necessary changes were made in line with expert opinions.

The findings of this study have a number of practical implications. The topics regarding the culture of the host country that were found to have attracted the international students' attention, and the problems they faced, can form the basis for further studies in this field. Websites developed to support international students in the future can be created in line with the findings of the study. In addition, in online content development involving a large number of participants, the working methods determined at the end of the action research process can be applied. The findings of this research will provide insights for experts who are developing online support systems for international students. More broadly,

transnational research involving international students living in various countries is also needed. This would enable the shared expectations of international students in different countries regarding online support systems to be determined. An online support system for the common needs of all international students could be developed in the future. In addition, there is also a need to better identify the particular issues and problems international students have in different countries, and to develop country-specific online support systems for these.

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Experiences of International Students at a Canadian University: Barriers and Supports

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ABSTRACT

Universities in Canada are increasingly attracting international students, but few studies have examined their academic and social experiences. This research identified the key supports and barriers for international students in order to make policy-relevant recommendations. This convergent mixed-methods study combined survey (n = 104) and interview (n = 14) data to investigate international student experiences through the lens of international students. Exploratory factor analyses revealed writing and mathematics skills and relationships with faculty and students as key factors for success. Frequency analyses revealed that racism was a persistent barrier. Assistance, access, diversity and equity issues were also raised. Open and axial coding of qualitative data corroborated these findings and revealed three dimensions of internationalization according to international students' perspectives: Exchange; Understanding, Sharing, and Support; and Transformation. Recommendations to universities included offering bursaries to international students from underrepresented regions, developing intercultural awareness of faculty, and providing program-specific student support centres with peer mentors.

Keywords: Canada, international students, internationalization, student success

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Universities are increasingly pursuing and attracting international students, who bring substantial benefits to host institutions and communities. International students can contribute significantly to universities and may also enhance student diversity. In response to calls for a national strategy to compete for international students with Australia and other nations, Canada (2019) announced an International Education Strategy in 2014 aimed at doubling the number of international students by 2022. This goal was surpassed in 2017 with 494,525 international students studying at all levels and 370,710 in post-secondary education (Canadian Bureau of International Education [CBIE], 2018). Canada has surpassed Australia in numbers and is one of the top destinations for international students compared to the United States, the United Kingdom, and China, a newcomer to this international competition. International students in Canadian post-secondary institutions accounted for 10% of Bachelor, 18% of Master, 32% of Doctoral students, and 12% of all students in 2018 (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2018).

India and China are Canada's largest sources of international students (CBIE, 2019). The number of international students from India has recently surpassed those from China as the largest number of students. The increase in students from India was interpreted as the *Trump effect* (Korostelina, 2017), as many international students chose not to study in the United States due to imposed barriers (Strauss, 2020). The number of Saudi Arabian students dramatically declined over the past five years in Canada, with a complete withdrawal of students in 2018. Diplomatic relationships between Canada and Saudi Arabia had collapsed and the Saudi Arabian students were recalled home. International students are vulnerable to geopolitical changes.

Universities in Canada have received decreased government funding for many years and were held to increased expectations to take a more entrepreneurial approach (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada [AUCC], 2007). Generally, international students pay three times more tuition than domestic students and tuition fees from international students make up increasingly larger portions of university budgets (OECD, 2018). Attracting more international students importantly resulted in economic benefits but the rationale for internationalization was also framed by enhanced globalization, skilled labour, and knowledge mobility (AUCC, 2007). Now, more than 82% of Canadian universities list internationalization in their top five priorities (UNIVCAN, 2014). International students contribute more than $20 billion to Canada's GDP (Global Affairs Canada, 2019; Government of Canada, 2019).

Canadian and international researchers identified significant challenges associated with the expansion and the marketization of higher education programs (Abdi & Shultz, 2008; Andreotti, 2013; Hébert & Abdi, 2013; Knight, 2000, 2006, 2008, 2011; Lennon, 2007; Ninnes & Hellsten, 2005; Stein et al, 2016). There are calls to reframe international student research to acknowledge the economic rationales "yet balance them with the social and academic outcomes necessary for all students to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for effective participation as professionals and citizens in increasingly multicultural and global contexts" (Garson, 2016, p. 19).

The university that participated in this study, Thompson Rivers University (TRU) is a comprehensive, learner-centered institution that serves its regional, national, and international learners and their communities. We serve more than 25,000 students. In keeping with national trends, TRU experienced rapid growth in international student numbers. Enrollments of international students more than doubled from 2,635 (2014–2015) to 5,795 (2018–2019) (TRU Factbook, 2019). According to internal reports, 27% of the university's operating costs are funded by international tuitions (Institutional Planning and Analysis, 2018). Our university has dramatically expanded graduate programs in response to the increased demand from international students. Figure 1 illustrates the home country of international students attending universities in Canada (CBIE, 2019). TRU's international student population demographics are similar.

Internationalization of higher education (IHE) is defined as, "the international process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research... to make a meaningful contribution to society" (de Wit et al., 2015, p. 29; cf. Knight, 2004). IHE is often measured by student mobility, but rarely are the experiences and perspectives considered of the international students, at the center of internationalization. Thus, the research questions are:

1) What is *internationalization* according to international students?
2) What are the barriers and supports experienced by international students?
3) What are the educational experiences of international students?

Figure 1

Home Country of International Students in Canada in 2019

Literature Review

Global Context

International university student issues have been articulated by many scholars (Beck & Ilieva, 2019; Buckner et. al., 2020; de Wit, 2008; Kang & Metcalfe, 2019; Khoo et al., 2016; Kim, 2005; Knight & de Wit, 2018; Lane, 2015; Larsen, 2016; Robinson et al. 2020; Sabzalieva, 2020; Tarc, 2011; Trilokekar & Masri (2020); Xiong & Yang, 2021; Yildirim, 2014) and this is an expanding area of research. Yildirim's (2014) meta-analysis on international students, and other researchers (e.g., Kang & Metcalfe, 2019) found that the key barriers for students were related to their English language ability, cultural differences, discrimination, homesickness, and differences in academic culture. Consistent support for international students included relationships with faculty and other students (Kang & Metcalfe, 2019; Xiong & Yang, 2021), as well as mental health and sense of well-being. Experiences of international students potentially vary by the host country, thus research from universities in Canada is summarized next.

Studies of International Students in Canada

There is a paucity of research giving voices to international students in the Canadian context with a few noteworthy exceptions (Kang, 2020; McGregor et. al., 2022; Reichert, 2020; Tavares, 2021). In the most comprehensive study to date, and to address the gap in the literature, Calder et al. (2016) surveyed (n = 75) and interviewed eight international students. They found that international students faced unique challenges compared to domestic students. The key barriers pertained to housing, employment, financial issues and the need for more assistance from the university. Supports identified included: social, faculty, students, and institutional. Calder et al. (2016) reported that no published studies or reports existed pertaining to the challenges faced by international students in Canada, but there has been some progress since then. Three recent international student research projects in Canada relevant to the study are reviewed in turn. Robinson et al. (2020) found a positive relationship between friendships among students and well-being but not between friendships and education satisfaction. They recommended research be carried out on how international students develop relationships and how social interactions can be incorporated.

Anderson (2020) investigated the experiences of international refugees studying in Canada. The results indicated that language barriers permeate international students' challenges. Moreover, broader structural and sociocultural issues were found to impact equity, access, participation and success rates. Implications for policy and practice included recruitment, enrollment and funding. Heringer's (2020) study of educators' perspectives at a mid-sized western Canadian university also raised these issues pertaining to the challenges of IHE while pointing out the paucity of research. In Guo and Guo's (2017) study, conducted at a large university in Western Canada, 26 undergraduate students from 9 countries were interviewed. The results showed that a neoliberal approach, treating internationalization as a marketing strategy, posed a number of problems including gaps between internationalization policy and the experiences of international students. Furthermore, students rarely encountered curricula that reflected their experiences. Ironically, this study did not include any students from India. Yet, India is one of the largest sources of international students (CBIE, 2019).

In summary, while a modest amount of research with international students in Canada has examined the demographics and experiences, and some studies identified barriers and supports related to student success, a paucity of research focuses on practices that could potentially enhance the university experience for international students. Clearly, it is in the best interests of international students and universities in Canada to identify the key elements of the student experience that serve as supports or barriers, and then attempt to enhance the student experience. International students are in an excellent position to make recommendations for enhancements to the university. Their recommendations could potentially serve as starting points for universities as programs for international students continue to expand in the future.

Having described the context of this study, next we briefly describe the conceptual framework and methodology. In the findings section, we start with international students' conceptions of internationalization, then we describe barriers and supports, before highlighting international student voices through rich descriptions of lived experiences. Finally, we discuss the findings and provide a summary, noting limitations, insights, recommendations, and implications for further research.

Conceptual Framework

In comparative and international education, internationalization of higher education has been well researched and clearly articulated (Knight & de Wit, 2018) but rarely are international students themselves included in the development of theories to explain the phenomenon. This research puts lived experience before theory. In this study, the voices of international students are the focus. Our narrative conceptual framework draws on Hayhoe (2000) and insider-outsider research (Etherington, 2006). Over the past two decades, Howe (2010) has developed comparative ethnographic narrative (CEN), as a means to better understand lived experiences. CEN is a blend of reflexive ethnography and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). CEN is both a conceptual framework and a method (Howe, 2022).

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Methods

This research employed a convergent mixed-methods design (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 551–553) including an online survey and interviews with international students. The study was conducted in 2016 upon receiving ethics approval from Thompson Rivers University's ethics review board. Unique pseudonyms chosen by participants are used throughout to protect student identities.

Participants

A diverse sample of one hundred and four international university students from Asia, the Middle East, Africa and other regions, were recruited via email through snowballing sampling techniques. The sample consisted of 62 females and 42 males with an average age of 23.03 (SD=3.80).

Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

Participants completed an online survey, drawing from previous survey design (Walton et. al., 2020). The survey contained three components. The first component asked demographic information including country of origin, program of study and year, age, and gender. The second included 15 items

related to barriers and supports to be answered on a 5-point Likert scale. The third component asked 15 open-ended questions related to their experiences as international students at a Canadian university and their conceptualization of IHE. Survey items were analyzed through descriptive analyses, ANOVAS, and exploratory factor analyses. Data from open-ended questions was integrated with data from interviews and analyzed qualitatively.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

A separate, diverse group of 14 students were recruited through snowballing techniques and interviewed by two international student research assistants. In alignment with *comparative ethnographic narrative* (Howe, 2005a; 2005b; 2010; 2022), a blend of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and reflexive ethnography (Etherington, 2006), unstructured open-ended interviews were followed by reflective debriefings by the two research assistants. Transcripts from interviews and debriefings were coded using open and axial coding techniques (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019) and crosschecked by Ramirez. Through iterative coding and constant comparison (Glaser, 1992), codes were collapsed and synthesized into major themes across the entire set of qualitative data.

Results

Internationalization Through the Lens of International Students

To address the first research question, participants were asked to reflect on the meaning of internationalization as part of the open-ended survey questions and interviews. Responses were analyzed and three dimensions were identified in the conceptualization of IHE by the participants: 1) Exchange; 2) Understanding, Sharing and Supporting; and 3) Transformation. Each of them with supporting quotes are presented in Table 1.

Survey Results: Barriers and Supports

To answer the second research question, pertaining to barriers and supports, here we analyze the quantitative data before investigating barriers, supports, and the lived experiences of international students embedded in the qualitative data.

Gender

It was possible that the supports and barriers differed by gender or by country. Ideally, gender and country differences could be examined in one multi-factorial ANOVA. However, there were only five countries with sufficient numbers of students for the analysis of country leaving a sample of 77. Separate analyses were conducted for gender and country so that the sample size for gender was not reduced from 104 to 77.

Gender differences were examined with separate independent *t*-tests on each of the 15 survey items. There were no differences across gender for any of the supports or barriers (all *p*s > .05).

Country

The participants in the study originated from 27 different countries. There were enough students ($n \geq 7$) from five countries (China, Russia, India, Nigeria, Ukraine) to conduct an ANOVA analysis to examine differences in supports and barriers in the sample. In total, the analysis included 77 students. See Table 2 for the results. There were significant differences on only one of the 15 items (*Q9. More access to campus advisors would help me complete my program*). Post hoc analysis with Fisher's least significant difference test found that students from China ($M = 4.17$) and India ($M = 4.23$) responded more positively to this item than students from Russia ($M = 3.33$) and the Ukraine ($M = 3.43$).

Barriers

As shown in Figure 2, barriers to the success of international students included the following: financial support; writing skills; mathematics skills and racism. Interestingly, about 2/3 of participants indicated they had sufficient financial support while 1/3 were either undecided or disagreed. Also,

Table 1

What is Internationalization According to International Students?

Exchange of Ideas, Language and Goods	Understanding, Sharing, Supporting	Transformation
People coming in from all different communities and studying living and working together (Participant 2)	People from different countries live, work, cooperate, care each other together (Participant 40)	It is the process of leaving one's country and try to adapt to a new place's culture. It can be associated to wanting to discover the world or simply exiting one's current identity to enter a new one. (Participant 22)
It's the process of planning and implementing products and services so that they can easily be adapted to specific local languages and cultures, a process called localization. (Participant 13)	Having the viewpoint of a range of nationalities taken into consideration when deciding any outcome (Participant 45)	Adaptation to other cultures (Participant 29)
When something is linked or being converted to the platform linked at international level (Participant 14)	To work together with different nationalities (Participant 52)	Adaptation to many different cultures or ways (Participant 63)
Bringing people of different country together under one roof and sharing a common learning (Participant 23)	Increase of intercultural communication (Participant 54)	Accepting and integrating others' beliefs, opinions, norms (Participant 87)
It’s hard to tell. People from all over the world can play together and work together in this case? (Participant 42)	Making service available to the international community (Participant 64)	A process that enables one to take on the ideas and attitudes of others (Participant 89)
When people in a society come from different parts of the world (Participant 53)	Tolerance to all people from all over the world from different cultures and religions (Participant 93)	
Lots of people from different countries with different culture (Participant 58)	Openness to other cultures (Participant 97)	
To get different people in different cultures to get in touch with other cultures (Participant 88)		
Going to another country and try to mix-up ourselves with the people of that country (Participant 70)		
In academic situation it’s a way of disseminating information and knowledge so that it can easily be adapted to specific local languages and cultures. (Participant 95)		

Table 2

Differences of Supports and Barriers Across Countries

	Country								
	China (n = 23)	Russia (n = 9)	India (n = 27)	Nigeria (n = 11)	Ukraine (n = 7)				
Survey item	***M (SD)***	***M (SD)***	***M (SD)***	***M (SD)***	***M (SD)***	*MSE*	***F***(4,76)	***p***	***Part. Eta²***
1. Financial support	3.13 (1.06)	4.11 (0.60)	3.63 (1.01)	3.64 (1.03)	3.52 (1.03)	1.80	1.74	.150	.070
2. Transportation easy	3.52 (0.95)	3.56 (0.88)	3.89 (0.70)	3.82 (0.87)	3.14 (1.46)	1.06	0.82	.298	.040
3. Housing available	3.39 (0.78)	3.67 (0.71)	3.26 (1.13)	3.91 (0.70)	3.29 (1.70)	1.05	0.95	.422	.046
4. Childcare available	3.00 (0.52)	3.00 (0.00)	3.04 (0.85)	3.00 (0.78)	2.71 (0.76)	0.59	0.25	.869	.013
5. University academic support	4.04 (0.56)	4.11 (0.60)	3.93 (0.92)	3.73 (1.10)	3.43 (1.40)	0.98	1.18	.470	.047
6. University non-academic help	3.17 (0.83)	3.44 (0.88)	3.11 (1.01)	3.64 (1.21)	2.43 (1.62)	1.09	1.60	.182	.082
7. Cultural activities at university	3.78 (1.00)	3.11 (1.17)	4.15 (0.83)	3.73 (0.91)	3.57 (0.98)	0.90	2.20	.077	.110
8. Support for my religion	3.70 (0.93)	3.11 (0.60)	3.62 (0.90)	3.91 (0.94)	3.00 (1.29)	0.86	1.71	.158	.088
9. Access to advisors on campus	4.17 (0.72)	3.33 (0.87)	4.23 (0.86)	4.09 (1.04)	3.43 (1.34)	0.83	2.56	.046	.126
10. Have the writing skills	4.04 (0.93)	4.44 (0.53)	4.22 (0.64)	4.27 (0.79)	3.86 (0.90)	0.60	0.81	.525	.043
11. Have the mathematics skills	3.96 (0.83)	4.22 (0.67)	4.44 (0.64)	3.91 (0.83)	3.57 (1.27)	0.64	0.06	.057	.118
12. Good relationships with faculty	3.91 (0.67)	4.11 (0.60)	4.30 (0.61)	4.00 (1.18)	4.14 (0.38)	0.52	0.95	.439	.050
13. Good relationships with students	3.91 (1.02)	4.22 (0.67)	4.33 (0.56)	4.09 (0.54)	4.29 (0.49)	0.53	1.13	.351	.060
14. Diverse faculty at the university	4.39 (0.72)	3.67 (0.87)	4.33 (0.88)	4.18 (0.60	3.71 (0.76	0.62	2.24	.073	.111
15. Encountered racism at university	3.09 (1.00)	3.22 (1.48)	2.33 (1.49)	3.45 (1.44)	2.86 (1.40)	1.88	1.83	.132	.092

noteworthy is that *Q15. I encountered racism at the university*, had a wide range of responses with participants choosing Strongly Disagree (25%), Disagree (16.3%), Undecided (23.1%), Agree (21.1%), and Strongly Agree (14.4%). This was the only question that had such a pattern of responses spread evenly across the 5-point Likert scale. We can better understand and interpret these results through the open-ended responses to survey questions, cross-referenced with interview data.

Supports

Academic support, advisors, and having good relationships with faculty and other students were strongly endorsed by participants as contributing to their success. More than ¾ of all participants chose Strongly Agree or Agree for each of these (See Figure 3). More access to advisors was identified by a majority of participants (70%) as something needed.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

There were 15 survey items in the second component of the survey, each one assessing a separate barrier or support for international students. A goal of the research was to identify the most influential barriers and supports, and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to reduce the number of factors from 15 (one for each survey item) to a smaller number of key latent factors. EFA determines if there are significant groups of items that are highly related to each other (i.e., clusters), orders the factors by how much variance is explained, and identifies the survey items related to the latent factors. The sample included 104 students, 100 with complete data, a requirement for factor analysis.

Polychoric correlation is advised in EFA over Pearson correlation when the data was collected with a Likert scale of five items or less (Baglin, 2014; Lorenzo-Seva et al., 2011). Polychoric correlations were used in the EFA as the survey used a 5-point Likert scale. There is also controversy in the EFA literature on determining the number of significant latent factors. Recent summaries on this topic found that Eigenvalues (i.e., > 1) are most commonly used in the literature, but tend to overestimate the number of significant factors, and parallel analysis is preferred over scree plots due to the subjectivity in reviewing scree plots (Garrido et al., 2013). The parallel analysis supported the interpretation of two factors, as did the scree plot. Eigenvalues (> 1.00) supported the interpretation of five factors. Following Suhr (2006) and Pett et al. (2003), the findings of two EFA factors are reported. The rotated factor matrix is presented in Table 3.

Factor loadings represent the relationship between each survey item and the latent variable, and factor loadings $\geq .50$ were considered significant. Table 3 reports the factor loadings for each survey item on the two significant factors, with a total explained variance of 44.8%, which is large.

Factor 1 is associated with having the writing and mathematics skills to complete their program, and relationships with faculty and students. A possible explanation is that students with strong mathematics and writing skills also developed positive relationships with faculty and other students. The second latent factor is related to support for culture, religion, and more access to campus advisors.

International students lived experiences

The lived experiences of the international students interviewed and surveyed in this study are synthesized and presented through two dimensions, barriers and supports. Included here are some of the survey responses to open-ended questions and interviews. To capture their voices as accurately as possible, quotes have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or punctuation.

Barriers

The main barriers reported include financial stress and finding a job, language issues and academic support, adjustment issues (social isolation, cultural shock) and racism. These issues were recurrently reported by participants through interviews and open-ended survey questions.

Table 3
Rotated Factor Matrix of Supports and Barriers

	Factor Loading (Variance Explained)	
Survey Item	Factor 1 (28.8%)	Factor 2 (16.0%)
1. I had the financial support I needed to succeed.	0.07	-0.19
2. Transportation to/from campus was easy to access and efficient.	0.37	0.05
3. Housing was readily available.	0.00	-0.07
4. Child care services were available to support me.	0.00	0.13
5. The university gave me the academic support to complete my program.	0.27	0.19
6. The university helped me to cope with non-academic issues (e.g., family).	0.15	0.12
7. More cultural activities would help me at university.	-0.04	0.85
8. More on-campus or community support for my religion would help.	0.03	0.80
9. More access to advisors on campus would help me to complete my program.	0.32	0.75
10. I have the writing skills to complete my program.	0.63	0.05
11. I have the mathematics skills to complete my program.	0.65	0.07
12. I have or had good relationships with the faculty at the university.	0.56	0.19
13. I have good relationships with other students at the university.	0.55	0.20
14. It is important to have diverse faculty at the university.	0.06	0.44
15. I encountered racism at the university.	0.09	0.19

Figure 2
Barriers for International Students

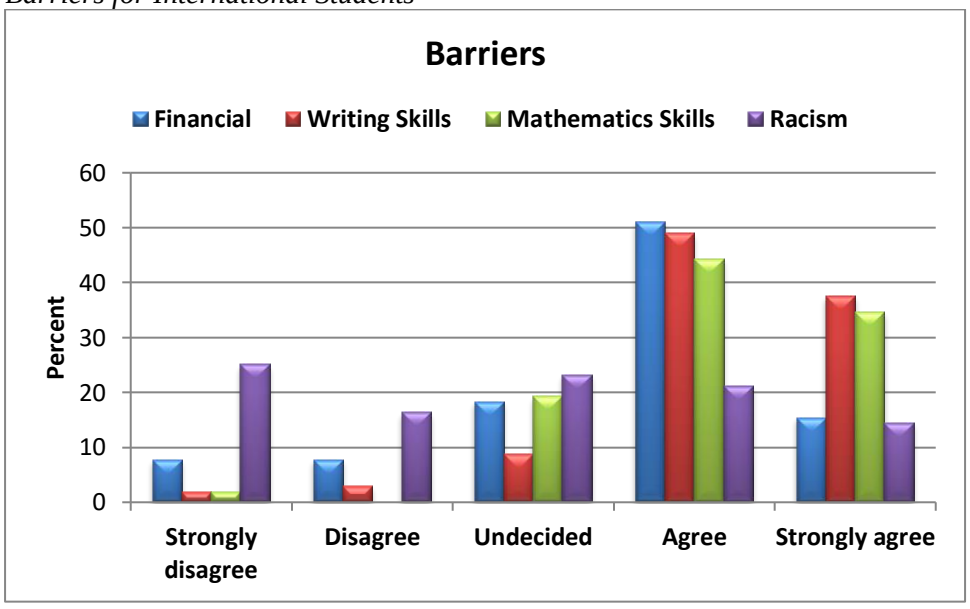
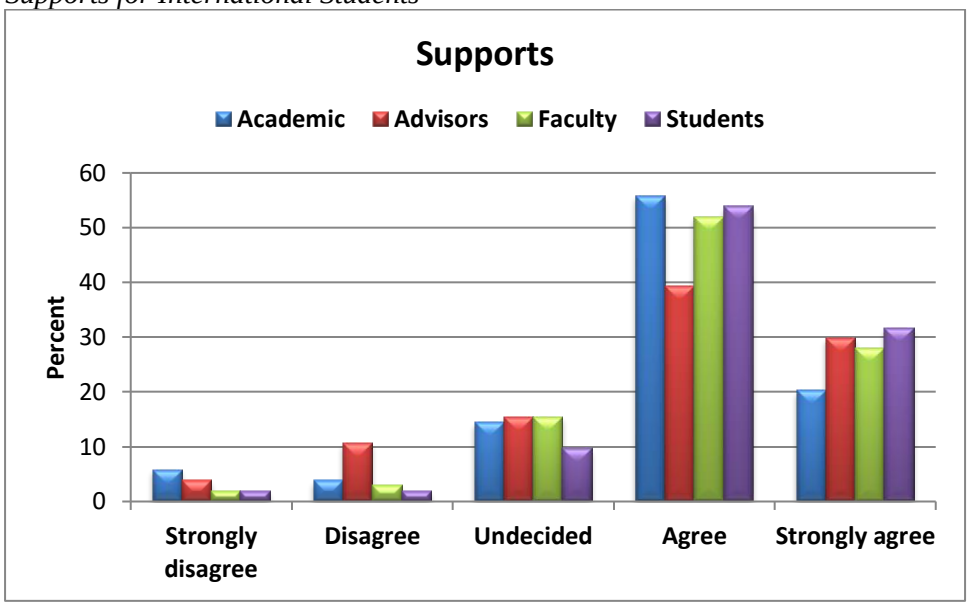


Figure 3

Supports for International Students



Financial Stress and Finding a Job. When asked about non-academic issues interfering with or facilitating the successful completion of their program, many identified financial stress as a major barrier. "Financial is a very big issue, so the fee need to be minimized for international students" (Participant 8). "Limited budget which creates stress" (Participant 22). "Financial issues are the biggest of the issues" (Participant 29). The high tuition rates, financial stress and frustration forced some students to drop out: "One of my friends told me she left school because she doesn't have enough money to pay those fees" (Participant 42). "I may choose to leave school even though My GPA is 4.0" (Participant 57). Several participants questioned the lack of scholarships for international students and some felt demoralized by it:

> We should set up scholorship for international students…I decided to work as part time job instead of studying during my spare time. My GPA is 4.0. But I have no enthusiasm to study under a high tuition fees without any scholorship reward. (Participant 57)

"There should be a revision in the fees structure for the international students to make education affordable. More awards/scholarships/bursaries should be made available for the international students based on merit" (Participant 83). Difficulties finding a job exacerbated financial stress as it seems that many participants expected to find a job to support themselves. Financial stress appeared in the narratives of most participants and was connected to difficulty finding a job, lack of scholarships for international students, and changes in the global economy.

Language issues and academic support. Language barriers were recurrently reported throughout the interviews and surveys and seemed to have interfered with academic performance. As Konstantin states in the interview, "the hardest part of my studies is the English course, because it is so hard to write those essays." Language challenges also limited social integration, as suggested by Ice Cream when talking about her biggest challenge, "My biggest challenge is conversation with Canadians." Chocolate also expressed that it was very hard to understand Canadian classmates because they "talked too quickly."

Overall, the major language issue was with academic writing. Students expressed the need for more support. For example, Participant 83 stated, "we need academic and language support, for adapting to a whole new education system." Similarly, Participant 29 affirmed, "Writing center and library services are helpful, but not when it comes to graduation school paper. Writing workshops on academic paper formats would be useful as different courses have different requirements."

Adjustment Issues and Racism. Some participants reported challenges with public transportation and accommodation issues, including difficulty finding an affordable place, limited and expensive student residences on campus, limited cooking space, and small and noisy dormitories at one of the residences on campus and some of the ones off campus.

Racism and discrimination are additional barriers experienced by many participants. This was a recurrent answer to the question: *What specific challenges do you face as an international student?* The following are some of the most representative answers: "Racism, discrimination, double standards, hard time to find friends" (Participant 22). "Racism and group-ism. People have made a mind set about a certain people of specific country and they prefer judging everyone on that ground "(Participant 23). These answers suggest that this was also connected to challenges with social integration and feelings of exclusion, "Instead of treating students as 'international students' we should be getting almost same treatment as Canadians. Because we are constantly being referred to as an international student, it definitely makes us feel excluded" (Participant 42).

Supports

Participants identified a variety of supports that facilitate their experience as international students. These included positive relationships with faculty and peers; the role of International Student Advisors (ISAs); activities, orientations, academic support centers, volunteer and cooperative education opportunities organized for international students; as well as effective pedagogical strategies such as group work, discussions and experiential learning. Also, participants mentioned the friendly nature of faculty and staff, small size, and the quiet and safety of the city, which gives authenticity to their Canadian experience.

Faculty and Advisors. The approachability and willingness to help of university faculty and staff was noted by several participants, who felt that the informal culture of the institution facilitates building effective relationships between faculty and students. One student, N mentioned the support he received from his academic advisor, professors, and Dean when he experienced challenges fitting in the schedule for the five final courses needed to complete his degree.

Dancer commended her ISA for help during her first days at university: "The first thing I did was look for my ISA. She was the only person I knew. My advisor calmed me down […] The next day we dealt with SIM-cards, bank accounts and all that."

Along with the role of ISAs and academic advisors, professors and instructors were recognized as people playing key roles in international students' success. The majority were satisfied with their relationships with professors, as stated by Participant 9 and 13 respectively, "Teachers are one of the best pluses here. People work for idea, not for money," "I think the teaching here has been better then I could ever hope for." Similarly, Chocolate stated: "Teachers in my program are all very friendly and like us to ask them questions, and they all have office hours an allow us to ask questions."

In some cases, instructors provided language support. For example, Maggie stated, "I received a lot of support from my instructors. In one of my graduate courses the teacher show me which sentences were strong and which were not, so I learned". However, a few, like Participant 91, noted, "I believe that relationship with professor could be enhanced with more ways to keep in touch with your professor." Along the same line, Participant 52 would like to "Maybe have a after class session where faculty can talk to students about any particular problems they are facing with the course." These statements highlight how important regular communication with professors is for international students. Participants would also like more workshops, socials, and events with faculty and "one to one meetings at least once a month" (Participant 89) to build stronger relationships.

Students. In addition to the support offered by faculty and staff, peer support was critical for international students' success. An ideal social network includes international and Canadian friends. Participant 87 stated, "Making Canadian friends other than sticking with a 'herd' from your home country helped me a lot. I've also tried to be as engaged as possible on campus." Friends significantly influenced their program choices. Moreover, making friends was reported recurrently as the most successful and

satisfying experience during their first year of study as international students. Friends provide important emotional and academic support, such as a friend who became a mentor to Maggie, “I had a conversation with this student here who is my friend, she is about to finish her thesis. She helped me to find my way.”

Activities. The orientations and special activities provided for international students were considered very useful by most. During orientations they met their ISA, learned about safety in the city, how to open a bank account, how to register for courses, what to do in the case of fire, how to deal with health issues, and most importantly, they made good friends who eventually played a key role in their successful adaptation.

Several participants emphasized the importance of volunteer and cooperative education (coop) experiences for their career development, language skills, and social networks. A states, “Volunteering in the Writing Centre made me feel valued.” T summarizes the importance of his coop experience, “I really enjoyed my coop, […] during those 4 months experience I learned what I am really interested in and also for future what I am looking for.” A comment by Participant 100 captures the sentiment of most students about the support systems offered:

> The university provides plenty of support for students (not just academic), though I haven't exploited most of them. When I did need help, it was provided by colleagues and teachers (both in-class and off-class hours), but other services were available (Writing Center, for example).

Academic. About effective pedagogy, several students referred to group work as a teaching strategy that supported their learning and improved their self-confidence. Dancer described how group work helped her, “Me and some other students gathered before the exams and discussed everything we learnt. It was very practical and helpful. We took some tests online, and it was “really useful”; we argued and questioned each other’s knowledge.” Chocolate also found value in group work, “The teacher ask me to speak in small groups, that is great. People in the group is from different countries, so you must speak English, so it helps you improve your English.” Maggie stated, “Teamwork improved my self-confidence. Day by day I become more and more confident and I can talk to people. It’s a very good method.”

The value international students see on experiential learning, group discussions, interactive activities, and practical application of theory is reflected in numerous recommendations provided to enhance learning: “More discussion should be added in classes. Try to ask questions to students to make them concentrate in classes” (Participant 70). “More stress should be given on practical aspect of the course” (Participant 81). “Experiential learning with interactive teaching methods and real-world examples” (Participant 83). “Hands-on learning!” (Participant 87).

Cultural. The experiences shared by some participants provide further insights of cross-cultural transformations. For example, Maggie shares transformative moments through her interaction with community members outside the university,

> I was on the bus, and someone wanted to have a conversation with me about religion and culture. He said, can I talk to you, if you don’t want it is ok, I am fine. I said, I am a sociable person, so it’s ok. And we became friends and he invited me for lunch. (Maggie Interview)

This interaction was an opportunity for Maggie to clarify misunderstandings about Islam and debunk myths about Muslims, while getting beyond her comfort zone to interact with a male. The transformative experience IHE offered Maggie is also captured in her educational experiences,

> In my country, we do not have classes with men, only women. So, it was very hard to have class with men and have teacher men. I didn’t want to talk, but now I am ok. […] I was not comfortable speaking with men. But now I am. I have to go back [to her country] and change people over there and the society.

Discussion

This research investigated IHE through the lens of international students to better understand their lived experiences, barriers and supports. We sum up by reflecting on the results within the changing context

of IHE and discuss the unique nature of the methods used, the significance and implications for further research.

The following questions guided this research: What is internationalization according to international students? What are the barriers and supports experienced by international students? What are the educational experiences of international students? Exploratory factor analyses revealed key factors for success included writing and mathematics skills and relationships with faculty and students. In addition, support for culture, religion, and advising were secondary factors. Open and axial coding of qualitative data corroborated these findings and revealed three dimensions of internationalization according to international students' perspectives: Exchange; Understanding, Sharing, and Support; and Transformation. Detailed qualitative data from open-ended survey questions and rich stories of lived experiences complemented the quantitative data summarized here. Results suggested that international students require more assistance.

To comprehensively present the findings, a graphic organizer and metaphor was created. Figure 4 represents a synthesis of all findings. Inclusion in this figure was dependent upon these supports and barriers being identified as significant elements in both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. Figure 4 illustrates the three dimensions of internationalization (Exchange, Understanding/Sharing/Support, and Transformation), through the lens of international students. Also included are the range of supports and barriers. The metaphor of a prism is used to conceptualize the phenomenon of IHE. In the same way white light is refracted by a prism into the visible spectrum, international students are transformed through their experiences within our universities. Barriers can block the path of students (represented by light). The prism permits student exchange, transformation and support (emerging as the rainbow).

A convergent mixed-methods approach, combining survey data and interviews, provided a clear window into the lived experiences of international students at a mid-sized Canadian university. This was facilitated through *comparative ethnographic narrative* (CEN) (Howe, 2005a; 2005b; 2010; 2022), which represents an original and unique conceptual framework and research method. Essentially, CEN is a collaborative form of narrative inquiry—*comparative* (as it involves comparing one's experiences with others); *ethnographic* (in situ, long term participant-observation); and *narrative* (incorporating peer-to-peer extended conversations). Two research assistants were recruited from international students and selected a small diverse group of other international students through snowballing methods. They worked as a team to conduct interviews or *peer-to-peer conversations*. CEN is more culturally sensitive and less hegemonic than traditional interviews between a researcher and a participant. Moreover, this approach effectively helps to develop rapport with participants to better understand their stories through individuals who can fully relate to shared experiences. International students felt more at ease in sharing their stories in this way. This entire process is done with another co-researcher. Through CEN, two international students collected, analyzed and reported interpretive data from peers to study IHE, from an insider's perspective. International students were thus a significant and integral part of this research as they were actively engaged at every stage. Through their efforts, the stories of international students were told and retold in order to better understand challenges faced and to improve the lives of future international students.

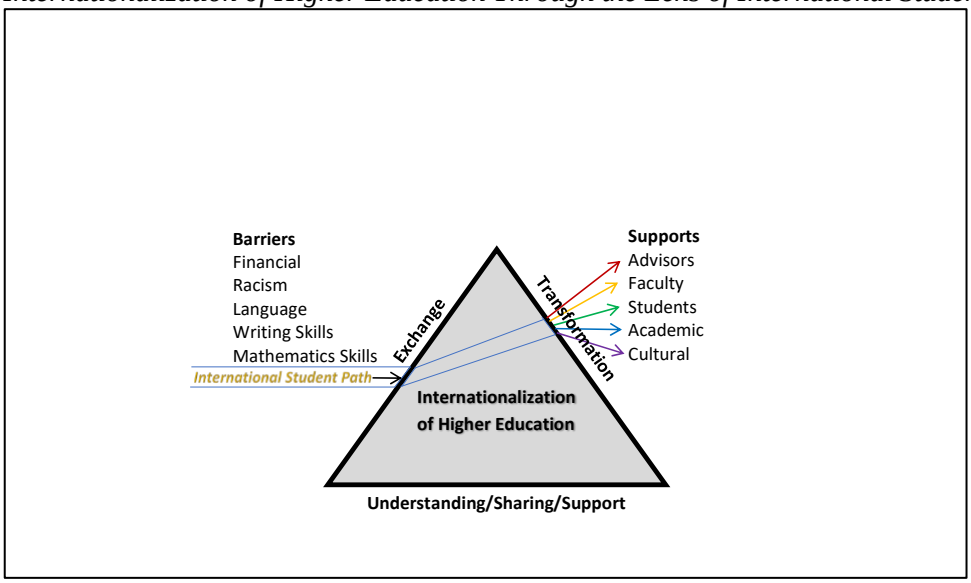
Implications and Conclusion

International students require more assistance, bringing to light critical social justice issues including access, diversity, and equity (Beck & Ilieva, 2019; Bedenlier et al. 2018, Kang, 2020; Lennon, 2007; McGregor et. al, 2020; Sabzalieva, 2020; Senyshyn et al., 2000; Yildirim, 2014). Also, in light of recent global developments (COVID-19), universities are facing dramatic budget cuts due to the potential impact of the pandemic on international student enrollments at universities across Canada. Thus, the well-being of our international students is paramount at this time more than ever before.

Most international students are from Asia, with China and India the largest sources. There is an international student *trade imbalance* as *senders* are China, India, and South Korea while *receivers* are predominantly Western nations. This poses a number of serious problems, including a significant hegemony of Western knowledge and uniformity of educational provision, with the United States as a de-facto model (de Wit & Hunter, 2014; Knight, 2013). Our study and further micro-level studies of IHE can help de-centre this meta-narrative.

Figure 4

Internationalization of Higher Education Through the Lens of International Students



Since this study was conducted in 2016, a number of significant changes have occurred, impacting the situation of international students in Canada. These include geopolitical tensions such as deteriorating Canada-China international relations, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the election of a new government in the United States. Furthermore, at a local level, our university has embarked on new initiatives to support international students, with remarkable results. Faculty are striving to develop intercultural awareness to better serve international students. The focus of curriculum development is equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). This research helps inform our EDI curriculum reforms.

Relations with China are having an impact on enrolments of Chinese international students in Canada. Thus, recruitment efforts have focused on India, at the expense of other nations. While our university boasts of international students from dozens of different countries, an overwhelming majority of students are from only two nations: India and China. We recommend actively recruiting more international students from underrepresented regions including Nigeria and other parts of Africa. Diversity, equity, and inclusion should be considerations in recruitment. Equity seats could be held for both Indigenous and international students within each program of study. Scholarships and bursaries could be offered to marginalized students from impoverished and underrepresented countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in drastic changes for international students in terms of travel restrictions, visas, and classes. Teachers had to suddenly pivot lessons to alternate delivery modes of instruction, and students had to adjust accordingly. While there was little that could be done in the Spring 2020 term as schedules had been set, in Fall 2020 our graduate program moved classes to times that accommodated international students. We recommend universities look carefully at schedules to ensure they are flexible and inclusive.

Finally, we wish to share an exciting initiative started several years ago within our graduate programs in education. Our Student Success Centre shows great promise. Other graduate programs at our university are in the process of replicating this model. It could be an effective way to support international students at other institutions across Canada. The Student Success Centre provides space to meet and to socialize. In addition, we offer weekly workshops and special seminars on topics such as graduate exit options, thesis writing tips, APA, and more. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual events have been offered. We have a faculty member who acts as a coordinator, hiring five or more peer teacher assistants (TAs) to run the Centre each term. International students can book appointments with TAs via our online learning management system (Moodle) for individual help with their writing. The TAs have great empathy and provide significant mentorship. In discussions with faculty and students, we can see evidence of the

Success Centre having a significant impact on the wellness of our international students. It is our recommendation that other programs offer something similar for their international students.

This study provided a platform and voice for international students. We have described common experiences of international students and identified barriers and supports, which we hope will contribute to innovative and student centric approaches to IHE at Canadian universities. Our findings clearly show that more work is needed to provide support to overcome barriers faced and better understand the lives of international students. As this research was conducted at a mid-sized Canadian university, that has undergone rapid expansion in recent years, caution must be advised in applying the findings widely. Nevertheless, the challenges facing international students at the university where this study was conducted are likely similar to the struggles of international students at other universities. We are hopeful this study will encourage others across Canada to investigate further the lived experiences of international students — the very students our universities have become so dependent upon.

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Exploring Students' Experiences of an Internationalized University Through a Person-in-Context Lens

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ABSTRACT

Reduced international student mobility has prompted Australian universities to reframe the way they provide intercultural and international learning experiences, with less dependence on the recruitment of international students. However, many related teaching and learning approaches are often met with perceived student resistance. The aim of this article is to provide better understanding of the challenges with university internationalization by exploring students' experiences of an internationalized university through a Person-in-Context lens. The article reports on a mixed methods study that took place at a metropolitan university in Australia and utilized a quantitative questionnaire

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and qualitative individual interviews, both of which explored students' expectations and experiences of their internationalized university. Main findings have been applied to Volet's person-in-context adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development in order to address the research question, "What influences students' experiences of an internationalized university?" Findings highlight the considerable importance students placed on intercultural interaction. This article presents the application of findings to the person-in-context model and discusses implications that can be drawn about the student experience of internationalized universities.

Keywords: Australia, higher education, intercultural interaction, internationalization, student experience

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For decades, Australian universities have adapted their practices and policies to an increasingly globalized world through a range of comprehensive internationalization approaches (Davis & Mackinstosh, 2011; Rizvi & Walsh, 1998). There are many types of and approaches to higher education internationalization in Australia, depending on a university's particular goals (Davis & Mackinstosh, 2011), including the development of overseas research networks, changes to learning outcomes and graduate attributes, recruitment of diverse staff and students, and adding global elements to curricular and extracurricular experiences. However, the predominant approach for much of the last decade comprised an association between internationalization practices and inward student mobility; that is, the presence and number of international students. The travel restrictions and economic uncertainty prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic have disrupted that association. This shift has prompted greater attention to internationalization approaches and strategies that do not depend on the presence of international students, such as greater international research collaborations, virtual exchange opportunities, and the inclusion of diverse contexts into the curriculum.

Experts have also suggested that the current state of flux in the higher education sector might be the ideal and/or necessary time to shift the way that the sector approaches internationalization, with particular attention to the social dimensions of internationalization. For example, Jones, Leask, Brandenburg, and de Wit (2021) recently argued that it was time to better align higher education internationalization agendas with considerations for global social responsibility.

Indeed, the entire special issue in which that argument appeared related to new ways of imagining internationalization (see Leask & de Gayardon, 2021). In Australia, specifically, scholars have also argued for a change in the way international higher education is perceived and discussed in a post-pandemic context, with suggestions to move beyond the commercial prospects (Rizvi, 2020), and to focus more on students engaging with and learning from diversity on the local campus (Uzhegova et al., 2021).

Importantly, however, the need for more attention to the social aspects of internationalization is not exclusive to the post- or mid-pandemic context. Brandenburg and colleagues (2019) argued pre-pandemic for higher education institutions to address social concerns within their internationalization approaches. A year prior, de Wit and Jones (2018) argued for a more inclusive approach to internationalization. These arguments have long existed in Australia as well. Twenty years ago, Welch (2002) critiqued the focus on financial incentives for internationalization in Australian higher education, and, before that, Rizvi and Walsh (1998) suggested that more attention was needed on helping students develop their intercultural understandings and sensitivities. The authors noted decades ago that the economic and social elements of internationalization are inherently intertwined, just as they are today.

This article contributes to the conversation around the need for expanded attention to the social dimension of internationalization by focusing on the student experience of internationalization. The student dimension is only one aspect of internationalization, but it is an important one. Many benchmarks of internationalization depend upon students (e.g., the number of international students or graduate attributes related to students' cultural understanding). Likewise, many internationalization-related aims depend upon students interacting with and learning from diverse peers, such as multicultural group work and others.

Yet, research over the last two decades has shown that many students resist the teaching and learning practices that are intended to promote the development of related skills, objectives, and attributes. For example, students often resist working in multicultural groups (Strauss, U, & Young, 2011) and it seems that students may be less likely to value diversity when that group work is assessed (Colvin, Fozdar, & Volet, 2015). More recent studies have indicated

that realities may be more nuanced, suggesting that multicultural group work can benefit students unequally (Héliot et al., 2020) and that a well sequenced task is key for positive attitudes and the development of students' perceived intercultural competence (Ferreira-Lopes et al., 2021).

In addition, some studies have suggested that there may be adverse effects of poorly facilitated student intercultural interaction. For example, discrimination can occur when culturally diverse student groups are brought together without proper preparation (Leask, 2009) and students' prior intercultural interactions may prompt them to avoid intercultural interaction in the future (Centola et al., 2007). Similarly, multiple studies have suggested that, after participating in multicultural group work, some students may be less willing to participate in multicultural group work in the future (e.g., Burdett, 2014; Strauss, U, & Young, 2011).

Other studies have also hinted at the presence of negative attitudes among the student body that would directly contradict efforts to improve the social dimensions of internationalization, whether global or local. For example, Harrison and Peacock (2010) found indications that domestic students "perceive threats to their academic success and group identity from the presence of international students on the campus and in the classroom" (p. 877). Barron (2006) found similar feelings of threat and resentment among a small but notable minority of domestic students. Likewise, studies have indicated that international students may feel that domestic students exclude them, talk to them as if they were children, or have an overall lack of patience or respect for them (Bianchi, 2013; Gareis, 2012; Hellstén & Prescott, 2004; Pham & Tran, 2015). The potential for increased resentment or intolerance would seem to oppose one common intended outcome of internationalization in particular: increasing students' cross-cultural awareness, tolerance, and skills (Beelen & Jones, 2015b; De Vita, 2000).

However, there is currently limited research that explores the extent to which these sentiments occur in recent contexts, outside of studies that demonstrate mixed responses toward multicultural group work (e.g., Héliot et al., 2020) or students' perspectives on related curricular internationalization strategies (e.g., Mittelmeier et al., 2021). In Australia, specifically, researchers suggest that more still needs to be done to better support international students

and to improve their relationships with the local community (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2019; Marangell et al., 2018). However, missing seems to be recent exploration of domestic students' attitudes in particular. Thus, this study explored both domestic and international students' recent attitudes in the context of internationalization of higher education in Australia.

This article aims to provide universities with better understanding around the challenges facing internationalization by exploring both domestic and international students' experiences of an internationalized university. It presents findings from a study which took place at one large, metropolitan university in Australia and which was guided by the research question, "What influences students' experience of an internationalized university?" It considers both international and domestic students' experiences across three different faculties. Findings from a quantitative student survey and qualitative interviews are then mapped onto Volet's (2001) person-in-context adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1986, 2005) ecological model of human development in order to provide a holistic picture of students' experiences.

Background

Challenges with Internationalization of Higher Education

There are numerous challenges to higher education internationalization in Australia, including disagreement and ambiguity about the term "internationalization" itself. Internationalization has been used to describe a variety of strategies and approaches that might make a university more global, international, or intercultural in its policies or practices (Arkoudis et al., 2012; Leask, 2009). Ambiguity over the term and differences in definitions can make it difficult to synthesize research that explores its implementation and effects. In addition, some scholars, such as Sperdutti (2019) have critiqued the name and practice of internationalization, noting that it is often associated with the assumption that advancement of Western pedagogies is preferable. "Internationalization" is used in this article to describe, broadly, changes to the educational experience at a university intended to make that experience more international or intercultural. It focuses on Australian higher education more specifically, rather than the "internationalization" of non-Western universities.

In Australia, internationalization practices that influence students' learning experiences often include incorporation of international or intercultural material within the curriculum, changes to intended graduate attributes, and increasing opportunities for international learning experiences, among other practices (Rizvi & Walsh, 1998). However, despite the numerous definitions of and approaches to higher education internationalization, student mobility has remained "king" in the internationalization conversation (Rumbley, 2015, p. 16). Challenges with this emphasis on mobility have been well-documented, from both a practical standpoint and a duty-of-care position.

First, from the practical side, mobility is inherently limited as an avenue for internationalization primarily because it reaches only the students who are privileged enough to study overseas (Beelen & Jones, 2015b; de Wit & Jones, 2018; Harrison, 2015). In addition, it can further privilege that already privileged cohort. For example, Universities UK found that undergraduate students who had studied abroad during their studies were more likely to find a job after graduation and to earn higher starting salaries than their non-mobile peers (Universities UK, 2019).

Secondly, from a duty-of-care position, there have been challenges around the way that international students are positioned. They have previously been positioned as sources of income and have not necessarily been given due attention or support as individual students (Choudaha, 2017). This circumstance may derive from the fact that most tertiary students who study abroad are self-funded and pay much higher fees than domestic students (OECD, 2019). In many countries, international students' fees subsidize domestic higher education (Altbach & de Wit, 2018) and university research efforts (Norton, 2018). This financial dependence relates to the third challenge, which the recent pandemic has brought to the forefront: that such dependence on inward student mobility is not sustainable for many Australian universities (Marshman & Larkins, 2020).

The financial realities may influence the way that international students are treated, cared for, or viewed; however, universities' responsibilities to care for their international students extends beyond the way these students may be positioned within the conversation about internationalization. International students in Australian universities often face a range of challenges specific to moving overseas for their studies, such as loneliness, difficulty finding housing,

separation from their support networks, and adjustment to a new academic system (Marginson et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2016). Research has also suggested that international students are at high risk of facing mental health difficulties while studying at Australian universities (Orygen, 2017; Shadowen et al., 2019; Veness, 2016). This is especially notable as Sawir and colleagues (2008) found that the institutional context may heighten feelings of loneliness. Although mental health challenges are not exclusive to international students, scholars have noted that there is more that Australian universities can do to better support the emotional, social, and academic needs of their international students (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2019; Marangell et al., 2018), especially after recruiting them and bringing them to Australia for their studies.

The challenges of internationalization, however, are more comprehensive than the perceived quality of support for international students or criticism of the terminology. Internationalizing curricula, for example through changes to teaching practices, content, or intended learning outcomes, can be challenging for teaching staff with large workloads and content-heavy courses (Arkoudis et al., 2010; Arkoudis & Baik, 2014). Likewise, some teaching staff might not see the relevance of internationalization within their field (Leask, 2013), nor might they find it easy to incorporate intercultural learning practices into their discipline (Arkoudis & Baik, 2014).

There are challenges, too, to the efficacy of such teaching and learning approaches, such as perceived student resistance, as described above. Simultaneously, there are sociological and cultural reasons why intercultural interactions between students might be limited or difficult. Effective intercultural communication depends on each party's knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Deardorff, 2006). Students in various contexts have noted the large amount of time and effort required when communicating with peers from cultures other than their own (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2010; Dunne, 2009; Peacock & Harrison, 2009). It can also be risky, especially for international students' interactions with teachers and classmates, during which misunderstanding of non-verbal signals can have "dire consequences" for the international student (Hellstén, 2007, p. 83). This is because intercultural communication comprises more than straightforward language translation; it often involves different ideas about space, humor, familiarity, and touch (Straker, 2016). Domestic students, too, have noted

the risks involved during intercultural communication and their worries over causing accidental offense (Dunne, 2009). Perceived English-language proficiency is also a well-documented limitation of interactions between international and domestic students in Australian universities specifically (see, for example, Arkoudis et al., 2018; Arkoudis & Baik, 2014). Importantly, however, researchers suggest that there is a need to improve both international and domestic students' communication skills while studying in Australian universities (Arkoudis et al., 2016).

Although other aspects of internationalization, such as research collaborations, may not depend as strongly upon the recruitment of international students or on student responses to intercultural teaching and learning practices, this article is concerned with the student experience of internationalization. The student experience is an aspect that has changed considerably as student mobility remains uncertain in Australia. In addition, as mentioned above, many aims of internationalization are student centered and, simultaneously, many identified challenges pertain to students' resistance to certain internationalization practices, including but not exclusively intercultural interaction and multicultural learning activities. Understanding what influences students' experiences can therefore illuminate a path forward for higher education internationalization.

Limited Understanding of the Student Experience of Internationalization

Literature that explores the student experience of internationalization tends to focus on the experiences of particular student groups (e.g., international or domestic students) and their interactions with each other. As a result, what is known about the student experience is constrained by the predominance of these topics in the related literature.

For example, the literature pertaining to students' experiences of internationalization in Australian higher education is first limited by the participant groups from which data is drawn. Specifically, literature relating to the student experience of internationalization has tended to consider international students' experiences almost exclusively. An increasing collection of Australian research has considered international students' adjustment to university, ways to support their transitions, and their experiences with domestic students (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2019; Marginson et al., 2010; Matsunaga et al., 2021). Likewise,

the growing but limited attention to domestic students' experiences has tended to focus on their relationships with international students or their attitudes towards multicultural group work (e.g., Arkoudis & Baik, 2014). As domestic students comprise the majority of the Australian higher education student population (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2020b), they are a critical component of the learning environment, and their experiences and attitudes deserve more exploration. As Leask (2009) explained, "the attitude of home students to international students is of critical importance in improving interactions between them" (p. 218).

In addition, research often perpetuates a dichotomy between international and domestic students that Jones (2017) has identified as a flawed dichotomy. Despite considerable linguistic and cultural diversity within the student population in Australia, literature rarely considers the heterogeneity of either population. Exceptions tend to consider other distinctions between groups, such as differences between first-language English speakers and additional-language English speakers (e.g., Tananuraksakul, 2012). Recent literature has explored the experiences of students from specific backgrounds and within specific contexts; for example, of Chinese students in America (Ruble & Zhang, 2013) or Muslim students in New Zealand (Gardner, Krägeloh, & Henning, 2014). Further attention to the range of unique experience should continue in research into the student experience.

A second gap in the literature relates to limitations in the researched contexts, as a predominance of studies comes from business-related subjects (Chan, 2011). Yet, pedagogies utilized in business subjects are not necessarily reflective of those used in other disciplines. Furthermore, the composition of the student population in business programs tends to differ greatly from those in the Arts and Humanities, for example.

Another limitation of existing literature on the student experience of internationalization relates to the aspects of internationalization that are studied. Literature that considers students' perspectives tends to be limited to investigations of group work, multicultural or otherwise (Héliot et al., 2020; Matsunaga et al., 2021; Teo et al., 2012), peer mentoring (Ragavan, 2104; Shigaki & Smith, 1997) or students' intercultural interactions (Arkoudis & Baik, 2014). Even so, the effect that these practices may have on changing students'

attitudes and skills is also underexplored. As Leask (2009) explains, this gap exists partly because it can be especially difficult to measure subjective responses to interventions. However, Leask continues that "it is vitally important that we find ways to do this" (p. 218).

What is noticeably absent is literature that explores students' perceptions of internationalization practices other than multicultural groups, such as the incorporation of diverse perspectives into the curricula. Two notable exceptions are recent studies by Mittelmeier and colleagues which explored the influence of internationalized content on student participation (Mittelmeier et al., 2017) and students' perceptions of the relevance of curriculum internationalization policies (Mittelmeier, Slof, & Rienties, 2021). The former study found that internationalized content encouraged greater student participation and that the inclusion of content relating to students' own cultural backgrounds was particularly important for encouraging participation. In the latter, the researchers emphasized that different students perceived the relevance of the internationalization policies differently and that internationalization "may be experienced differently by students from different backgrounds" (Mittelmeier, Slof, & Rienties, 2021, p. 116). While these two studies were Netherlands-specific, the findings have clear implications for Australia as well where the student population (domestic and international) comprises students from hundreds of cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2020a). However, the direct applicability is unknown due to the lack of Australia-specific research that considers students' attitudes to a wider range of internationalization-related practices.

This article aims to reduce this gap in the literature by considering students' perspectives of internationalized universities more broadly. It will do so by exploring multiple layers of influences on students' experiences at an internationalized university as considered through a person-in-context lens.

Volet's Person-in-Context Lens

The student experience of an internationalized university can be better understood by considering students' experiences in relation to established frameworks and theories. This article takes a social-constructive approach and applies research findings to Volet's (2001) person-in-context (PiC) model. The

PiC model is an adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1986, 2005) ecological model which considers micro, meso, and macro spheres of influence on human development. In Bronfenbrenner's model, each sphere influences the subsequent spheres within it and, ultimately, the individual. Similarly, the PiC model not only considers multiple layers and multi-directional influences, but it also focuses on the outcomes for motivation and learning in context. As such, it considers the attributes of each sphere as they pertain to the learning context. For example, at the individual level, attributes include one's motives, attitudes, and appraisals of the learning tasks (Volet, 2001).

Another key characteristic of the PiC model is identification and understanding of the "experiential interface" (Volet, 2001, p. 57), the place where the individual and environmental dimensions interact. For example, a student's personal attributes, such as their expectations and appraisals of the environment, and their interpersonal variables (e.g., their intercultural interactions with other students) would likely interact with any influences within the situational, institutional, and sociocultural levels of the learning environment. These environmental variables might be the specific classroom task, assessment type, or the university's sociocultural context. Volet (2001) suggests that congruence, or alignment, between the individual and environmental dimensions leads to motivated and productive learning.

On the other hand, incongruence, or mismatch, at the environmental interface would exist when "students are unwilling or unable to benefit from the opportunities provided by the learning environment" or "when the instructional approach does not support the special needs or circumstances, and ends up inhibiting their motivation, engagement and learning" (Volet, 2001, p. 62). Application of this framework would suggest that literature that describes examples of student disengagement, resistance, or ambiguity, as presented in the previous section, could be indications of incongruence at the experiential interface.

Previous applications of this model have investigated specific aspects of the situational layer (e.g., assessment group format) and associations with certain individual variables, such as students' attitudes towards their intercultural interactions (e.g., Kimmel & Volet, 2010; 2012a; 2012b; Kudo, Volet, & Whitsed, 2019). This article, however, reports on a study that considered

students' intercultural interactions as one component of students' university experiences. In addition, one aim of the study was to explore influences, both known and unknown, rather than to investigate the influence of only specific variables. As such, this article expands upon those previous studies by considering a holistic picture of students' experiences within the internationalized learning environment.

A Study of Students' Experiences

Based on a review of existing literature and insight from Volet's (2001) PiC framework, this study was designed to (a) investigate both domestic and international students' experiences and (b) consider multiple aspects of both the individual and environmental dimensions. To do so, it considered students' experiences within a defined context, which allowed for better understanding of the relationship between environment and experience. The study aimed to address the question, "What influences students' experience of an internationalized university?"

The study also explored how students conceptualize an internationalized university and, for that reason, no pre-determined definition of an "internationalized university" was presented. However, the university at which this study took place has a comprehensive approach to internationalization (Hudzik, 2011), which includes, among other objectives, providing intercultural interactions for students, incorporating global perspectives and contexts into the curriculum, and expanding overseas research collaborations. For the purposes of the conversation in this article, a similarly internationalized university would be a large, metropolitan English-medium university with a large presence of international students and a comprehensive approach to internationalization. More information about the study context is provided below.

Case Study Approach

The study adopted a single-institution case study design which allowed for the exploration of both known and unknown variables and provided a bounded context within which students' experiences could be explored. As Yin (2003) explains, the case study approach is suitable when deliberately considering contextual conditions. The case study institution is a large,

metropolitan university in Australia. It is internationally ranked and attracts students and scholars from around the world. In 2019, pre-pandemic, the case study university had a larger percentage of international students studying on campus (32.6%) than the national average (21.9%) (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2020b). It also had one of the largest numbers of international students onshore compared with other Australian universities, with over 23,000 international students in 2019 (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2020b). The three selected faculties within the university, referred to as Arts, Design, and Business, comprise different teaching practices, cohort sizes, and proportions of international students (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Overview of Faculty Enrolment, with Proportions of International and Domestic Students in 2018

Degree	Faculty undergraduate enrolment		Cohort size[a]
	Domestic	International	
Arts	80%	20%	2,300
Design	53%	47%	700
Business	47%	53%	2,200

Note. [a] Cohort size has been rounded to the nearest 100

Methods

To keep the context constrained, the global level of the PiC framework was considered out of scope. The methods below, therefore, were designed to gather information on the levels from personal to sociocultural, which would provide a bounded context and retain elements of both the individual and environmental dimensions.

A mixed-methods approach was utilized, and two collections of data provided a picture of students' expectations and experiences within the constrained context of the institution. Quantitative data were collected from an electronic questionnaire and qualitative data were collected from individual student interviews. This provided a comprehensive picture of students'

experiences and beliefs because data collected from each provided a different perspective on the same phenomena. The design, collection, and analysis of the two methods were concurrent (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011); meaning that, although the student interviews took place after the student survey, the interviews were not used to elaborate on the survey data, but, rather, to provide a distinct set of data. The quantitative data collected in the surveys provided measurable information on students' attitudes about known variables, and the qualitative data collected in the student interviews allowed for exploration of "individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation" (Creswell, 2009, p. 4).

Participants

Ethics approval was granted from the case study institution, and students from one core subject per selected faculty were invited to complete the electronic survey. Of the 1,211 students who received invitations, 170 students completed the survey, which comprised a 14% response rate. Participants gave explicit consent on the first page of the survey.

Survey participants self-identified as being enrolled as either an international or domestic student. As shown in Table 2, 58% of survey participants identified as international students compared with 42% who identified as domestic students.

At the end of the survey, students were invited to express interest in participating in an individual interview. Of the 170 final survey participants, 42 expressed interest in participating in an individual interview. Of these, 17 were eventually interviewed, either in person or over the phone. The profile of interview participants can be found in Table 3.

Table 2

Survey Participant Profile by Residency Status

	International students	Domestic students	All
No. of students	99	71	170
Gender			
Female	75.8%	56.3%	67.6%
Male	23.2%	42.3%	31.2%
Non-binary/Third gender	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Prefer not to answer	1.0%	1.4%	1.2%
Faculty			
Arts	40.4%	28.2%	35.3%
Design	15.2%	29.6%	21.2%
Business	42.4%	40.9%	41.8%
Other	2.0%	1.3%	1.7%
First language[a]			
English	11.1%	83.1%	41.2%
Mandarin	62.6%	5.6%	38.8%
Cantonese	8.1%	5.6%	7.1%
Vietnamese	4.0%	0.0%	2.4%
Other	14.2%	5.7%	10.5%

Note. [a] Participants selected from a list of the 21 most common languages in the state, plus a 22nd choice of "Other, not listed". These are the answer choices that were selected by 2 or more participants, with the others combined into the percentage for "Other".

Table 3

Overview of Interview Participants

Students[a]	Gender	Age	Residency status	Faculty	Nationality
Abigail	Female	18	Domestic	Arts	Australian
Adele	Female	18	International	Arts	Singaporean
Alice	Female	18	Domestic	Arts	Australian
Amanda	Female	22	Domestic	Arts	Australian
Amy	Female	20	International	Arts	Chinese
Anh	Male	18	International	Arts	Vietnamese
Annie	Female	19	International	Arts	Vietnamese
Beatrice	Female	19	International	Business	Indonesian
Bela	Female	20	International	Business	Russian
Ben	Male	22	International	Business	Vietnamese
Bhavini	Female	20	Domestic	Business	Australian
Brian	Male	20	Domestic	Business	Australian
Bruce	Male	22	International	Business	Singaporean
Dahlia	Female	18	International	Design	Myanma
David	Male	22	Domestic	Design	Australian
Diana	Female	21	Domestic	Design	New Zealander
Oliver	Male	19	International	Business[c]	Belgian

Note.[a] Pseudonyms are used; [b] As indicated on the Interview Interest Form; [c] On exchange

Analysis

In alignment with the concurrent research design (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011), each data set was analyzed independently. Key findings were identified separately from the survey and interviews.

The survey responses were analyzed first using primarily descriptive statistics to create a broad picture of students' attitudes and experiences. Descriptive analysis (including frequencies, medians, and means) was conducted for overall responses as well as for aggregated responses by faculty, residency status, language background, and gender. Chi-squared tests were then conducted

to explore the presence of statistically significant associations between students' survey responses and certain other variables, including their faculty, residency status, language background, or gender.

Transcripts from the student interviews were analyzed using NVivo software so that patterns across responses could be identified. The transcripts were first coded into prior categories consistent with the interview protocol (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011), levels of the PiC framework, and existing concepts in the literature. Then, a combination of inductive and deductive codes was used to allow for both (a) relating findings to existing concepts in the literature and (b) exploring new ideas which emerged in the data.

After the iterative coding process was completed, patterns were identified and summaries written up separately for each prior category (Bazeley, 2009). Matrix coding and cross tabulations were then utilized to establish relationships between codes and respondents (Bazeley, 2009). Overarching patterns and findings across the interview data were then identified.

A merged analysis was then conducted, using key findings from both data sets to address the main research question, "What influences students' experience of an internationalized university?" Patterns were explored and findings across all data were explored to determine whether different pieces of evidence corroborated, complemented, or conflicted each other (Yin, 2009). The key findings from the survey and the interviews were collated and then mapped onto Volet's person-in-context framework, which is discussed below.

Students' Experiences as Seen Through a Person-in-Context Lens

The recurring patterns, themes, and key findings from both the survey and interview analyses were applied to the PiC framework; meaning, they were listed under the respective levels or placed into the space for the experiential interface. Figure 1 shows how the findings were applied. The discussion below focuses on the key features of each level and descriptions of the experiential interface.

Personal
Conceptualizations of internationalization as equating to diversity
Expectations for intercultural interaction with peers, within the classroom and on the university campus
Expectations for high-quality education, exhibited as interactive learning and personal relationships with classmates and staff
Sense of agency and initiative, confidence, and personality
Linguistic challenges, level of comfort with one's own accent and language ability

Interpersonal
Intercultural interactions in class are limited
There is less interaction with teachers than expected
Interactions with peers outside of class are limited
Interactions with peers seem superficial or rushed

Individual dimension

Experiential interface

Situational
Classroom activities do not often include interaction
Assessment types can either exacerbate tensions between students or encourage inclusion of additional perspectives
Tutors may or may not be good facilitators of in-class discussion

Environmental dimension

Examples of congruence, ambivalence, difficulty, or incongruence:

lack of intercultural interaction in class

lack of interpersonal interaction with staff

difficulty making friends

lack of motivation and engagement

unproductive group work

difficulty communicating or working with classmates

uneven participation in

Classmates' behavior seen to influence learning experience		class discussion
Presence of international students seen to reduce quality of learning experience		frustration with classmates' level of engagement
Learning is not as practical, innovative, or interactive		
		surprise over autonomous nature of study
Institutional		
No opportunity for cohort-based learning		surprise over lack of relationships with teachers
Little overlaps with other students' subjects		
Timetables inhibit opportunity for interaction between classes		feeling unwelcomed and unvalued
Sociocultural		
Racial stereotypes of Asian students and conflating of all international students with Asian students		
Cultural capital preferences White, European, domestic students, and those with previous experience in Australian or Western educational settings		
Differences in humor, cultural references, and lifestyle		

Figure 1. Application of Main Findings to the Person-in-Context Framework

The Individual Dimension

The individual dimension includes findings related to the personal and interpersonal levels. Specifically, the personal level comprised results relating to how students conceptualized the internationalized university, what they expected of their internationalized learning experience, the personal attributes that emerged as notable, and other motivational influences that were present in the data.

The main findings relating to the personal level included the finding that students expected high-quality, highly frequent intercultural interaction. For

example, 86% of participants expected “a lot of opportunity to interact with students from different backgrounds” (compared with 14% who expected “not a lot”), and 74% expected “a lot of classroom discussion”.

In addition, interview responses suggested that most participants associated an internationalized university with diversity—specifically, with the presence of students from many linguistic, cultural, and national backgrounds. Similarly, they seemed to expect that an internationalized university with a diverse student body would inherently foster frequent and abundant intercultural interactions with peers, as demonstrated in the quote below:

> I’ll explain what I thought of [the university] before I came. So, I would imagine people mingling together despite their language differences, culture differences, and they would be having fun, they would be sharing ideas, reading books together, on the courtyard or something. (Dahlia)

Specifically, students also seemed to expect that this frequent, intercultural interaction would take place both inside and outside the learning environment.

In addition to students’ expectations, the personal level included the finding that a student’s own sense of agency (including their confidence and level of extraversion) seemed to play a significant role in how they approached and then interpreted their experiences within the learning environment. This idea was present in both survey and interview responses, with 75% of survey participants indicating that “personality” might be a barrier to interacting with one’s classmates. A related finding was that a student’s perceived language ability influenced how they approached their learning experiences, as did how they perceived others’ language abilities, a finding which supports previous research (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2010).

At the interpersonal level, students’ descriptions of their interpersonal interactions with teachers and peers were included, as were their evaluations of the quantity or quality of those interactions. The themes and patterns that fell into the interpersonal level focused predominantly on the limited opportunity for interaction, both with classmates and with teachers, and the perceived superficiality of their interactions. While these sentiments are consistent with those found in previous studies (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2010), what was significant for the application to the PiC model was that they focused on the negative (e.g.,

the lack of or limitations of such interactions). The following quote provides one example of commentary about the absence of expected interaction:

> During tutorials, it's very quiet. Like nobody talks at all, so it's really awkward when you want to ask a question because you don't know if you're like lagging behind or sometimes you don't want to ask questions because you think they might be stupid. (Bhavini)

It seemed that interpersonal interaction predominated the personal level by comprising not only the interpersonal level itself, but also by predominating students' expectations and appraisals of the internationalized university environment.

The Environmental Dimension

Attention to interaction and the quality of interaction also arose in students' descriptions of the environmental dimension; specifically, in the situational and institutional layers. In regard to the situational layer, for example, students commented on the way that assessment design may increase social tensions. For example, Brian mentioned that an assignment which required "a binary, yes-or-no, right-or-wrong kind of assignment" would be less likely to encourage collaboration than one in which different perspectives would be valuable in the quality of the task.

Other students elaborated on environmental factors which would influence the quality of classroom discussion, such as the number of assignments or readings:

> Sometimes the discussion is a little bit useless, because maybe, for example, in the assignment week, there's too many assignments to do; none of us in the group do the readings, so it will be really embarrassing, and we just won't say anything. (Amy)

The institutional elements that were mentioned seemed primarily to be those that inhibited interaction. An overarching theme among these was that there was little opportunity for students to learn together or to build a strong cohort. Specifically, this included observations that most students do not take the same classes with the same peers each semester and that, if two students did have a class together one semester, they might not see each other again after the semester finished.

> You meet people 12 times [the number of weeks in the semester] and then you kind of never see each other again. So, you don't really have time to make friends. (Bhavini)

Other students echoed this comment. For example, Ben believed that his lack of close friends was "inevitable" because students have different schedules and do not go from class to class together.

For reference, the student participants in this study were not enrolled in cohort-based programs (i.e., those in which the same students attended the same classes as each other); however, some students were in program or majors with smaller cohorts of students (see Table 1). Even among those with some consistency in their classmates, there was frequent commentary that the structure of the program inhibited students from getting to know each other. For example, students mentioned that there was too little time between classes to build upon in-class discussions.

There were also sentiments which emerged that touched upon elements of the sociocultural level. In alignment with previous studies (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2010; Dunne 2019; Peacock & Harrison, 2009), key findings included the idea that differences in humor, cultural references, or lifestyle inhibited student interaction. There were also observations that the experiences of students from certain cultural backgrounds were given more value in the classroom than others, an idea that was previously discussed by Jon (2012) and Colvin, Fozdar, and Volet (2013). In this study, the students whose experiences were mentioned as being most valuable were the domestic, European, or White/Caucasian students, and those with previous experience studying in educational settings in the U.S., Australia, or the U.K.

Descriptions of the Experiential Interface

In addition to considering how students described elements of each layer, it is also important to consider the ways students described what takes place at the experiential interface, which would exemplify the relationship between the individual and the environment. In relation to the research aim, students' descriptions of the experiential interface would provide insight into potential challenges and perceived student resistance to teaching and learning approaches aimed at fostering international or intercultural understanding. In addition, they

address the research question by identifying what influences how students experience and perceive their learning experiences.

In this study, students' descriptions of their learning were often characterized by aspects that were missing; namely, interaction, engagement, and participation. These characterizations suggest that there might be a lack of alignment at the experiential interface. Students' descriptions also reiterate that many of the well-established challenges identified in previous literature persist, such as frustration with group work, difficulty in cross-cultural communication, the presence of stereotypes, and the perception of a barrier between student groups.

When viewing the main findings through the lens of the PiC framework, the student experience of an internationalized university seems to be exemplified by a lack of alignment between the individual and environmental dimensions, with particular misalignment in the interactional elements of the learning environment. In other words, students' expectations for high-frequency interaction, intercultural and interpersonal, do not seem to align with how students perceive their learning environment.

Discussion

The findings from this study support and expand upon much previous literature that has explored students' intercultural interactions or experiences within multicultural learning environments. Previous literature from Australia specifically has long established the limited nature of students' intercultural interactions, the apparent divide between students from different backgrounds, and the challenges of implementing related teaching and learning strategies within the classroom (e.g., Arkoudis et al., 2010; Arkoudis & Baik, 2014; Barron, 2006; Bianchi, 2013). Research from outside Australia has also identified similar sentiments among the student body, including research from the United Kingdom (e.g., Dunne, 2009; Peacock & Harrison, 2009), the United States (Halualani, 2010), and New Zealand (Strauss et al., 2011). It is therefore not surprising that the student participants in this Australian study mentioned the lack of intercultural interaction that they perceived at their university. What is notable, instead, is that these students seemed to view their learning experiences through the lens of those intercultural interactions; their perceptions of their interactions

influenced their perceptions of their learning experiences as a whole. This suggests that interaction may play a more predominant role in students' experiences of universities that may have been considered "internationalized".

In addition to the findings related to interaction, the application of the PiC model in this exploratory study expands the scope of the model to consider the various ecological layers as they inform the student experience of an internationalized university. As mentioned above, previous applications (e.g., Kimmel & Volet, 2010; 2012a; 2012b) have explored the relationships between pre-defined variables or have investigated the influence of specific contextual factors. By exploring students' perceptions of each layer, the underlining importance of interpersonal interaction becomes more visible as a through-line between the various layers.

This is not to say that interaction was not already identified as important to the student experience. Instead, these findings build upon existing understanding of the important influence that interaction has on students' experiences. For example, loneliness and isolation can negatively impact students' academic adjustment, achievement, and mental wellbeing (Baik et al., 2017; Thomas, 2012; Tinto, 1993). In addition, intercultural interaction, specifically, can improve students' cross-cultural skills, understanding of diverse perspectives, and preparedness for employment in a global society (Arkoudis et al., 2010; Beelen & Jones 2015a; 2015b). Furthermore, the findings presented in this article expand upon our understanding of the importance of interaction by identifying its influence in how students perceive multiple ecological layers of their experiences at an internationalized university. Much previous research has explored students' experiences of intercultural learning. What this study contributes specifically is the understanding that students' experiences of intercultural interaction are related to not only the way they perceive their classmates, but also their perceptions of their learning experiences more broadly.

Importantly, however, the multiple ecological layers of such models are interdependent (Nolen & Warn, 2008), and the nested nature of the PiC model emphasizes the complexity of creating learning environments that will align with students' expectations and attitudes. A change to either the learning environment or the learner's approach might lead to an entirely different experiential interface, and, consequently, could lead to either more or less alignment. Based on Volet's

(2001) description of such incongruence, an environment that conflicted with a student's expectations for and ideas of an internationalized university may result in a student experience that is characterized by limited motivation and/or engagement. Learning environments that more effectively encourage student interaction, or that better incorporate students' diverse perspectives into the classroom, might better align with many students' individual approaches to the internationalized university. Conversely, this incongruence may help illuminate why students have tended to resist certain practices associated with internationalization.

Importantly, though, the importance of individual students' impressions is heightened by both the structure of the PiC model and the methodology of the study. Critics (e.g., Wosnitza & Beltman, 2012) have commented on the framework's emphasis on students' subjective interpretations of the learning environment. While the attention to students' subjective impressions suited the aim of this study, future research that utilized different methodologies (e.g., observation) would expand our understanding further. In addition, utilizing students' subjective responses means that generalizability and reliability were limited in favor of detail and exploration.

It is also important to acknowledge that, because each learner is different, congruence with the learning environment will likely vary "across groups and individuals, task purposes and subject matter" (Volet, 2001, p. 62). Likewise, the alignment experienced by each individual student would vary "over time and across situations, although some consistency is expected overall" (Volet, 2001, p. 62). This variation, along with the exploratory nature of the study, means that it is not possible to draw conclusions about environmental variables that would ensure an aligned experience for all students. Instead, what this article offers is observation of patterns among students' descriptions as a starting point for guiding future practice at internationalized universities. One specific example seems to be the importance of providing frequent, well-facilitated opportunities for interaction within the learning environment.

Conclusion

Findings from this study suggest a more ubiquitous and fundamental role for intercultural interaction in shaping students' expectations and experiences of universities that had been previously termed "internationalized" universities. Conclusions and implications that derived from mapping findings onto the PiC model have implications for universities that would seek to improve the experiences of all students at their institutions. Findings would be particularly relevant for institutions that would like to develop or revise their "internationalization" strategies to emphasize curriculum-based or "at-home" approaches, such as providing intercultural and/or international learning experiences for all students.

However, this was a small-scale study that took place at a single institution in Australia. As such, the conclusions drawn can only be directly applied to that specific university context and to the three programs from which participants were drawn. Furthermore, the beliefs and experiences discussed by the participants cannot be said to represent those of all students at the institution or in other Australian universities. With these limitations in mind, the findings and implications might additionally be helpful for universities that would like to adapt their internationalization approach, to establish more comprehensive forms of internationalization, or that would like to better understand how students approach the internationalized university.

As international student mobility returns, these findings might be helpful for universities trying to navigate new directions with internationalization. They suggest that a focus on elevating students' diverse perspectives and prioritizing opportunities for interaction, virtually or otherwise, might be helpful ways for further developing internationalized learning environments that might align with students' expectations of the internationalized university.

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Investigating the Social and Academic Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on International Students at a Canadian University

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant disruptions in traditional educational policies and practices worldwide. The study adopted an equity, diversity, and inclusion lens to investigate the impact of the pandemic on international students in a Canadian university. The findings from data analysis identified challenges and supports for international students in five areas: academic, financial, health and well-being, socialization, and housing and accommodation. There were several gaps between international students' academic and social needs during the pandemic and the institutional support. While the university prioritized supports in the academic domain, international students identified social

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challenges as more significant during the pandemic. The gap was also evident in communicating institutional support to students, as some students were not aware of the spectrum of institutional services. Finally, there was a need for more targeted support for international students. The pandemic called for more fundamental and comprehensive actions to support the diverse student population.

Keywords: academic and social challenges, COVID-19 pandemic, inclusive excellence framework, institutional supports, international students

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In response to the COVID-19 outbreak in early 2020, post-secondary institutions worldwide took preventative measures to slow down the spread of the pandemic and protect their students, faculty, and staff. In March 2020, most Canadian universities closed their campuses, canceled public events, closed student residences, and moved classes from face-to-face to being delivered remotely. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, there had been plenty of research attesting to the challenging experiences of international students in Canadian post-secondary institutions (Gebhard, 2012; Guo & Chase, 2011; Wu et al., 2015; Zheng & Berry, 1991; Zhou & Zhang, 2014). The difficulties of international students adjusting to a new educational environment had been mainly attributed to academic challenges, social interactions, and cultural aspects. For instance, Wu, Garza, and Guzman (2015) identified communication with professors, classmates, and staff as the main academic challenge. Socially, students felt isolated when engaging in different group activities. Culturally, international students experience challenges from the different ways of thinking and doing in the home and host cultures (Wu et al., 2015). Campus closure and limited resources offered to support international students during the pandemic added to these challenges.

After the campus closure, international students struggled with social isolation due to a lack of support networks that they would not be able to access campus (Gomez et al., 2020; Ebrahim, 2020). In addition to social isolation, international students also faced academic challenges associated with switching to online learning. While classes were still delivered remotely, experiential learning opportunities for international students, such as internships and field placements,

were canceled or postponed (Gomez et al., 2020). Students were deprived of indispensable work experience and opportunities to develop professional networks.

Not prepared for these extraordinary circumstances, Canadian universities developed pandemic emergency response measures to support their students throughout the pandemic. These measures included providing emergency funding for international students in need, offering emergency housing options, and providing various mental health and well-being supports (Anwar, 2020; Gomez et al., 2020). However, to what extent these measures were available or whether they were sufficient remained a question. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to understand how the unprecedented circumstances caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic have impacted the experiences of international students at a Canadian research university. The following research questions guide the study:

1. What academic and social challenges are international students facing in the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What are the institutional supports in place for international students to cope with the challenging circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. How effective are the institutional measures in supporting the academic and social needs of international students during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Literature Review

Posing significant disruptions to social and academic life for all students in post-secondary institutions, the pandemic had an even greater impact on international students. With the enactment of social distancing and other public health measures, challenges for international students had increased twofold. The research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international students around the globe has only begun to appear in academic journals. Thus, a cross-country student well-being survey during or directly after the initial peak of the COVID-19 pandemic was conducted by a large international consortium of 26 countries and 110 higher-education institutions (Van de Velde et al., 2021). The resultant dataset included information on students' living and financial conditions, academic workload, mental well-being, perceived stressors, resources, knowledge related to COVID-19, and attitudes toward COVID-19 measures implemented by

the government and relevant educational institutions. However, only partial findings of the study have been published as separate cases for some universities in Cyprus (Solomou et al, 2021), Greece (Stathopoulou et al., 2020), and the Netherlands (Super & van Disseldorp, 2020). Results indicated that most participants reported depressive symptoms associated with academic stress, loneliness, isolation, and restless sleep. An in-depth analysis of the data is currently taking place. A qualitative study in the United States investigated the experiences of eight Chinese doctoral students in a large research university during COVID-19 (Zhang & Sustarsic, 2022). Learning obstacles, health concerns, funding uncertainties, and limited social interactions, as well as the tense political climate and hate speech targeting Chinese people, were among the stressors that impacted the doctoral students.

Likewise, the coverage of the international students' experience in Canada during the pandemic mainly involves news reporting on Canadian universities' responses to the COVID-related developments, travel bans, and life difficulties of separate international students (Anwar, 2020; Coulton, 2020; Ebrahim, 2020; Gomez et al., 2020; Unkule, 2020). Only a limited number of studies have been conducted on how the pandemic affected international students in Canada (Firang, 2020; Ge 2021). For example, Firang (2020) interviewed five international students to initiate a discussion on how social work could mitigate the impact of the pandemic on international students. Ge (2021) inquired about the experiences of 10 Chinese students at a Canadian university in COVID times.

In 2019, Canada hosted nearly 640,000 international students (El-Assal, 2022). Canada introduced travel restrictions at the start of the pandemic in March 2020. Those restrictions affected many prospective students who intended to come to Canada in 2020 and 2021. As a result, the pandemic caused a fall in the number of international students to some 530,000 in 2020. (El-Assal, 2022). With the relief of the travel restrictions in October 2020, Canada's international student population was slowly approaching the pre-pandemic numbers. Currently, nearly 622,000 international students study in Canada (CBIE, n.d.).

International students were struggling with social isolation – lonely, constantly worried about their families overseas, unable to travel back to their home countries and support their families (Gomez et al., 2020). After interviewing several international students from Ontario, Gomez et al. (2020) shared that

> [International students] are thousands of miles away from their families, watching from Canada as international borders shut down, airlines cancel flights, and cities and countries announce drastic isolation measures. They are worried about their families as the virus spreads through their countries. And they're worried about how they're going to get through this themselves, isolated in a country where they lack the support networks they would normally have at home (para., 2-3).

Moreover, some international student study permits might not allow for an extra term to cover the missed classes during the pandemic. Students were concerned about whether their application to extend study or work permits would be processed in time for them to have the legal status to stay in Canada (York University, n.d.).

As international students waited out the pandemic, their financial situation deteriorated. Historically, international students had to pay international differential tuition fees, which were much higher than domestic student fees. Many international students found themselves unemployed, as there were fewer on-campus and part-time jobs available during the pandemic. Even with the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit available to international students in financial need, many did not meet the eligibility requirements (Coulton, 2020). In addition, fewer scholarships were available for international students, as they did not qualify for many domestic scholarships (Calder, et al., 2016). There were even fewer funding opportunities for international students during the spring and summer terms. Many international students were also required to move out of student residences in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Gomez et al., 2020). These students would need to find alternative accommodations in a short period of time. All these circumstances had added to international students' already challenging financial situation. They had to plan their finances carefully, and many of them might not have enough financial means to stay in Canada during the pandemic.

Under these unusual circumstances, most Canadian universities did their best to provide support for international students. The initiatives to support international students differed from university to university. They all aimed to provide emergency financial support, offer emergency housing options, extend services for mental health, and accommodate remote teaching and learning (Anwar, 2020; Ebrahim, 2020; Gomez et al., 2020; University Affairs, n.d.).

However, to what extent these measures were effective or whether they were sufficient remained a question. On the one hand, there were many questions about institutional support for international students: whether the universities were adequately prepared to respond to the needs of those students who could not return to their home countries (Unkule, 2020). On the other hand, Dennis (2020) predicted that the current COVID-19 situation might influence the choice of international students to study closer to home or to look for intra-regional universities as an alternative for post-secondary education. Similarly, there was no definite answer to the question of whether university measures and supports were sufficient to maintain the recruitment of international students at the same or higher level (Dennis, 2020).

Ultimately, the COVID-19 pandemic is commonly recognized as a major disruption of the social and academic life of international students. Social isolation, online learning, scarce job opportunities, and financial hardships became a few of the challenges for international students in the new pandemic reality. Canadian universities offered many services and supports to help their students overcome pandemic-related challenges. However, empirical data is much needed to testify whether these institutional measures in supporting the academic and social needs of international students during the COVID-19 pandemic have been effective and sufficient. This study attempts to address the gap in the existing scholarship and utilizes an inclusive excellence perspective for this purpose.

Analytical Framework

This study adopts an equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) lens to understand international students' experience in a Canadian university during the pandemic. In the context of the global pandemic challenges, many post-secondary initiatives and policies, especially those focused on internationalization, require fundamental and comprehensive institutional efforts. Bihn (2019) tied equity, diversity, and inclusion to education quality by outlining critical areas of institutional support for international students. Thus, she suggested that hosting institutions should draw on their commitment to the EDI framework and better attend to the key areas of their work with international students, such as housing, academic programs, academic placement policies, and college progress. To do so, institutions should identify people with proper training and experience to lead the

work with international students, review their policies and practices through the EDI lens, understand the process of second-language acquisition and develop corresponding language policies, educate the entire institution community about cultural competence, support faculty and staff in their work with international students, and engage with and learn from international students (Bihn, 2019). Bihn concluded that developing proper supports and services for international students was an issue of equity and inclusion. As such, institutions should resolve it by providing their students, both international and domestic, "with an equitable educational program that honors their experiences and meets their needs" (Bihn, 2019, para. 16).

In 2017, Canadian universities engaged in developing strategic plans to recognize and reflect the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion in their approaches to teaching and learning, research, governance, and community engagement (Charbonneau, 2019; Universities Canada, 2017). While each university decided on the meaning of inclusive excellence considering its unique campus locality, the main objective connected all their efforts – to comprehensively link equity, diversity, and inclusion to education quality. Williams et al. (2005) differentiated four primary elements of inclusive excellence that should underlie institutional efforts. These elements were (a) a focus on student intellectual and social development, (b) a purposeful development and utilization of organizational resources to enhance student learning, (c) attention to the cultural differences learners bring to the educational experience and that enhance the enterprise, and (d) a welcoming community that engages all of its diversity in the service of student and organizational learning (Williams et al., 2005).

While there is no single way for universities to adopt an inclusive excellence perspective in their work, the universities are to decide how to link equity, diversity, and inclusion to education quality. Canadian universities have committed to developing equity, diversity, and inclusion action plans in consultation broader university community, including students, faculty, staff, administrators, and under-represented groups (Universities Canada, 2017). However, in this regard, the essential component is to listen to students' needs and ensure that university supports and services meet them.

Methodology

This study uses a case study approach to understand the social and academic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international students in a Canadian research university. The research site is one of the 15 most research-intensive universities in Canada. The university has more than 25,000 students, of whom international students constitute around 12 percent ([University Name], n.d.c). International students come from more than 130 countries around the world, with the top seven countries being China, Nigeria, India, Iran, Ghana, Bangladesh, and Vietnam. Before the pandemic in fall 2019, the university reported an increase in international student enrollment by 5.5 percent. The pre-pandemic retention rates for the first and second-year international students were at 93.1 percent ([University Name], 2019a, 2019b). As the risk of COVID-19 for the campus community appeared in winter 2020, the university's cross-campus working group was created to follow the COVID-19 situation closely and to develop the university's emergency management plan ([University Name], n.d.a). The university aligned all policies and actions with the restrictions and recommendations of the provincial health authorities ([University Name], n.d.a). The campus stayed closed during the Spring and Summer Terms 2020, and the students and employees were encouraged to study and work from home. In 2020, the enrollment of international students dropped by 6.7 percent, a similar decreasing tendency was evident in international student retention rates, with the lowest at 69.6 percent in 2021 ([University Name], 2021a, 2021b). In comparison, overall retention rates dropped only by four percent since the pre-pandemic times ([University Name], 2019a, 2021b).

The study was reviewed and approved by the [University Name] Behavioural Research Ethics Board (#2159). Data was collected from document analysis and an online survey. With the constantly changing conditions and several waves of the pandemic in Canada since March 2020, university initiatives and student services have evolved to respond to provincial and federal public health policies. We collected documents from the university website aiming at exploring policies and practices that reflected institutional responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. These documents include university policies, news releases, announcements, and updates, as well as other communication materials such as emails and newsletters sent by individual colleges and associations. We collected

these institutional documents from March 2020 to September 2021 and analyzed them to find key initiatives and practices to support international students during the pandemic.

An online survey was introduced by means of the Survey Monkey platform and was open for three months from September 2020 to December 2020. To recruit international students as participants of the study, weekly announcements outlining the nature of the study and the contact details were posted on the university web portal. Participants' consent for the online survey was obtained before the survey.

Sixty-seven respondents participated in the survey. Such a small number of participants was reasonably expected given the pandemic time and the challenges international students were undergoing. Considering the purpose of this study, the inclusion criteria for potential participants were the international status of the students and their voluntary participation. The term "international student" is complex to define as international students form a diverse student community of individual social and cultural identities (Gomez et al., 2014; Hardy Cox & Strange, 2016). However, for the purpose of this article, we follow Statistics Canada (n.d.) and define *international students* as "non-Canadian students who do not have "permanent resident" status and have had to obtain the authorization of the Canadian government to enter Canada with the intention of pursuing an education" (para. 1). Given the above considerations, students who could not be considered international or those who did not study at the university were excluded from the study. The respondents were predominantly full-time students (97 percent). 54.6 percent of them were in graduate programs. 74.7 percent of the respondents were international students who had been in Canada for less than two years. 15.3 percent of the international students had lived in Canada for three-four years, and only 10 percent stayed in the country for more than five years.

The survey was built predominantly using a variation of the Likert scale (Krosnick et al., 2018). In our case, a six-point scale allowed international students to express how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement. We used fixed choice response formats on a continuum from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree' with the neutral point being 'Neither Agree nor Disagree.' We also offered the participants an additional option of 'Not Applicable' to allow for degrees of opinion, no opinion at all, and even unprecedented circumstances when

neither of the identified options was applicable. The survey contained 34 questions that focused on four main areas: demographic information about participants, international students' academic and social challenges during the pandemic, institutional supports, and impacts of COVID-19. The area of academic challenges contained questions on academic courses, access to university resources, access to relevant academic-related information, and so forth. The questions on social challenges were built around housing and accommodation, finances, communication with family and friends, health and well-being, and so forth. For example, the international students were asked to identify their degree of agreement with statements as follows: "I have opportunities to engage with my peer students while learning remotely," "I can easily access University resources necessary to support my remote learning," "I have an appropriate home working environment to support remote learning," or "I have sufficient financial resources to pay my tuition and fees during the COVID-19 pandemic." As well, the participants were encouraged to express their opinions on what could be done by the university to better support international students to cope with the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. The international students could also communicate their thoughts related to any aspect of their social or academic life during the pandemic.

To identify patterns in the data, we used descriptive statistics. We followed (Jamieson, 2004; McLeod, 2019) and treated the data from the Likert scale survey as 'in-between' ordinal and numerical. As the Likert scale survey allows for the participants to express the rage of opinions and even not indicate any opinion at all, such response categories have a rank order, but the intervals between values cannot be presumed equal (Jamieson, 2004). According to Jamieson (2004) and McLeod (2019), the mean and standard deviation are inappropriate for the Likert scale data where the numbers generally represent verbal statements. Thus, we treated the data as not continuous and the intervals between values as not equal. We summarized the results using a mode – the most frequently occurring score in data – as the most suitable for interpreting students' attitudes, opinions, and the extent to which they agree with suggested statements.

Findings

Our analysis of the institutional documents and the survey results enabled us to identify five main findings. These findings reflected international students' perspectives on their challenges and the institutional support they had received. The findings focus on five themes: academic challenges and supports, financial challenges and supports, health and well-being, socialization opportunities, and housing and accommodation.

Academic Challenges and Supports

Most of the university supports and programs implemented during the pandemic were related to supporting student academic success. "Support student success" ([University Name], n.d.f, para. 13) was one of the main principles that guided a special response team's planning, decision-making, and implementation. Under this principle, the university "prioritize[d] students' academic progress and supports and [strove] to minimize adverse impacts to their academic progress" ([University Name], n.d.f, para. 13).

Different supports were offered to navigate students' transition to remote learning. The university created a new section on remote learning on the university website. It provided students tips and strategies for becoming successful distant learners, starting with setting up their workplaces and ordering class materials. Several services were ready to assist students with any remote learning environment issues. Moreover, the university libraries and related centers offered many services to support students' academic progress. For instance, a writing center organized twice-weekly 90-minute virtual write-ins. The university libraries provided free digital course textbooks, initiated safe contactless pickup of ordered materials, and automatically renewed all students' checked-out items.

In addition to different academically-oriented supports, the university academic policies changed correspondently to accommodate for the uncertainty of the COVID-19 situation. The guidelines regarding students' enrollment in and withdrawals from the classes became more flexible. The enrollment/withdrawal deadlines were extended to give students more time to decide upon their 2020 Fall and Winter Terms workload.

While international students faced some academic challenges, the data indicated that they could successfully continue their studies. For example, while

learning remotely, 51.6 percent of students could be fully engaged in the course content; 67.8 percent could complete course assignments; 90.3 percent could get in touch with a course instructor or supervisor if needed. Around 55.7 percent of students could easily access university resources (library, learning technologies, etc.) necessary to support my remote learning. Moreover, 72.1 percent of respondents specified that they had access to tools and technologies they needed to learn remotely.

At the same time, international students expressed two significant concerns associated with their academic life during the pandemic. First, a few students felt that online learning did not provide them with the same learning opportunities as in-person. For example, remote learning put a strain on their communication with professors and peers in the program. 30.6 percent of the respondents struggled to engage with their peer students while learning remotely. As one of the students explained, "We don't have labs for that course, and since the lectures are asynchronous[,] there's no way you are WITH the professor unless you have doubts. I mean, professors need to engage more" (From an open-ended question #33). Second, while over half of the students found the help they needed from the university services to move to remote learning, 19.7 percent felt they were not satisfied with the university academic supports. Some suggested that they would benefit from more asynchronous classes. Many international students continued studies from their home countries, and the time differences made attending live lectures very difficult.

As mentioned in the survey, graduate students might have additional challenges completing their programs, mainly when completing their theses depended on the accessibility to special equipment. An international student described such struggles as follows:

> Graduate students are pressured to complete their program within certain time limits. However, when stumbling blocks arise […], it makes it even more difficult for students whose entire thesis is based on lab[-]based (pre-clinical/ clinical) and hands[-]on research with chemicals/ materials of all sorts. Such students not only do literature search-based research but also labor-intensive research. […] Therefore, students who don't have the luxury of completing their thesis work by just having access to computer-

based e-resources are under extra pressure and time constraints. (From an open-ended question #33)

Overall, the survey results showed that COVID-19 greatly impacted students' progress in the program. 82.8 percent of the respondents indicated that the pandemic had impeded their advancement towards completing their programs.

Financial Challenges and Supports

Given the COVID-19 impact on students' financial resources and work opportunities, the university considered mitigating those financial hardships for students. Apart from informing students on federal and provincial financial support programs, such as the Canada Emergency Student Benefit and others, the university undertook several local initiatives. First, the university revisited its original tuition plans for the 2020/21 academic year and implemented a tuition freeze for most programs. According to this tuition freeze, students would pay their tuition at rates similar to the previous years. Moreover, the university would not charge for late fees and overdue student tuition. Students would not pay for the services that are no longer available. For example, as the university closed all recreational programming and physical activity areas, the corresponding athletics and recreation fee was reduced.

Second, the university created a university crisis financial aid ([University Name], n.d.h). The crisis financial aid was designed as student loans to help students through unexpected and temporary financial hardships. Finally, the university redistributed some emergency funds to offer graduate students remote employment opportunities. The university created additional student teaching assistant opportunities in partnership with different colleges and centers for the 2020/21 academic year.

The campus community established an emergency student trust to support the students in financial and personal hardships due to COVID-19. Quickly available to students, this fund is aimed to meet the "variety of crisis needs, such as groceries, rent, medications, household needs, damage deposits, moving costs, emergency travel, car[,] and computer repairs, and computer equipment to adapt to online learning" (University Relations, 2020). In addition, faculty and staff could choose to support students by reallocating some finances from their

professional development funds to emergency student grants or graduate student support funds ([University Name], n.d.g).

While the university created multiple opportunities to support its students financially, the survey data showed that international students did experience various financial challenges. For example, 31.1 percent of participants could not pay for their living accommodations during the pandemic. 44.3 percent could not pay their student tuition and fees. 46.7 percent of the respondents could not find a part-time job to cover their expenses. Moreover, 75.9 percent of international students felt that the pandemic had significantly reduced their prospects to find employment. Therefore, most open-ended responses to the question "What could be done by the university to support international students during the COVID-19 pandemic better?" identified that international students would benefit from more financial support and job opportunities. Some students expressed disappointment that they had to pay the same amount for online courses as they used to pay for in-person course delivery. Many suggested that the university should eliminate international tuition differential and recreation fees for the time of the pandemic. As one of the participants wrote,

> International students pay double the amount of tuition compared to locals, but the support/ guidance they receive is the same as the locals. As an example[,] even though there is a vast difference in student expenses ([e.g.,] university fees and living expenses), both local and international students receive the same amount of financial support through scholarships (if awarded/ selected as a recipient). International students are a means of gaining a good source of income for universities in general. International students were still paying university fees during the university closure for months. (From an open-ended question #33)

Considering all these, a meager percentage of the international student (only 13.6 percent) used university financial aid. 42.4 percent did not even apply for financial support opportunities to cope with their financial challenges. It became evident from the open-ended responses that some were not aware of all the university's financial opportunities.

Health and Well-Being

The third main area of the university support during the pandemic was student well-being. Like all other university centers, a student health center continued offering its services remotely, including mental health supports. The students could access its virtual health care or receive counseling by phone. If required, the center could arrange in-person appointments off-campus. A seasonal influenza immunization program was offered as usual on campus for all students. Due to COVID-19 pressures, several new programs were launched to contribute to a resilient and healthy university community. All graduate students and their families could find assistance through special counseling services, available by telephone, video, or e-counseling. The university constantly kept students informed on provincial and federal health services, technological tools, and the COVID Alert mobile app. In October, the university reopened a fitness center. Indoor fitness classes became available with limited capacity for students to maintain their well-being.

Notwithstanding the university's support for students' health and well-being, 34.4 percent of respondents admitted that they could not maintain good physical and mental health during the pandemic. The primary reasons for such claims were relative isolation when learning remotely and the concerns about students' families being safe. As one international student indicated,

> Being confined in Canada and not being able to visit my home country, working from home alone, and not being able to see friends or family has had a significant negative impact on my life. Luckily, I am at a point in my degree where this is not impacting my overall learning. (From an open-ended question #34)

Another participant wrote that travel restrictions had impacts on international students and family relationships. She was constantly worried "whether the family is "intact" and can mitigate some stress or if not, how this influences the situation, as the latter has much more severe repercussions" (From an open-ended question #34). Moreover, when international students needed family support, travel to their home country was heavily strained by travel restrictions. With all the physical and mental strains associated with COVID-19, only a few international students accessed and used respective university services. For example, only 25.9 percent of respondents sought help through the university

health center; even less (8.6 percent) asked for assistance in supporting their mental health.

Socialization Opportunities

While academic, financial, and health and well-being services were abundant, student socializing opportunities were also available. Various university centers for Indigenous, international, undergraduate, and graduate students continued supporting diverse student groups. In times of need or crisis, an association of graduate students actively resumed its services and organized several social support activities for graduate students. For instance, during Fall Term 2020, all graduate students were welcomed to join bi-weekly online coffee afternoons to connect, socialize, and communicate with the association representatives. For Christmas, the association organized a virtual holiday hangout. In addition, the association delivered free meals for graduate students right to the doorstep to support those who would spend the holidays away from their families and friends. As well, the association collaborated with the center for international students and several other centers to offer the opportunity for international students and members of the university community "to connect with each other over a virtual dinner and share in the holiday spirit" ([Association of Graduate Students], 2020, p. 2).

To support international students in the current circumstances of the global pandemic, the center for international students initiated distant services of international students advising ([International Student Centre], 2020). The center specifically designed many events for international students to socialize during the COVID-19 pandemic. Apart from various sessions on work permit applications, permanent residency, and taxes, the center offered regular opportunities for international students to meet and connect ([University Name], n.d.k). For instance, virtual tea chats, book discussions, board games, various virtual events, such as virtual adventures, celebrations, story-telling, and home parties were held weekly or bi-weekly.

As the survey data showed, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the predominant number of international students (81.7 percent) stayed connected with my family and friends outside of the university. While the family was the prime source of support (82.8 percent), many international students also sought

communication with friends outside of the university (64.9 percent). In contrast, only 29.3 percent stayed connected with peer students since the COVID-19 pandemic, while local communities were the last resort for students to connect (12 percent). As was evident from the international students' responses, they lacked opportunities for socializing. The COVID-19 pandemic, the campus closure, and the transfer to remote learning greatly impacted students' social networking (79.3 percent). For this reason, one student remarked that international students would benefit from more services available for social engagement during the pandemic. She suggested that the university should let international students "know of the services available and have some sort of social engagement if possible" (From an open-ended question #33). However, there were no comments on whether the students were aware of all the social engagement opportunities offered by the university.

Housing and Accommodation

To prevent the spread of the COVID pandemic, the university closed on-campus residences in March 2020 and urged all students to return home within three days (Anwar, 2020). International students and other students who could not return home had to move to the university's other residence buildings with more possibilities for self-isolation, "[a]t this time, we have international and domestic students who do not have the ability to return home. If they were displaced from residence, we are uncertain if and how they would find accommodations" (as cited in Anwar, 2020, n.p.). Concerned about students' safety, the university also enforced other changes in students' accommodation services, such as changes closure of the university meal plan cafeteria (Anwar, 2020, n.p.).

Regarding international students' accommodation during the pandemic, the data showed that 11.5 percent of the respondents did not have appropriate housing/accommodation during the COVID-19 outbreak. Approximately 1/3 indicated that they did not have sufficient financial resources to pay for their current living accommodations. Moreover, 31.2 percent did not have an appropriate home working environment to maintain their learning at the same level as before the pandemic. One student exemplified that reducing the cost for living in residences and maintaining meal plans open would have been very helpful for international students during the pandemic,

> On-campus residence prices could have been lowered. Most of my friends and I had to move out after April because [the name of a university residence] room I was assigned to was too expensive for us[,] and off-campus options were much more affordable. I also believe the University should have kept the meal plan going for students in [a university residence]. It was very difficult for us[,] who were used to living on campus[,] to buy kitchenware and start cooking for ourselves right before the finals. The meal plan could have been transformed into a pick[-]up/delivery service like several other universities have done. (From an open-ended question #33)

Ultimately, the COVID-19 pandemic had an immense social and academic impact on the international students in the research site. The document analysis and the online survey showed that international students faced academic and financial challenges. The pandemic not only impacted students' progress in the program but also hindered their ability to pay for their living accommodations, student tuition, and fees. Many students did not have an appropriate home working environment and could not maintain their learning at the same level as before the pandemic. The majority of the participants also admitted that they could not maintain good physical and mental health. The COVID-19 pandemic and the campus closure impacted students' social networking and reduced opportunities for socializing. The university offered various supports to mitigate the COVID-19 impact on students; however, only fewer participants used those institutional supports.

Discussion

The findings from this study showed that there were obvious gaps between international students' academic and social needs during the pandemic and the institutional support provided by the university. First, while international students faced both academic and social challenges during the first year of the pandemic, the majority of the students identified social challenges as more significant. Lack of in-person communication with family and friends and limited opportunities to socialize with student peers and professors contributed greatly to international students' feeling of social isolation. Without a comprehensive system of support,

international students struggled most to cope financially and maintain their physical and mental well-being.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the university formed a Pandemic Response and Recovery Team (PRT), which was responsible for developing policies and initiatives responding to the pandemic. The PRT was composed of representatives from various academic and administrative units on campus, such as teaching and learning, research, finance and resources, communications, and stakeholder relations. The PRT worked with the university community members including students and faculty, to plan, coordinate, and monitor the university's operation during the pandemic. Our analysis of the university policies and practices during the pandemic showed that the university intended to support students through measures in four main directions: facilitating students' academic progress, assisting them in financial hardships, sustaining their well-being, and providing opportunities for safe socialization.

In practice, most institutional responses were aimed at providing academic supports during the pandemic. The university's COVID-related policies and actions were primarily oriented at "ensuring the health and safety of [its] campus community, while minimizing disruptions for students and staff" ([University Name], n.d.d, para. 2). When the university implemented a working/studying remotely policy, all university supports continued offering their services remotely through web conferencing, phone, or email. Among the university supports and services to navigate remote learning/working, university libraries (48.3 percent), IT services (27.6 percent), and learning services (around 19 percent) were the most frequently accessed. Still, 1/3 of the respondents indicated they did not use any university service for remote learning/working.

Second, it became evident from the study that there were gaps in communicating institutional support to students. The university declared that its priority was to ensure its community's health and safety, including keeping the university students, faculty, and staff informed of the latest pandemic-related developments ([University Name], n.d.a). The university continued to provide updates on any changes or new policies online. Moreover, it initiated the COVID-19 Update as regular announcements sent to students and faculty through the university email platform. The COVID-19 updates became a weekly recap of the latest university actions impacting the community ([University Name], n.d.a).

Additionally, colleges and various university associations sent weekly or biweekly newsletters. Regularly, conversations with the university professionals were organized. All students could attend WebEx sessions and communicate on various issues with university professionals from different centers. Nevertheless, some students were not aware of the spectrum of institutional supports and services. This lack of communication might lead to many students not finding necessary university services, even though such services and supports were in place. For instance, having significant financial difficulties, a strikingly low percentage of international students used university financial aid. While 1/3 of the respondents felt they had not received sufficient institutional support, the same number of students had not accessed University services to navigate remote learning/working nor other supports to cope with different challenges. Predominantly, international students sought family support, support from friends outside the university rather than from their peer students or university services.

Finally, the university claimed to convey the equity, diversity, and inclusion policy to strengthen the community and enhance excellence and innovation ([University Name], n.d.b). Moreover, the university recognized the importance of seeking the balance between inclusive practices and healthy academic discourse. Thus, the individual academic colleges and units were encouraged to critically review their structures, systems, and procedures and develop approaches that support equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging. The supports and services were to provide physical and virtual environments, which would be not only accessible but also welcoming regarding social and cultural diversity ([University Name], n.d.b). Still, during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the university services were predominantly aimed to support the general university student population. Notwithstanding such a university's commitment, there was a need for more targeted support for international students. Only 46.6 percent of international students pointed out that they had received sufficient institutional support since the university closure. The survey also revealed that the center for international students and the health services were among the widely used university services. There was also the opinion that international students did not receive sufficient support, considering their unique needs during the pandemic. One of the students phrased it like this,

> It is important to note that international students who are visible minorities ([e.g.,] darker skin tone, physical traits, accent), sexual ([e.g.,] LGBTQ) minorities ([e.g.,] students who come from countries/ cultures that discriminate/ persecute such individuals), and other minorities ([e.g.,] cultural practices, food options) face additional and unique difficulties as well. As a person who has experienced and witnessed others who have faced such difficulties, and tried to get support from relevant university personnel and failed; I'm not sure if the university wants to provide better support for international students. (From an open-ended question #33)

The set of principles guided the university's planning, decision-making, and implementation of the post-pandemic responses. Among these principles were: value, protect and support people; deliver the academic, research, and service missions of the university; support student success; ensure the university's long-term excellence and financial sustainability; contribute to the province's recovery; communicate and consult with the community; and acknowledge the impact on external communities ([University Name], n.d.f). At the same time, these principles provided little evidence in support of the EDI policy in action. Apart from a brief referral to the university mission and engagement with internal and external communities, the principles contained no explicit mention of international students or a diverse student population. We found that the Pandemic Response and Recovery Team did not even include any representatives from the international student service unit.

Implications

The challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic became an example of how traditional internationalization practices of higher education were disrupted. In the new pandemic reality, universities suspended the usual in-person instruction and prioritized remote teaching and learning. Traditional recruitment and admission practices gave way to online outreach to prospective international students (Dennis, 2020). Student mobility takes different forms. Online mobility and virtual exchanges became more thriving under the current circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic (de Wit & Altbach, 2020). All these shifts in the internationalization of higher education require universities to adapt their

institutional policies and practices to accommodate new challenges and demands to support international students.

Since February 2022, many Canadian universities have been returning to in-person teaching and learning. However, there is an ongoing discussion on the challenges and implications of the post-pandemic new normal for higher education. This paper addresses the gap in the existing scholarship on international students' academic and social needs in Canadian universities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings from this study contribute to gaining an accurate picture of the proper institutional supports during campus closures and transition to online education. This study informs university administrators to develop plans to balance emergency measures and student well-being to ensure the best possible learning experiences for international students during the pandemic. Moreover, it contributes to the discussion on revisioning the post-pandemic policies in higher education with an equity, diversity, and inclusion lens.

Conclusion

The current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic calls for post-secondary institutions to connect their inclusive excellence policies with educational quality and with fundamental and comprehensive actions to support their diverse student population. An inclusive approach is needed to understand international students' challenges and the corresponding institutional supports during these unprecedented circumstances. The insights from the study will contribute to developing such institutional policies and practices. The study potentially will shed light on future research that explores a more comprehensive approach to internationalization instead of relying on international student enrolment as the leading revenue-generating strategy in most Canadian universities. Integrating institutional diversity and quality efforts with the pandemic response and recovery initiatives should be at the core of institutional functioning. Such an approach will inevitably benefit both the diverse student population and institutions.

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Obstacles to Fostering Integration of Local and Non-Local Students in Hong Kong Universities amid Political Turmoil and the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The internationalization of higher education has become a key policy within the global higher education sector. Yet a large body of literature suggests that simply having a diverse group of students does not guarantee meaningful intercultural engagement. This paper presents a qualitative study intended to gain a richer understanding of Hong Kong's higher education environment. In-depth interview

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data were collected from students of different cultural backgrounds and from academic, non-academic, and managerial staff at three Hong Kong universities. The data collection period covered local political turmoil in Hong Kong as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. Results indicate that, due to language barriers and potentially opposing political ideologies, all students faced challenges engaging with others who were culturally different from themselves. These findings can facilitate the development of an adaptable cross-institutional framework for meaningful intercultural learning.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, intercultural engagement, internationalization of higher education, political turmoil

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The internationalization of higher education is a global phenomenon. The definition of "internationalization" was initially updated to emphasize the concept's core purposes: improving the quality of education and contributing to society (Knight, 2004). The rationale for internationalization has since continued to evolve, as reflected by the following description:

> Internationalization is the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society. (De Wit, 2015)

In Hong Kong, internationalization is considered a driver of the region's appeal as "Asia's World City" with a unique blend of East and West (Cheng et al., 2016). The growing importance of a knowledge-based economy has spurred six reforms around local higher education. These reforms are intended to prepare graduates to address challenges arising from globalization while enhancing students' competitiveness and work readiness. In 2010, all publicly funded higher education institutions in Hong Kong were invited to review their activities "as a matter of urgency"; internationalization was ultimately endorsed as a strategy across these institutions (University Grants Council [UGC], 2010).

Governments around the world assign high priority to internationalization in their education policies, recognizing the need to enhance international

competitiveness by nurturing an educated and highly skilled workforce with global attributes to meet the challenges of globalization (Brooks & Waters, 2011; Tsuruta, 2013; UGC, 2004). The Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (Vereniging Hogescholen) and the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (2018) specifically suggested that internationalization contributes to three aims of higher education: socialization, personality development, and qualification.

The literature on social and academic acculturation has identified a lack of social support, limited contact with locals, and perceived discrimination as the main barriers to smooth intercultural interaction. Even students who share a broad Confucian cultural heritage can perceive themselves as holding distinct cultural identities depending on their place of origin (e.g., Hong Kong or mainland China) (Yu et al., 2019). Therefore, promoting interaction between local and international students represents a mission that universities/schools should actively pursue. Fostering intercultural engagement between domestic and international students has been suggested as vital to nurturing students' intercultural competency, establishing reciprocal cultural relations, and enhancing individuals' employability in today's globalized world (Deardorff, 2006; Kudo et al., 2017; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2018). Yet some studies have shown that without well-planned institutional strategies, the interaction between domestic and international students rarely results in meaningful intercultural learning (Gareis, 2012; Trice, 2004). Additionally, scholars must consider innovative ways to facilitate productive intercultural engagement (Thomas et al., 2018).

In an education context, intercultural interaction is a two-way process that requires adaptation from both local and non-local students (Leask, 2009). Most relevant research has focused on the acculturative challenges that non-local students encounter while studying in Hong Kong (Vyas & Yu, 2018; Yu et al., 2019). Few studies have examined adjustment problems among local students on such culturally diverse campuses. The present study thus sought to reveal the unique obstacles that local and non-local students face when studying in Hong Kong. Data collection spanned the period prior to local political turmoil in 2019 and continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Results indicate that current practices can be refined to improve interactions between local and non-local students. Political turmoil and student protests further underscore the

importance of this work: findings could inform the development of an action framework relevant to curricular and co-curricular settings in terms of intercultural learning, which could also be applied in settings outside Hong Kong.

Literature Review

Simply having a group of students with diverse backgrounds does not necessarily render one's education or even a global campus. An essential part of a global education is the inclusion of international students in communities and classes (British Council, 2014). The world's educational patterns have tended to narrow following the COVID-19 outbreak (Mok et al., 2021). Under these circumstances, educators and policymakers must consider a series of strategies (e.g., internationalization at home and internationalization of the curriculum) and decide how to embed these techniques into a "new normal" in higher education settings (Tesar, 2020).

Educational Benefits and Challenges of Intercultural Engagement

The internationalization of students' learning experiences is crucial to personal development in a globalized world; it provides opportunities for meaningful intercultural interaction that can improve learning outcomes (e.g., subject-based knowledge and skills), enhance employability, and develop global graduate attributes (e.g., values and life skills, including international and intercultural competencies) (Hill & Viragos, 2020). Meaningful intercultural student engagement has been shown to have positive effects on university students' general education, personal development, science and technology learning, vocational preparation, and diversity competence (Hu & Kuh, 2003).

At the same time, intercultural engagement may result in student divergence and occasionally conflicting ideas. Despite the roles of such engagement in cultivating complex moral reasoning skills as well as intercultural competence, intercultural engagement is not always a spontaneous or productive process (Grayson, 2008). Research conducted over years within various universities and national contexts has shown that it can be challenging for local and international students to have meaningful intercultural interaction (Leask & Carroll, 2011). Research suggested that actively participating in the activities or programme outside of students' major is likely to promote intercultural learning (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2013). Moreover, negative intercultural interaction may

increase discomfort during classroom discussions and reduce the quality of students' learning experiences (Harrison & Peacock, 2010). Other problems include perceptions of discrimination and dissatisfaction with participation levels. These issues may raise tension between local and non-local students, thereby inhibiting positive engagement (Moon, 2016). Some scholars have observed low levels of interaction between local and non-local students: local students may be unwilling to embrace diversity in the student community, while non-local students experience stress due to negative experiences when interacting with local students (Moon, 2016; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2018).

Intercultural Interaction Between Local and Non-Local Students in Hong Kong

The literature highlights several issues that non-local students, including those from mainland China, may encounter while studying in Hong Kong: acculturative challenges arising from language barriers, sociocultural differences, political ideological differences, perceived alienation, and distinct teaching and learning styles (Vyas & Yu, 2018; Yu & Wright, 2017). Perceived discrimination provoked by political tensions over the "One Country, Two Systems" policy has also been identified as a challenge in recent decades (Vyas & Yu, 2018). Min and Chau (2012) found that even students with similar Chinese ideological and cultural background could face language and cultural barriers. The Occupy Movement in 2014 and local political turmoil triggered by the Hong Kong government's introduction of the Fugitive Offenders amendment bill in 2019 has magnified the tension between Hong Kong and mainland students. Following the pro-democracy uprising, intercultural activities were further impeded by COVID-19 as universities halted in-person teaching and learning. Intercultural interaction on Hong Kong university campuses has become both increasingly important and challenging in the wake of these events.

Higher education institutions in Hong Kong and elsewhere are striving to cultivate students' global mindsets and to develop global graduate attributes by adopting numerous internationalization plans (UGC, 2020). Schools are implementing an array of strategic actions, such as modifying admission requirements for non-local students, offering scholarships, internationalizing the teaching curriculum, devising innovative and inclusive pedagogies, providing

international internship opportunities, and recruiting renowned overseas scholars (The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 2019).

Social Movement in Hong Kong (2019-2020)

The Government of the Special Administrative Region, P.R.C. intended to introduce the Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019 (Legislative Council 2019) The key aspect of the "Extradition Bill" is to legalize transfers of criminal fugitives who are wanted from Taiwan, Mainland China, and Macau. This Bill greatly influences Hong Kong society, because the existing laws enacted before the handover in July 1997 prohibit extradition to mainland China.

The origin of the social unrest was to against the Extradition Bill, it has gradually changed into a movement with the slogan of "Five demands, not one less" because their demands were not fully addressed by the Government. Additionally, weak identification with the Chinese national identity (Public Opinion Poll, The University of Hong Kong 2019a), economic strains (Oxfam 2018), and lack of upward mobility (Shek and Siu, 2019b) may amplify the dissatisfied emotions during the social movement. In 2020, the promulgation of The National Security Law began to profoundly impact Hong Kong's future, accelerating the holistic integration with Hong Kong and mainland China (Cai, 2021).

Theoretical Lenses

Intercultural integration is intended to foster a culturally diverse learning environment on campus, which may include both formal and informal programs. This study adopted two concepts as theoretical lenses respectively. Beelen and Jones (2015) defined internationalization at home as '…the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments. It is also highlighted the importance of articulation and assessment of internationalized learning outcomes which allow such environment to be used for achieving meaningful intercultural learning (p.59). Meanwhile, Leask (2009) defined internationalization of curriculum as 'Internationalization of the curriculum is the incorporation of international, intercultural, and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods, and support services of a program of study

(p.209).’ These two lenses are essential components of creating the meaningful intercultural engagement and also contributing to the internationalization of higher education. This study was based on the two lenses and identified the obstacles and challenges in the context of Hong Kong higher education setting.

Arguments have been discussed that the research on internationalization of higher education needs to be improved in terms of criticality (Mwangi et al., 2018). The situation is more complicated after the Hong Kong social movement in 2019, a new national security law has been imposed on Hong Kong by the mainland Chinese government, the introduction of this law tends to have a series of unforeseeable consequences as these intertwine with the internationalization agenda in Hong Kong’s higher education sector (Zou et al., 2020). At the same time, COVID-19 is a new disruptive force to shape the new research possibilities in terms of internationalization of higher education (Mittelmeier & Yang, 2022). The above has laid a good foundation that allow us to understand the complexities and challenges for intercultural integration in the regional context.

Research Questions

In light of the known challenges with cultural inclusion in universities, particularly in Hong Kong, the following research questions guided this study:

1. From different stakeholders’ perspectives, what are the main obstacles to the integration of local and non-local students in Hong Kong universities?

2. How have local political circumstances and the COVID-19 pandemic affected intercultural interaction in Hong Kong universities?

Research Method

We employed a qualitative method in this study, using in-depth interviews to reveal key challenges that local and non-local students (including mainland Chinese and international students) face to respectful intercultural engagement. Multiple stakeholders in Hong Kong’s higher education sector were included. Specifically, we adopted a multiple-case study approach (Merriam, 1998) to investigate intercultural interaction in the field of higher education. Ethical approval was obtained from the corresponding universities prior to data collection. Fifty-six students from three universities participated in interviews between May 2018 and June 2020. Social unrest and the COVID-19 pandemic coincided with participant’s recruitment. Additionally, all project co-investigators from the three

universities were invited to participate in interviews (all had conducted at least one internationalization-related project at their respective universities). Thirty-six project co-investigators responded and participated in the first round of interviews; 21 project co-investigators took part in the second round. All interviews were semi-structured, and the interview protocols for students and staff consisted of a set of open-ended questions. The research team conducted hybrid individual and focus-group interviews with students due to social unrest and the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews were held either online or face-to-face as appropriate. Interview questions covered three areas: (1) to what extent those interviewed interacted with others from different cultures inside and outside the classroom; (2) challenges these students faced studying or socializing with others who were culturally and linguistically different from themselves; and (3) to what extent the local political turmoil and COVID-19 pandemic had affected their academic work and social activities. Staff interviews were conducted individually and included open-ended questions on the following topics: (1) obstacles to effective integration between local and non-local students; (2) the strategies staff had used to support student integration; and (3) how staff had altered their strategies to address challenges in a time of adversity.

The research team organized multiple interviews. Conversations ranged between 45 and 90 minutes depending on the number of participants. Interviews were carried out in the participants' preferred language to ensure that participants could express themselves openly and in detail in the language with which they were most comfortable. The research team translated non-English-language comments into English and read them back to students for verification. The research team took detailed notes during interviews and used back-up audio recording with participants' consent.

Judgemental and snowball sampling methods were used for student recruitment (Leppink, 2019). Thirty-eight nominated students across the three universities participated in focus groups, each containing three to five participants. Another 18 students were interviewed individually due to unavailability during the designated focus-group time slots. The full student sample included 21 local students from Hong Kong, 16 from mainland China, and 19 who were international. Students were studying a range of academic disciplines including the basic sciences, business, engineering, health sciences, and linguistics; most were

undergraduates. Thirty-six project co-investigators representing the basic sciences, business, engineering, health sciences, and linguistics across the three universities also were interviewed.

Data Analysis

The research team transcribed all interviews and prepared corresponding notes. Resultant data were coded and interpreted via thematic analysis, a fundamental method often used to identify patterns within and across data in relation to participants' lived experiences, views and perspectives, and behavior and practices (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2017). Four members of the research team read the notes prior to data encoding, during which two members encoded the data and another two reviewed the coded data and emerging themes.

Results

Data analysis uncovered a range of factors that influenced the attitudes and behavior of local Hong Kong, mainland Chinese, and international students towards each other. Relevant aspects included political ideological differences, perceived discrimination, attitudes towards cultural differences, and linguistic differences. Each of these themes is explained below:

Political Ideological Differences

Interviews revealed that all student groups held their own perceptions and beliefs about political issues. Students from mainland China often considered their studies in Hong Kong to be a steppingstone for overseas education; they focused on academics and strove to earn high grades to promote their subsequent studies and career development. As one of the project co-investigators stated in the interview, mainland students are typically reluctant to discuss political issues; however, these students are generally more proactive than those from Hong Kong in seeking academic assistance from teachers. By contrast, the Hong Kong students are largely concerned with political freedom. Some local students participated in numerous local protest activities during the sample period and deemed political freedom as important as other topics, including their academic work and career prospects.

Mainland students shared that they would not converse with others, particularly Hong Kong students, about political issues concerning mainland China

and Hong Kong. Unlike local students' involvement in related social movements, mainland students possessed distinct perceptions of pertinent political issues. One mainland student who had returned to Shenzhen, China due to the political turmoil in Hong Kong explained:

> From my personal point of view, most Hong Kong students talk about the local pro-democracy and [the slogan] "Five demands, not one less." (Because of peer pressure, they probably do not have political intentions to achieve anything. Most of their understanding is binary, and they may easily make the wrong decision.

Hong Kong students expressed in interviews that they avoided politically charged topics in class. However, they stated that they would not make new mainland friends after political unrest, as they did not know whether these peers held different political views. They admitted that "the local political turmoil further increased their interactive distance from mainland Chinese students."

One mainland student reported that the local political turmoil had influenced his interaction with local students as follows:

> As a teaching assistant who has experience interacting with local undergraduate students, I think they are quite humble and eager to learn. I do not believe some Hong Kong students are violent protesters. I never imagined what they did in November 2019. I felt there was an invisible barrier between me and Hong Kong students. I cannot describe this kind of feeling.

A few mainland students further suggested that the local political turmoil had heavily impeded social integration. Most of these students had been forced to return to the mainland, and residential housing was under siege. They recalled needing to minimize social interaction to protect themselves. The circumstances only worsened following the second major COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, when all essential face-to-face activities were suspended and students and staff at local universities transitioned to working/studying from home. Nearly all overseas initiatives also ceased due to the pandemic.

Project co-investigators opined that local students' involvement in protests reflected these students' negative attitudes towards embracing differences. One co-investigator said that "instead of hearing and knowing about different political

views, [students] fought against each other and did not really embrace any cultural/political differences."

Both Hong Kong and mainland students reported having negatively stereotyped each other to some extent due to the adverse effects of social media and recent political activities. Some mainland students remarked that Hong Kong students seemed to be "free riders" (i.e., benefiting from others' academic effort without contributing their own), often thought in a non-linear fashion, and worked spontaneously; most Hong Kong students held part-time jobs during school and sometimes ignored some of their tasks during group projects. Meanwhile, many mainland students with a student visa did not work. They often paid high tuition to study in Hong Kong and thus devoted much of their attention to school.

Mainland students shared in interviews that "some Hong Kong local students formed their own social communities after having political disputes with their mainland peers. Very few students actually held stereotypes." Hong Kong students remarked that negative impressions hindered the formation of mixed groups. They also mentioned that they preferred to collaborate with their local counterparts due to poor experiences working with mainland students in the past; for example, Hong Kong students suggested that peers from mainland China did not abide by standard operating procedures during group work. One Hong Kong student said: "Hong Kong students are less proactive about engaging in intercultural interactions, especially when they are heavily influenced by the negative stereotypes about mainland Chinese students conveyed by the mainstream media." Several Hong Kong students who had studied in mainland China on exchange agreed that certain local media outlets in Hong Kong tended to amplify negative aspects of mainland China. Some Hong Kong students even resisted using Chinese mobile applications due to personal privacy concerns.

Most Hong Kong students indicated that their interactions with mainland students largely involved the completion of group assignments as required by their teachers; the two groups seldom socialized about topics unrelated to academics. Some Hong Kong students reported that recent local political upheaval had exacerbated this situation. For instance, one student said:

> After the local political upheaval, I have worked with the mainland students solely on academic-related tasks and am not interested in talking with them about any political issues. There seems to be a greater

> interactive distance with mainland students after local political unrest. I will not proactively make new friends from the mainland.

One mainland student echoed this sentiment, explaining:

> It is somehow hard to get into the social community with Hong Kong students as they are more interested in interacting with their own community rather than the non-local students' community; the situation is getting worse with the local political turmoil.

Attitudes Towards Culturally Different Peers (Academic Curriculum Programs)

Student interviews revealed that Hong Kong students generally recognized the benefits of a diverse university experience and exposure to information that they would not have learned locally. However, these students discussed rarely having the time and energy to engage in intercultural activities for reasons ranging from tight study schedules and part-time jobs to being unable to meet students on campus. The following is a typical comment from Hong Kong students:

> We are somewhat in our comfort zone with friends speaking the same language. Instead of making more friends, [students] would rather maintain their friendships with old friends. We do not want to step out of it. We do not want to put too much effort into making any unnecessary changes.

Some project co-investigators commented during interviews that they occasionally sensed a degree of reluctance from Hong Kong students when collaborating with non-local students, particularly in classes of more than 40. Co-investigators also shared that Hong Kong students exhibited a growing tendency to remain within their own small spaces, keeping to their own cultural-linguistic groups out of convenience. Some mainland students found it difficult to mingle with Hong Kong students who often turned down invitations out of hand. A mainland student commented:

> Before studying at a Hong Kong university, I thought that Hong Kong students would be open-minded and outgoing; actually, they are very shy when I interact with them. There are limited opportunities to talk to them in class because they like to stay in their own community.

Although most Hong Kong students appeared to socialize and cooperate with their own group, others welcomed mainland students who excelled

academically. One local student commented that mainland students who come to Hong Kong to study tend to be academically strong, adding:

> I would like to work closely with [mainland students] on group work so that I can earn a higher GPA in my final grade.

Similar to Hong Kong students, those from the mainland tended to work within their own cultural sub-groups. One student mentioned that working with peers who share the same language, cultural background, and working style was more efficient. Mainland students allocated most of their time and effort to their studies; many felt obligated to earn high grades to then further their education overseas after graduation. In particular, some mainland students confessed that they were unaware of the importance of internationalization, which did not play a critical role in their plans for the future. Although some international students want to cultivate friendships with other student cohorts, language barriers can hinder them from doing so. International students in this study were also concerned about their final grades being negatively affected by groupmates' limited English proficiency (i.e., among students from Hong Kong and mainland China).

Project co-investigators described some mainland Chinese students' typical learning approaches:

> Students always request to be grouped together so that they can speak Putonghua [Standard Chinese] for topics involving terminology. They will also buy the Chinese editions of textbooks and supplement with English versions. They simply want to find ways to make life easier. They only see Hong Kong as a steppingstone to an overseas life. For most mainland students, they just want to finish their studies as soon as possible and leave the city.

Mainland students believed that disputes during academic projects largely resulted from poor cross-cultural communication. These students seemed to view culturally mixed groups as destructive and aimed to avoid potential cultural confrontation. Meanwhile, both Hong Kong and mainland Chinese students perceived international students as being eager to work with them, such as by forming groups with others in class. Most international students indeed expressed being keen to interact with other cohorts in their new environment. Regarding in-class behavior, one co-investigator pointed out that international students generally preferred to present on behalf of their groups because they were concerned that

they might receive lower marks if groupmates presented who were less proficient in English.

Attitudes Towards Culturally Different Peers (Extracurricular Activities and Programs)

Apart from academic endeavors, various extracurricular activities were intended to facilitate socialization among student groups to foster cultural interaction on campus. Findings revealed that both mainland and international students solely participated in extracurricular activities aimed at non-local students. Some mainland and international students nevertheless noted that they initially joined extracurricular activities organized by Hong Kong students. However, they had no interest in taking part in similar activities after their first experiences; most of the activities, particularly those organized by hall residents and societies, were conducted exclusively in Cantonese, a language that they did not understand. Regarding intergroup interaction, a mainland student commented: "Discussion among Hong Kong, mainland Chinese, and international students is not common as they only get along with their own groups most of the time, probably due to the different lifestyles." Most students cited language barriers and cultural differences as major obstacles to mingling with other cultures. Students' attitudes towards cultural differences appeared to be the main constraint to constructive cross-cultural engagement, as mainland students suggested.

Several project co-investigators commented that Hong Kong students might need support to broaden their horizons. These students tend to be less eager to participate in cross-cultural activities or to interact with non-local students for reasons including a lack of cultural awareness, insufficient exposure to internationalization, a heavy academic workload, a part-time job, and shyness. One project co-investigator remarked that students' attitudes toward cultural differences represented the key issue to be addressed in order to promote respectful cross-cultural engagement among local and non-local students. He further indicated:

> Whole-person development, particularly on cross-cultural leadership, is a key approach to develop students' competencies, including how to take care of themselves and others, build up a community, integrate with others, adapt to different cultures and lifestyles, and embrace diversity among individuals.

Challenges with Language Differences (In Class)

Students and teachers both reported language differences as a substantial hindrance to the academic and social integration of local and non-local students. In Hong Kong, pre-university education (i.e., grades K–12) can be taught in English and Chinese; schools have different language policies. Not all Hong Kong local students had used English as their main language in the K–12 period. Although local language education policies seek to ensure that local students will be biliterate and trilingual, local students for whom Chinese was the medium of instruction during pre-university education often struggle to adapt to using English at their university. Non-local students, including those from mainland China, also have varying English proficiency due to different language-learning requirements throughout pre-university education. Non-local students hail from distinct linguistic backgrounds as well; some speak their local dialects in everyday life.

Students and project co-investigators observed a lack of proficiency in expressing complex ideas in English and limited confidence in using English when Hong Kong and mainland students interacted in academic settings. For example, Hong Kong students tended to use Cantonese when seeking to clarify and expand on their ideas during class discussions. One Hong Kong student stated:

> English was used in a group project involving three Hong Kong students and one international student from Korea. Sometimes, we used Cantonese when we needed to delve deeper into the aspects of meaning and to generate new ideas and then translated them back to English.

An international student from Kazakhstan said:

> Five Hong Kong students and I worked together for a group assignment on a company law subject. The Hong Kong students used Cantonese for work, sometimes switching back to English. I think that it is hard for local Hong Kong students to speak and communicate using English at a near-native level.

Mainland student groups reportedly found it difficult to adapt to English as the medium of instruction; they had used Putonghua throughout their studies in mainland China. They saw language as the primary challenge when integrating with others academically. A mainland student illustrated this point:

> Most Hong Kong students are happy to help me interpret what they said using English and Putonghua. However, I have found it is not easy to

> engage and deliver my own ideas smoothly in English, and that is why I want to learn Cantonese.

One international student from the Philippines explained:

> I like interacting with local Hong Kong and mainland students but feel a bit excluded due to the use of different languages. We need someone to translate or communicate using simple English words with both local Hong Kong and mainland students.

As an exception, an international student from Malaysia remarked that language was not a problem; this student would use multiple languages including English, Cantonese, and Putonghua to communicate with others.

Challenges with Language Differences (Outside Class)

Language differences also impeded the development of relationships outside the classroom. Both mainland and international students reported that they did not engage in certain extracurricular and on-campus activities due to language differences. These students' proficiency in Cantonese – the prominent dialect in Hong Kong – influenced their integration into the local student community. Cantonese- and non-Cantonese-speaking students from mainland China expressed diverse opinions about interacting with Hong Kong students. Those who spoke Cantonese felt more comfortable; as one student said: "If you communicate with Hong Kong students in Cantonese, you will feel a sense of belonging to the local students' community."

Students acknowledged Cantonese proficiency as crucial to respectful engagement with Hong Kong students on campus. Some mainland students recalled having attempted to improve their conversational proficiency (e.g., by learning Cantonese slang), such as by watching local movies and participating in cross-cultural activities in student residence halls. However, these activities were not always successful. One mainland student commented:

> When I first participated in a hall activity, it was held in Cantonese. I felt excluded. It was hard for me to participate in the activity as others spoke Cantonese, which I could not understand. As such, [some mainland students] do not participate in hall activities anymore.

An international student also mentioned feeling excluded, as most hall activities were not held in English. A student from Kazakhstan commented that residence hall–organized events could potentially be helpful but that only large events (where

English was the primary language) were targeted towards international students. Other events were generally in Cantonese; therefore, mainland and international students could not easily participate due to the language barrier.

Discussion

Multiple factors influenced academic and social interactions among Hong Kong, mainland Chinese, and international students during a period of political unrest in Hong Kong. Aspects previously found to affect the interactions between cultural groups on campus and in class (e.g., communication challenges due to language differences; attitudes towards cultural others) applied during this study as well. However, the socio-political turmoil that erupted in Hong Kong at the time of this study highlighted political ideological differences while the COVID-19 pandemic amplified the impacts of these factors.

Political Ideological Differences

Findings revealed that wide gaps in political views between local and mainland students led to less social engagement among students. Mainland students' attitudes towards politics caused them to avoid disputes on political issues and to maintain interpersonal distance from local students. Awareness of patriotism in China initially began to rise following the promulgation of Marxist-Leninist ideology, which precipitated the expansion of associated educational curricula and activities (Ding, 1994). National education, which was introduced in 1997 in Hong Kong, was not deployed smoothly due to conflict between the British colonial curriculum structure before 1997 and the overall ideology of national education. Nearly a decade later, in April 2016, some young politicians from the pro-democracy camp promoted the "Resolution for Hong Kong's Future" and adopted "internal self-determination" and "permanent self-government" as slogans (Cheng, 2016). Empirical research substantiates the peripheral rise of nationalism in Hong Kong; scholars have also documented a strong positive relationship between consciousness of Hong Kong's autonomy and eagerness around localist mobilization under the identity of "Hong Kongers" (Fong, 2017). Disparate political ideologies may therefore be a critical factor in the limited academic and social integration between local and non-local students.

The present study especially shed light on political ideological differences within Hong Kong's higher education landscape. Social movements in recent years

and the COVID-19 pandemic may have hampered social interaction between Hong Kong and mainland students. Regarding perceived discrimination, this study's findings align with earlier work on stereotypes about international students in the Western higher education system (Hanassab, 2006; Spencer-Rodgers, 2001). Yet the rationale behind such stereotypes in Hong Kong differed from that in other countries: negative perceptions of mainland Chinese were elevated by public sentiment against the rise in the number of migrants from mainland China since 2003. Ongoing conflict could also be attributed to the opposing political ideologies that mainland students encountered as well as growing tension in the Hong Kong and mainland media (Yu & Zhang, 2016). Internationalization is largely perceived in conflict-ridden societies as interactions between opposing groups who are not necessarily from different countries (Yemini, 2017). The current study mirrors this trend. Hong Kong's higher education sector affords Hong Kong students opportunities to interact with their "cultural others." Elsewhere, some student groups are pursuing universal values to shape intergroup relations (e.g., in Israel) and believe that it is possible to enhance intercultural engagement by adopting the concept of "global citizenship" (Green & Mertova, 2016) as the expected outcome of internationalization in socially conflicted societies (Goldstein et al., 2019).

Attitudes Towards Cultural Differences

Results showed that Hong Kong students typically responded passively to forming multicultural groups in academic environments; many formed mono-cultural groups with local peers. This finding is in line with prior research (Bhoomiah, 2009). Most mainland students focused on performing well academically but were relatively unfamiliar with the notion of internationalization. The majority of international students faced obstacles related to language barriers and insufficient institutional support when interacting with local students. Guidance around cultural adaptation thus seems indispensable (Ward & Zarate, 2015).

Language Differences

Ample research has examined language in relation to international students' acculturation. The literature has also emphasized the importance of English language proficiency for international students in English-speaking Western countries, particularly in facilitating these students' psychological and sociocultural adaptation (Yu, 2010). Beyond proficiency in the language of

instruction, fluency in the host dialect is paramount to easing international students' interaction with locals as well as their adaptation in everyday life (Yu et al., 2019). The current study showed that most Hong Kong students speak Cantonese during extracurricular and social activities despite being able to communicate with other students in English and Putonghua. In line with prior intercultural research, language was found to affect project collaboration and teamwork in numerous ways, including in terms of mutual understanding and collaboration (Nunamaker et al., 2009). Language proficiency can also influence students' group participation and engagement (e.g., by affecting each team member's contributions).

Implications and Conclusion

Implications

This study unveils the current situation and obstacles hindering local and non-local students' integration in Hong Kong universities. Results also address ongoing shifts in students' experiences and attitudes throughout a time of social unrest and the COVID-19 pandemic. Educators should reflect on how university stakeholders can improve the intercultural engagement system based on these circumstances in Hong Kong. This work demonstrates that meaningful intercultural engagement is not automatic in the absence of a deliberate framework that includes a strategic combination of curricular and co-curricular practices (Leask, 2009).

This study's findings could lay the foundation for a cross-institutional framework within Hong Kong universities, which would have meaningful implications at student, departmental, institutional, and societal levels. Such a framework could guide educational policymakers' embedding of internationalization into institutional strategic plans. Additionally, an associated framework could consider intercultural learning during the COVID-19 pandemic to offer useful insight for other regions grappling with social-ideological differences.

Based on the proposed framework, more elaborate institutional support is needed to promote students' intercultural learning. Our findings identified social-ideological differences as a unique reason for social and academic exclusion in

Hong Kong. To tackle this form of estrangement between local and non-local students, institutions could implement pre-arrival training sessions that provide overviews of relevant concerns (e.g., cultural differences, ideological differences, and attitudinal differences towards academic and daily life) that may influence students' educational journeys. Intercultural experts can facilitate these sessions. As language appears to be the main barrier to intercultural learning, some sessions should be delivered in non-local students' native tongue to ensure understanding and eliminate the pressure associated with communicating in an unfamiliar language. Different university departments can also staff "intercultural consultants." For example, bilingual/trilingual consultants could work in the English language learning center, counsellors could help students navigate potential intercultural problems at the university counselling center, and intercultural mentor–mentee programs could be offered in the student development center. These measures will make institutions more responsive to non-local students, so these enrolees will not need to confront unfamiliar cultures alone.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. Persistent uncertainty about Hong Kong's political environment during the study period may have led some students to be reluctant to express themselves candidly during interviews. Additionally, only a few representatives from different postgraduate student groups could be interviewed amid social unrest and the pandemic. Future research could include a larger sample or investigate intercultural engagement among students enrolled in associate-degree or vocational training programs to provide more comprehensive findings.

Conclusion

This study has provided a richer understanding of the factors impeding meaningful interactions among students of different backgrounds during their academic journeys and social activities at Hong Kong universities. Findings highlight the need to develop and implement detailed strategic action plans in both the curriculum and co-curriculum to foster intercultural learning through intercultural engagement among local and non-local students in Hong Kong.

Appendix – Demographic Information of Participants from Three Participating Universities

	Hong Kong	Mainland China	International
Category of Students	31	15	10
Category of Staff	20	10	6

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Shifting Gears in a Pandemic: The Impact of Online Academic Support for International and Domestic Students

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ABSTRACT

During a global pandemic, many students in 2020-2021 turned to peer-facilitated academic support through supplemental instruction (SI) to succeed. In this study, proficient students were hired as SI Leaders and trained to facilitate study sessions in a collaborative virtual learning environment. The impact of online SI support is assessed upon subgroups of 4,793 students enrolled in difficult courses at a four-year public university. Mean course GPAs and pass rates of international students, domestic students of color, and domestic white students with varying levels of SI session attendance were examined. One-way ANOVA and chi-square test results

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reveal significant differences by level of attendance for students of color and white students, with higher mean course GPAs and pass rates associated with higher levels of attendance at SI sessions for all three subgroups. Results are consistent with feedback from SI attendees and convey the significance of programs like SI, especially in times of crisis.

Keywords: academic support, international students, online, students of color, supplemental instruction

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As industry pivoted to an online context during a global pandemic, so did higher education. This also meant shifting academic support programs such as Supplemental Instruction (SI) online. SI is a form of peer-facilitated academic support in which proficient students are trained with collaborative learning strategies and facilitation skills and with such training, facilitate study sessions for interested students. There is an abundance of evidence that face-to-face SI is effective at boosting course grades (Channing & Okada, 2020; Dawson et al., 2014; Gasiewski et al., 2012; Haak et al., 2011; Im et al., 2019; Oja, 2012; Peterfreund et al., 2007-2008; Rabitoy et al., 2015) and course success rates (Oja, 2012; Peterfreund et al., 2007-2008; Petrucci & Rivera-Figueroa, 2021). However, it is unclear whether *online* SI support was effective in enhancing the course performance of students, especially while many students faced additional pressures due to the pandemic.

Additionally, it is unclear whether online SI support is effective for *all* groups of students. For example, research shows that domestic students of color are less successful in college due to obstacles often associated with their minority status such as lower income, first-generation student status, and segregation (Ishitani, 2003; Reason, 2009; Sanchez & Kolodner, 2021). Students of color may also attend lower-quality schools that do not adequately prepare them for college, and they may feel less confident in their abilities due to prevalent stereotypes (Frye et al., 2021; Massey et al., 2002; Rath et al., 2007) and/or hostile campus climates (Bowman et al., 2021; Hurtado et al., 2012).

Although academic support has been cited as a contributing factor to the success of international students in higher education (Cong & Glass, 2019; Glass et al., 2014; Martirosyan et al., 2019; Zhang & Goodson, 2011), limited English language proficiency and/or different academic cultural norms may interfere with

their success (Jacobi, 2020; Martirosyan et al., 2015). During the pandemic, many international students were also isolated on an empty campus or in their home countries, forced to engage in all school-related communication online and potentially in a different time zone.

In the context of these stressful circumstances, would online SI support be enough to support these marginalized groups of students (i.e., international students and domestic students of color)? The purpose of this study was to assess the impact and perceptions of impact of online SI support upon course GPAs and success rates of international students, domestic students of color, and domestic white students during a global pandemic. Therefore, the following research questions are advanced.

Research Questions

RQ1: How will online SI session attendance frequency impact the final course GPAs of international students, domestic students of color, and domestic white students?

RQ2: How will online SI session attendance frequency impact the percentage of international students, domestic students of color, and domestic white students who succeed (earn a final course grade in the A, B, or C range) in SI-supported courses?

RQ3: What are the perceptions of students regarding the impact of online SI upon their grades and success in the course?

Literature Review

As stated above, there is an abundance of literature, which confirms the significance of SI session attendance upon the course performance outcomes (i.e., course GPAs and success rates) of all students. However, there is much less research that explores a differential impact upon subgroups of students to determine the efficacy of SI for domestic students of color and international students. There is even less research that explores differential impact of *online* SI upon course performance outcomes of subgroups of students. Due to the paucity of research on online SI upon subgroups of students, the literature relevant to the impact of face-to-face SI upon course performance outcomes of subgroups of students is reviewed first followed by the literature that exists on online SI.

Impact of Face-to-Face SI on Course Performance Outcomes of Student Subgroups

Students of Color

Some studies have found a differential impact of face-to-face SI upon students of color (Buchanan et al., 2019; Fresno State University, 2016; Peterfreund et al., 2007-2008; Petrucci & Rivera-Figueroa, 2021; Rabitoy et al., 2015; Rath et al., 2007; Rath et al., 2011; Shaya et al., 1993; Williams, 2014; Yue et al., 2018). For example, Shaya et al. (1993) assessed the impact of SI upon the final course grades and retention of at-risk students in an Excel program (largely minorities and women) enrolled in a basic biology course at Wayne State University. Despite no significant differences in high school GPA or ACT scores between attendees and non-attendees, *t*-test results indicate statistically significant differences in mean final course GPAs between Excel SI session attendees (2.9) and non-attendees (2.4). Attendees also successfully completed the course at a significantly higher rate (90% versus 32%). Peterfreund et al. (2007-2008) examined the pass rates of students enrolled in SI-supported courses at San Francisco State University. SI attendees performed better in 14 of 15 courses, and there were more significant increases in pass rates for underrepresented minorities. At the same university, Rath et al. (2007) found larger gains among the 101 underrepresented minority student SI attendees in a study of 1,526 biology students (78 students passed vs. an expected 52). Finally, despite small effect sizes, Williams (2014) discovered a stronger positive effect on final course grades of Hispanic, Black, and first-generation SI attendees in science courses at a community college.

Some studies have also conveyed the significance of face-to-face SI in closing the equity gap, or what Yue et al. (2018) refer to as the *achievement gap*, the "gap which exists between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students and their mean final course grade in an SI-supported course" (p. 19). For example, after attendance at 16 SI sessions, the equity gap between underrepresented minority students and others nearly closed (.09 difference in mean course grades) in the study conducted at Fresno State University (2016). In Yue et al.'s study, the gap was eliminated with attendance at 16 SI sessions (.96 vs. .63 average grade improvement).

International Students

Research on the impact of face-to-face SI upon international students is limited (Chilvers, 2014; Dancer et al., 2015), but a few studies have found a

positive differential impact. For example, Couchman (1997) found a significant difference in pass rates of international student SI attendees (78%) versus non-attendees (48%) in an accounting course. Similarly, Couchman and Pigozzo (1997) found a significant difference in pass rates of international student SI attendees (93%) versus non-attendees (63%) in an economics course. Examining the websites of the 20 U.S. universities with the highest enrollment of international students, Martirosyan et al. (2019) assessed the academic and social support services offered to international students. Findings suggest that academic support is one of the six key forms of support offered in all 20 top enrolling institutions. SI was one of those forms of academic support that helped international students to succeed. Finally, Dancer et al. (2015) compared the impact of PASS (Australian version of SI) upon the course grades of international and local students in a business statistics course in 2006 and 2010. Course averages for local and international PASS participants exceeded non-participants in both years, revealing that PASS had a significant impact regardless of country of origin. However, international students experienced larger grade increases with attendance at each PASS session (1.12 and .98 vs. .81 and .79). These studies provide evidence of positive impact for international students. However, the research is limited to individual courses.

There is also some research that explores international student perceptions of peer-facilitated support. For example, Chilvers (2014) conducted a thematic analysis of interview transcripts of 3 international student PASS participants and found that PASS offered both academic and social support. In a study using self-perception survey results of 16 international postgraduate PASS attendees and interview data from 4 of those students, Zaccagnini and Verenikina (2013) found that PASS helped students to improve their grades, English skills, and understanding of course content, helped them to meet others, and boosted their motivation, self-regulation, study skills, and confidence with class participation.

Although these studies convey significant benefits for international students, they were based on small samples, and in the case of Zaccagnini and Verenikina, based upon the perceptions of postgraduate international students, not undergraduates. Additionally, these studies explore the impact of *face-to-face* SI; it is possible that online SI leads to different outcomes.

Impact of Online SI on Course Performance Outcomes of All Students

Like face-to-face SI, online SI is associated with higher course grades and better pass rates for SI-session attendees than non-attendees (Finlay & Mitchell, 2017; Hizer et al., 2017; Miller, 2006; Ndahi et al., 2007; Pereira, 2012; Rockefeller, 2003; Rowe, 2019; Spaniol-Mathews et al., 2016; Woolrych et al., 2019). For example, after randomly assigning students to a face-to-face or online SI group, Hizer et al. (2017) compared the impact upon course grades and success rates. Findings suggest similar results for both forms of SI, with attending students receiving higher final course grades (average increase of .5) and a 13% decrease in fail rates. Finlay and Mitchell (2017) compared the impact of face-to-face and online SI sessions upon course grades of 350 students enrolled in introductory biology courses as part of the University of Regina's nursing program. Grades improved by 5-6% with attendance at three or more SI sessions, regardless of delivery format.

Woolrych et al. (2019) examined the impact of online and face-to-face delivery of PASS sessions on 169 attendees in an introductory statistics course. Although small sample sizes, there were no significant differences between the mean final grades of online (M = 73), face-to-face (M = 73.26), or online and face-to-face attendees (M = 72.82). Regardless of delivery format, all PASS attendees performed better than non-attendees (M = 68). Similarly, Spaniol-Mathews et al. (2016) compared final course grades and persistence of 585 undergraduates in STEM courses who were randomly assigned to face-to-face or online SI at Texas A&M University. They found no statistically significant differences in mean final course grades (1.88 online vs. 1.91 face-to-face) or persistence (92% online vs. 90% face-to-face); in other words, online SI was just as effective as face-to-face SI.

Finally, Carter-Hanson and Gadbury-Amyot (2016) examined the impact of participation in an Admissions Enhancement Program that included mandatory online SI sessions of 48 underrepresented minority and disadvantaged students. Post- Dental Admission Test (DAT) scores were significantly higher (M = 17.84) than pre-DAT scores (M = 16) following completion of the program. Additionally, 70.8% of the 48 students were admitted to a dental school following participation in the program. However, this study was conducted on a small and specific sample of students, which limits generalizability. Additionally, the SI program was mandatory, so participants attended all sessions and impact by varying levels of attendance was not examined.

The results of these studies are promising since they suggest that online SI is just as effective as face-to-face SI. However, only one study (Carter-Hanson & Gadbury-Amyot, 2016) examined impact upon subgroups of students, differentiated by country of origin or race. Furthermore, none of these studies examined differences by varying levels of attendance, which should be "factored into associated analyses so that questions of minimal and optimal treatment dosage might be effectively addressed" (Spaniol-Mathews et al., 2016, p. 27).

In summary, there are gaps in the research on online SI. Some studies have found a difference in the impact of *face-to-face SI* upon the performance outcomes of students of color, but there are less studies of international students. Other studies have found that online SI produces similar outcomes to face-to-face SI, resulting in better course grades and pass rates for all students collectively. However, a thorough review of the extant literature revealed no studies that examine differential impact of *varying levels of online SI attendance upon subgroups of students by citizenship and/or race*. The aim of this study was to fill these gaps in the literature.

Method

Recruitment & Data Collection

This study focuses on a particular aspect of the overall examination of the MavPASS program (their version of SI) at Minnesota State University Mankato (MSUM). MSUM is a regional comprehensive university with approximately 13,000 students. It is a predominantly white institution where approximately 9% of students are international students and 13% are domestic students of color. MavPASS (Maverick Peer-facilitated Academic Support System) was developed on the campus to increase the course success and retention of all students and to close equity gaps.

The data used for this study come from a large database of information from MSUM's institutional records of the approximately 7,000 students who had taken one or more courses supported with SI Leaders between fall 2019 and spring 2021. Only the student data from the 2020-2021 academic year were used since this study was focused upon the impact of *online* SI, and SI sessions were held exclusively online due to the pandemic in this time frame. The data collection protocol was approved by the institutional review board, and because the data collected from the Office of Institutional Research was deidentified prior to

analysis, a waiver of consent was approved. This educational research is also exempt through the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act guidelines.

Attendance at online SI sessions was tracked with Google forms. At the end of each semester, the attendance data were entered onto an Excel spreadsheet and sent to the Office of Institutional Research. Final course GPA and demographic information was added for each student, and the data were deidentified and returned to the principal investigator for analysis. To assess whether course performance outcome data coincided with students' perceptions of their performance, SI attendees were also offered the opportunity to share anonymous feedback on the program with a link to a Qualtrics survey emailed to them.

Participants

In 2020-2021, 4,793 students were offered the opportunity to attend SI sessions *online* due to the pandemic (2,250 students in fall 2020 and 2,543 students in spring 2021). The subgroups of students examined in the study included 547 international students (11.3%), 944 students of color (19.5%), and 3,302 white students (68.3%). An international student was defined on this campus as "a person who is not a citizen or national of the United States and who is in this country on a visa or temporary basis and does not have the right to remain indefinitely (IPEDS). This is reported regardless of racial-ethnic status." Of the students of color, most were Black (31.9%, $N = 301$), followed by Hispanic of any race (26.1%, $N = 246$), two or more races (20.3%, $N = 192$), Asian (19.9%, $N = 188$), Alaska Native (1.6%, $N = 15$), and Pacific Islander (0.2%, $N = 2$). See Table 1 for the specific breakdown of demographics within subgroups.

The courses supported with SI Leaders were difficult courses with approximately 25% or higher DFW rates [i.e., percentage D, F and W (withdraw) grades]. Most courses were from the College of Science, Engineering, and Technology (CSET) and included classes in biology, anatomy, programming, mathematics, physics, and statistics. Several courses in anthropology, economics, and social statistics from the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS) were supported. Accounting from the College of Business, and English in Arts and Humanities were also supported. The courses were taught by 40 instructors, and SI sessions were led by 55 leaders, some of whom were instructors and leaders in both semesters.

Table 1: Demographics

	International (*N* = 547)		Students of Color (*N* = 944)		White (*N* = 3302)	
	n	%	*n*	%	*N*	%
Gender						
Female	187	34.2%	407	43.1%	1294	39.2%
Male	357	65.3%	537	56.9%	2004	60.7%
First-generation						
Yes	154	28.2%	511	54.1%	1047	31.7%
No	354	64.7%	423	44.8%	2224	67.4%
College						
CSET (sciences)	297	54.3%	429	45.4%	1197	36.3%
SBS (social sci.)	191	34.9%	353	37.4%	1394	42.2%
COB (business)	58	10.6%	120	13.7%	602	18.2%
Arts &Humanities	1	0.2%	33	3.5%	109	3.3%
SI Sessions Attended						
0 sessions	316	57.8%	581	61.5%	2322	70.3%
1-4 sessions	154	28.2%	243	25.7%	675	20.4%
5-9 sessions	39	7.1%	74	7.8%	166	5%
10/more sessions	38	6.9%	45	4.8%	137	4.1%

Supplemental Instruction: Traditional vs. Online

Supplemental instruction is a peer-facilitated model of academic support grounded in Vygotsky's (1962, 1978) social learning theories, which claim that people learn through communication and collaboration with others. SI is built on the notion that learning is a social process. The SI Leader, a student who excelled previously in a challenging course, is recruited (with the use of faculty, advisor, and/or other SI Leader recommendations) and hired to support students and to help them achieve success in that same course. Attempts are made by program staff to hire a set of leaders that match the diversity of the student body (e.g., 9% international students, 13% domestic students of color). In fall 2020, 13% of SI Leaders hired were international students and 23% were domestic students of color; in spring 2021, 14% of SI Leaders hired were international students, and 19% were domestic students of color.

SI Leaders are trained in the use of facilitation skills and collaborative learning strategies; they also attend class and communicate regularly with the course professors to identify challenging content. SI Leaders host 2-3 study sessions each week and invite all students to attend (UMKC, 2021). Traditionally, SI sessions are held in person where SI Leaders may use tangible

items to facilitate learning in a collaborative environment (i.e., whiteboards, post-it notes, or notecards).

Due to the pandemic, SI sessions were facilitated online via Zoom. Online SI poses new challenges since it may be difficult to replicate the in-person SI experience in an online format (Fetner, 2013). Different skills and modifications are required to adapt SI to the online context (Beaumont et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2018). Therefore, SI Leaders were trained to facilitate learning in a collaborative virtual environment without the traditional tangible items. They practiced with Zoom tools such as the virtual whiteboard, screen share, file sharing, reaction tools, polling tool, chat feature, annotation tools, and breakout rooms. They also learned to use alternative tools (i.e., PowerPoint presentations with collective annotation, shared Google docs, Jamboard, Poll Everywhere, Kahoot).

SI Leaders were also trained to use the same facilitation skills they used in face-to-face SI sessions (checking for understanding, redirecting questions, and wait time) to ensure that the onus was on students to work through the material and problem-solve. Finally, to maximize participation of attendees for their academic benefit, SI Leaders were trained on how to encourage active participation and how to create a cameras-on norm in their sessions. Leaders role-played learned skills and conducted mock sessions. SI sessions were recorded and shared with students upon request.

Measures & Data Analysis

RQ 1: Impact of Online SI on Mean Course GPAs of Subgroups of Students

To test the impact of online SI at varying levels of attendance upon mean course GPA in the three subgroups of students, One-way ANOVAs were performed. The independent variable, SI session attendance, was coded as a categorical variable with four levels (0 sessions, 1-4 sessions, 5-9 sessions, and 10+ sessions) in accordance with the standards set by the International Center for Supplemental Instruction at UMKC. Mean course GPA was a continuous dependent variable. Final course grades were translated by the Office of Institutional Research from letter grades to GPA points, in which pluses increased grades by .33 points and minuses decreased by .33 points [i.e., A (4.0), A- (3.67), B+ (3.33), B (3.0), etc.]. F's were assigned 0 points. W's (withdraws) and I's (incompletes) were not included in the mean course GPA.

Although sample sizes were large enough within each group, they varied significantly across session attendance groups in the white student group. This

resulted in a significant *Levene F*(2,2977) = 8.84, p = .000, indicating that the homogeneity of variance assumption was not met. To accommodate, the Welch's F test for unequal variances, a more robust test of equality of means, was conducted to confirm significance for the white student group (Welch, 1951).

RQ2: Impact of Online SI on Course Success of Subgroups of Students

Chi-square tests of independence were performed to examine the relation between SI session attendance and course success for each student subgroup. Course success rates were defined by the percentage of passing students within each subgroup (i.e., percentage of A, B, and C range grades versus percentage of D, F, and W grades). Incomplete grades were excluded from analysis.

RQ3: Student Perception Data

A Qualtrics survey was used to assess perceptions of online SI session attendees. With Likert-scale items, attendees were asked to rate the extent to which SI supported them in various ways. One question asked participants to rate how helpful the online SI sessions were on a 10-point Likert scale (1 = not helpful at all; 10 = very helpful). The other scale items requested ratings on a 4-point scale (1 = definitely not; 4 = definitely will) of the extent to which students perceived that SI would help them with future courses, achieve their vision of success, increase their sense of belonging, and increase their likelihood of recommending SI to others. Survey respondents were also given the opportunity to share general qualitative feedback.

Results

RQ1: Impact of Online SI Session Attendance on Mean Course GPAs

Three One-way ANOVAs were performed to test the impact of online SI session attendance on course GPAs of international students, domestic students of color, and domestic white students.

International Students

Results of the One-way ANOVA by level of SI session attendance were not statistically significant, *F*(3, 517) = 2.37, p = .07. However, mean course GPAs were increasingly higher at each level of attendance: 0 sessions (M = 2.89, SD = 1.24), 1-4 sessions (M = 3.05, SD = 1.07), 5-9 sessions (M = 3.18, SD = 1.19), and 10+ sessions (M = 3.35, SD = 1.02). An independent samples t-test was run to determine if there were significant differences between international students who attended any online SI sessions with those who did not attend at all. A

significant difference was found between groups, $t(519) = -2.26$, $p = .02$, indicating that online SI session attendance had an impact upon course GPAs for international student attendees.

Students of Color

Results of the One-way ANOVA revealed that mean course GPAs differed significantly among the four groups based upon session level attendance, $F(3, 786) = 3.63$, $p = .01$. Mean course GPAs suggest the most significant difference for students of color who attended 10 or more sessions. The course GPAs for students who attended 0 sessions ($M = 2.43$, $SD = 1.39$) and 5-9 sessions were virtually the same ($M = 2.42$, $SD = 1.25$), while students who attended 1-4 sessions had a slighter higher mean course GPA ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 1.26$) and students who attended 10+ sessions shifted from a C to a B average ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.33$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey's HSD procedure reveal significant differences only between 10+ SI session attendees and all other groups (see Table 2).

Table 2: Post Hoc Results for Student of Color Mean Course GPAs by Sessions Attended

Sessions Attended	Mean	Mean Differences			
		1	2	3	4
1. 0 sessions	2.43	--			
2. 1-4 sessions	2.54	.11	--		
3. 5-9 sessions	2.42	.01	.11	--	
4. 10+ session	3.11	.67*	.57*	.68*	--

*$p < .05$

White Students

Results of the One-way ANOVA revealed that mean course GPAs differed significantly among the four groups based upon session level attendance, $F(3, 786) = 12.78$, $p = .000$. Because the homogeneity of variance assumption was not met, a Welch's F test was also performed. The test confirmed a statistically significant main effect, *Welch's* $F(3, 391) = 22.19$, $p = .000$, indicating a significant difference between groups. Mean course GPAs were higher at each category level of attendance for white students: 0 sessions ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 1.21$), 1-4 sessions ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.07$), 5-9 sessions ($M = 3.12$, $SD = .94$), and 10+ sessions ($M = 3.34$, $SD = .79$). Post hoc comparisons were conducted with the Games-Howell procedure to determine which pairs differed significantly. Results

in Table 3 reveal the most significant mean differences in course GPA between non-attendees and regular attendees (especially 10 or more sessions).

Table 3: Post Hoc Results for White Student Mean Course GPAs by Sessions Attended

Sessions Attended	Mean	Mean Differences			
		1	2	3	4
1. 0 sessions	2.82	--			
2. 1-4 sessions	2.91	.09	--		
3. 5-9 sessions	3.12	.30*	.21	--	
4. 10+ session	3.38	.56*	.47*	.26	--

*$p < .05$

RQ2: Impact of Online SI Session Attendance on Course Success

Three chi-square tests of independence were performed to examine the relationship between online SI session attendance and course success of international students, domestic students of color, and domestic white students.

International Students

The chi-square test assessing the relationship between online SI session attendance and course success of international students did not reach significance, X^2 (3, N = 547) = 77.49, p = .075. However, the percentage of students who succeeded in the course increased at increasingly higher levels of session attendance. The percentage of students who passed with an A, B, or C range grade increased from 80.1% among non-attendees to 83.8% among attendees of 1-4 SI sessions, to 89.7% among attendees of 5-9 SI sessions, and to 94.7% among attendees of 10+ sessions. Conversely, the percentage of students who earned a D, F, or W decreased (19.9% for non-attendees, to 16.2% for 1-4 SI sessions, to 10.3% for 5-9 sessions, and 5.3% for 10+ sessions). In other words, the more international students attended SI, the greater their likelihood of success in the course.

Students of Color

The chi-square test assessing the relationship between online SI session attendance and course success of students of color was significant, X^2 (3, N = 943) = 18.81, p = .000, *Cramer's V* = .141. The pattern reveals increasing levels of course success with increased frequency of SI session attendance. The percentage of students of color who passed with an A, B, or C increased from 61.6% among non-attendees to 68.7% among attendees of 1-4 SI sessions, to 70.3% among attendees of 5-9 SI sessions, and to 91.1% among attendees of 10+ sessions. Conversely, the percentage of students of color who were unsuccessful

decreased (from 38.4% among non-attendees, to 31.3% for 1-4 SI sessions, to 29.7% for 5-9 sessions, and 8.9% for 10+ sessions). In other words, the more students of color attended SI, the greater their likelihood of success in the course. The impact was most prevalent with attendance at 10+ sessions.

An examination of the observed and expected values revealed that there were less successful students (358 versus an expected 381) and more unsuccessful students (223 versus an expected 200) in the "0 sessions" group. There were also more successful students than expected and less unsuccessful students than expected in all other groups, indicating a positive impact of online SI attendance upon course success. For example, only 4 (vs. an expected 16) 10+ attendees failed or withdrew, and 41 (vs. an expected 29) 10+ attendees passed. In summary, more student of color SI session attendees than expected passed the course while less student of color non-attendees than expected passed the course.

White Students

The chi-square test assessing the relationship between online SI session attendance and course success of white students was significant, X^2 (3, N = 3300) = 41.19, p = .000, *Cramer's V* = .112. Again, the pattern reveals increasing levels of course success with increased frequency of SI session attendance. The percentage of white students who passed with an A, B, or C increased from 77.6% among non-attendees to 81.9% among attendees of 1-4 SI sessions, to 89.2% among attendees of 5-9 SI sessions, and to 96.4% among attendees of 10+ sessions. Conversely, the percentage of white students who were unsuccessful decreased (from 22.4% among non-attendees, to 18.1% for 1-4 SI sessions, to 10.8% for 5-9 sessions, and 3.6% for 10+ sessions). In other words, the more that white students attended SI, the greater their likelihood of success.

An examination of the observed and expected values revealed that there were less successful students (1802 versus an expected 1854) and more unsuccessful students (520 versus an expected 468) in the "0 sessions" group. There were also more successful students than expected and less unsuccessful students than expected in all other groups, again indicating a positive impact of SI attendance upon course success for white students. For example, only 5 (vs. an expected 28) 10+ attendees failed or withdrew, and 132 (vs. an expected 109) 10+ attendees passed. In summary, more white SI session attendees than expected passed the course while less white non-attendees than expected passed the course.

Chi-squares were significant for students of color and white students. See Table 4 for percentages of students who passed per session attendance frequency within each subgroup.

Table 4: Percentage of Student Subgroups who Succeeded by SI Session Attendance Frequency

	Sessions Attended				
	0 sessions	1-4 sessions	5-9 sessions	10+ sessions	All Students
International Students (N = 547)	80.1%	83.8%	89.7%	94.7%	82.8%
Students of Color (N = 943)	61.6%	68.7%	70.3%	91.1%	65.5%
White Students (N = 3300)	77.6%	81.9%	89.2%	96.4%	79.8%

RQ3: Student Perceptions of Online SI

Of the 1,571 online SI attendees, 255 (16.2%) completed the Qualtrics survey. To ensure that students gave honest feedback, no demographic information was collected. Unfortunately, this did not allow for comparison of student perceptions between subgroups of students.

Student perception data are consistent with course performance outcomes. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being "very helpful," the average extent to which attendees found SI helpful was 8.02. Additionally, most (90.2%) claimed that online SI "contributed in some way" or "definitely contributed" to helping them to achieve their vision of success. The majority (89%) also perceived that SI was "likely to help" or "definitely will help" them to do well in future courses. Most students (65.9%) felt that SI helped them to have a "slightly stronger" or "definitely stronger" sense of belonging on the campus. Finally, nearly all attendees (93.3%) were "probably" or "definitely" likely to recommend online SI to others taking SI-supported courses.

Qualitative comments suggest that online SI helped students to achieve success in the course in the same way that face-to-face SI helped them. There were consistent references to students' belief that they would not have passed the class without the support of MavPASS. One student made specific reference to the need for academic support in the context of the pandemic: "With this COVID

learning space some of the information was hard to learn in class and the MavPASS sessions really helped me understand the material, and I believe they were a driving force for me passing the class." Another student conveyed a sense of frustration with the fact that they found it *necessary* to rely on academic support to understand the course material:

> My opinion of the COVID version of MavPASS isn't really as indicative of the quality I experienced when they were in person . . . MavPASS should be seen as additional help, not as the one and only resource to help us with the class . . . MavPASS ended up being more of a primary source of information.

Although this student seemed grateful to have had a resource upon which to rely, they also expressed disappointment with the "COVID version of MavPASS" compared to the "quality experienced . . . when they were in person." Because the student does not elaborate, it is unclear what made the face-to-face sessions better "quality." It is possible that the student missed atmospheric elements of face-to-face sessions that allow for human connection.

Some students directly explored atmospheric elements of SI sessions. For example, one student missed the face-to-face format of the previous year and requested in-person sessions again to enhance the "experience as a whole." Other students made note of the efforts of their leader in creating a welcome environment. One attendee said, "I always attended MAVPASS with [SI Leader] and he was always SOOOO welcoming and inclusive." A final student referred to the community atmosphere despite the virtual context: "With Zoom it's tough to get to know people, but with a smaller MavPASS, I got to hear other people speak a little more. . . it was a slightly more relaxed atmosphere." In summary, students found both academic and social benefits to online SI, which coincides with the success they achieved.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to consider. First, although the study explored the impact of online SI, the exploration occurred without a face-to-face SI control group under the circumstances surrounding the pandemic. However, the impact of online SI upon three student subgroups offered interesting comparisons. Second, SI session attendance was not treated as a continuous variable but rather by categories of increasing levels of attendance; if treated as a continuous variable, additional subtle differences might have been found. Finally, because demographics were not collected along with the student perception data, it was

impossible to determine if there were differences in perceptions by student subgroups.

Discussion

Results of this study are consistent with findings of previous studies, which convey the impact of online SI upon course grades and success of all students (Finlay & Mitchell, 2017; Hizer et al., 2017; Miller, 2006; Ndahi et al., 2007; Pereira, 2012; Rockefeller, 2003; Rowe, 2019; Spaniol-Mathews et al., 2016; Woolrych et al., 2019). The results also add to the current body of research by clarifying impact upon student subgroups at varying levels of attendance. The mean course GPAs and course success rates of international students, students of color, and white students increased as SI session attendance increased, with the most significant impact revealed when comparing non-attendees with students who attended 10+ sessions. However, there are important considerations when examining the specific findings. The performance level of international students is promising given the circumstances surrounding the pandemic, and the lower baseline for students of color is disconcerting and conveys the significance of regular attendance at SI in closing the equity gap.

Of all three subgroups, international students had the highest course means at all levels of SI session attendance. Additionally, more international students succeeded (82%) than white students (79.8%) or students of color (65.5%), regardless of their level of attendance. In fact, international students had the highest success rates of all three subgroups at every session level category except 10+, at which point they were a close second to white students (94.7% vs. 96.4%). Considering the stressful circumstances international students faced during COVID, this is surprising. There are a number of possibilities for their higher levels of success. First, sometimes financially supported by their home countries, international students may come more prepared for college than their domestic peers. Despite the stressful circumstances, this preparation likely helped them to succeed. Second, MSUM provides a strong support network for international students with a Center for English Language Programs and the Kearney International Center, which provides advising, student programming, and other resources. This confirms previous evidence that academic and social support services are important to international student success and matriculation (Cong & Glass, 2019; Glass et al., 2014; Martirosyan et al., 2019).

In addition to the availability of SI support, international students at this university are highly integrated into the SI program since many international students are hired as SI Leaders. Program staff attempt to hire a diverse group of leaders that at least matches the diversity of the student body. Despite the fact that international students represent just 9% of the student body, in fall 2020, 13% of SI Leaders hired were international students while in spring 2021, 14% of leaders were international students. Such employee representation helps to ensure that international student SI attendees feel represented and welcomed at sessions and likely contributed to the higher attendance levels of international students (37% in fall 2020 and 46% in spring 2021), which were higher than those of white students (29% and 31%) and students of color (37% and 40%).

Finally, the SI sessions were recorded and shared with any students who requested them. Requests often came from international students who lived in different time zones or who wanted to re-watch the sessions for extra practice. In fact, requests were disproportionately from international students with 49 of the 91 requests made for Zoom recordings of SI sessions made by international students (54%) in fall 2020 and 48 of the 171 requests (28%) made by international students in spring 2021. Overall, that means that 37% of the requests came from international students despite the fact that they represent just 9% of the student body and 11% of the students enrolled in the courses in this study. The extra level of support from recordings likely contributed to their success.

Although SI clearly has a stronger impact with increasingly higher levels of attendance for all students, international students (M = 2.89) and white students (M = 2.82) started at a higher baseline than students of color (M = 2.43). Therefore, students of color showed more significant gains with frequent attendance at SI sessions (.68 gain vs. .52 for white students and .46 for international students). In other words, the equity gap closes as SI session attendance increases. Calculated at MSUM by dividing the course GPA of white students from the course GPA of students of color, the equity gap is .867 for non-attendees (2.43/2.82) and .93 for 10+ attendees (3.11/3.34). With a 1.0 representing no gap in performance, clearly, frequent SI session attendance helped to close the gap. This finding is consistent with the findings of previous research that revealed a closing or eliminated gap with attendance at 16 SI sessions (Williams, 2014; Yue et al., 2018). Additionally, consistent with the findings of other studies (Fresno State University, 2016; Rabitoy et al., 2015), the

data reveal the importance of encouraging regular attendance, especially in supporting students of color.

Online SI had a positive impact on the course grades and success of all student groups, especially with increasing attendance. The student perception data suggest that it was not simply the academic support that contributed to student success. Some students made comments pertaining to the welcoming nature of their SI Leaders and the community built within their sessions, and over 65% of students rated the sessions as contributing to their sense of belonging on the campus. The academic and social support of SI, regardless of context, speak to the significance of both academic and social integration of students, which is supported in previous research (Cong & Glass, 2019; Glass et al., 2014). In fact, Cong and Glass (2019) found that *educational service augmenters* (i.e., academic and social support services) and traditional predictors of academic adjustment (which included welcoming attitudes towards international students) together explained 68% of the variance in the academic adjustment of international students. According to sociology scholar Tinto (2021), academic and social integration can occur when educators help to foster students' self-efficacy and their sense of belonging. In other words, students can succeed with encouragement and positive reinforcement. Tinto also asserts that students' presence must be valued rather than tolerated, and their voices perceived as contributing to the dialogue of learning. SI offers the space for such inclusivity and cooperative learning since it encourages active participation of all members regardless of delivery format.

Conclusion

Online SI contributes to the academic success of all subgroups of students, but students of color have a lower baseline mean course GPA than white students and international students, contributing to large equity gaps without academic support. Increasing levels of SI session attendance help to close equity gaps and lead to increasingly positive perceptions of students. Therefore, academic support programs may wish to consider intentional ways to attract students to SI along with ways to foster their academic and social integration.

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Reflection on the Impact of COVID-19 on International Student Mobility from and to China

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ABSTRACT

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has affected and continues to impact several areas of human lives and activities. With a particular focus on China, this reflection shares authors' observation on how COVID-19 may affect future trends of student mobility from and to the country. The reflection revealed that the impact of COVID-19 might not have a big negative impact on China. The declining interest of Chinese students to study abroad after COVID-19 will rather empower their home country. The reflection also revealed that the successful battle China has been leading and keeping the pandemic situation under control reassures international students to consider China as a protective destination for a future study plan. This study has relevant policy implications for understanding and informing international education actors of the change that may occur in student mobility trends and international higher education landscape due to COVID-19.

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Keywords: China's destination, COVID-19 pandemic, international higher education, student mobility

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Safety and security issues are increasingly becoming a critical factor when deciding upon a country and institution for study. Today, the decision relating to safety and security includes not only internal conflicts, racist violence, the rise of nebulous terror incidents, and gun violence in destination countries, but also insecurity related to the pandemics and epidemics. This latter have become a serious factor taken into consideration. Pandemics in destination and origin countries are emergent factors that affect students' movement and choice for study destination. Students fear to go where there is a pandemic. Likewise, they fear being "attacked" in their study destination if the pandemic is in the home country. In this second case, a clear example is the recent case of Chinese students in the United States (US) and Australia (Lee, 2020). In this perspective, this reflection mainly looks into China as origin but also as a destination country: How may COVID-19 pandemics affect the country's future student mobility trends? What will be the consequences on China's largest destination countries? Of course, it is difficult to predict its impact on study mobility, but the analysis of students' trends and attitudes, coupled with the global political environment, portends a change in international student mobility, not only with regard to the rate of mobility but also the destination's choice. Yet, the pre-COVID-19 period was characterized by a tremendous rise in student mobility across the world, with China keeping the status as most important sending country, but also an emerging study destination.

Pre-COVID-19 Trend of Student Mobility to and From China

In recent years, China has grown significantly as a destination country for international students in the global market (Ding, 2016; Wen & Hu, 2019). It has become a regional hub of international students in Asia. China has balanced the status of being solely the largest source country. Thousands of students from across the world are entering the country each year to study. Figures from the Ministry of Education website of the People's Republic of China reveal, for instance, that "in 2018 there were a total of 492,185 international students from 196 countries pursuing their studies in China, making an increase of 3,013

students or 0.62% compared to 2017" (Ministry of Education, 2019). The number of inflow students in China has been more than that of outflow (Pan, 2013). When it comes to the factors attracting international students to China, most existing literature is congruent with the fact that China's rapid economic growth and the recent reputation of Chinese universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) are the major reasons (Ahmad & Shah, 2018; Guiaké, et al., 2021; Song & Liu, 2014). China's engagement in globalization made her become an essential provider of international education. Beall (2012) stated in a study entitled "The shape of things to come: Higher education global trends and emerging opportunities to 2020" that, in line with their growing importance to the world trade, emerging economies are becoming increasingly popular study destinations and have seen significant growth in research. In this perspective, known as one of the world's fastest-growing economies, China is likely to win in ranking among the largest destination countries globally. The number of Asian and African international students in China has increasingly grown recently.

Apart from a growing Chinese higher education reputation and economic prosperity as major attractive factors, Asian students choose China for its geographical proximity and cultural resemblance. As for African or western international students, they are keen to discover new experiences from emerging countries such as China. It is probably for these reasons that new emerging economies have experienced a significant rise in international student inflows in recent years. The rate of international student flows in those countries has exceeded traditional Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) destination countries, 2018).

However, apart from its status as an emerging destination country, China, as said earlier, is keeping the traditional status of the most important sending country worldwide. With more than 710,000 Chinese students sent abroad in 2019, for instance, outbound students from China constitute a primary source of international students to several destination countries (Mok et al., 2021). Many receiving countries, especially western Anglo-Saxon countries, motivated by a commercial orientation, greatly benefit from international students from China. For instance, 1,095,299 international students studying at US colleges and universities during the academic year 2018–2019 have contributed around $45 billion to the US economy (Wang & Freed, 2021). These authors add that "international students also contribute to America's scientific

and technical research and bring international and cultural perspectives into US classrooms." For Altbach (2019), universities in major countries have come to depend on Chinese students for their agenda of international student recruitment. That is the reason why the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of interest to study abroad due to existing geopolitical tensions between China and some receiving countries are detrimental to these countries and institutions where benefit from international students is an important economic income. Rizvi (2021) revealed that the decline in the number of international students made universities go into panic mode. Thus, as the biggest sending country across the world, China plays a critical role in the survival of these universities' economies. One-third of 1.1 million international students in the US are from China, with similar proportions found in other major receiving countries, such as Australia and the United Kingdom (UK) (Altbach, 2019). An overdependence on one country has instilled a reflection on the future of international education in case of any change from China.

The Analysis of the Tensions Before COVID-19

The pre-COVID-19 economic tensions between China and some western countries, notably the US, which led their leaders to impose acts of trade restrictions, are not without consequences on the education and mobility of students. The US President, Donald Trump, has called academics and Chinese students in the US "spies" (Altbach, 2019). On the other side, Chinese authorities have warned Chinese nationals about studying abroad in some countries like the US and Australia (Prema, 2020). The crisis has pushed countries to distrust each other in educational and scientific cooperation. It has caused losses to both sides—the loss of income from international students for some, and the inability to continue studies for others. These geopolitical tensions that preceded the outbreak of COVID-19 have favored conflicting relations between China and some countries during the pandemic regarding, for instance, the origin and the spread of the virus. Such conflict can affect student mobility across those countries.

Research Method

This critical literature review study employs a combined approach including related literature review analysis and the authors' own reflection. As

international education scholars, we have put forward, based upon insights from our personal experience and observation as actors of studies abroad, the international student mobility trends from and to China after the COVID-19 crisis. The reflection is supported by recent literature on economic tension between the world's economic leaders and on the COVID-19 crisis that still nourishes uncertainties about the future trends of student mobility. From an analysis of trusted available literature, mostly from 2016 to 2021, a clear projection is made on student mobility trends from and to China, and its impact on China and Chinese students' preferred destination countries.

The literature review search strategy was based on key terms related to the topic, including "impact of covid-19," "student mobility and covid-19," "outbreak of covid-19," "China and covid-19 pandemic," and "impact of covid-19 on international education." The search was done from databases such as the scholarly journal archive ERIC, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and so on. In my literature review process, the criteria of exclusion and inclusion were adopted with regard to (un)trusted research findings and (ir)relevant research to ensure that my research was sufficiently scaled to fit the purpose of the study. Information from popular media news and non-academic references included in this study was double-checked in academic sources, thus confirmed. Conversely, unconfirmed data were automatically excluded. Then, a synthesis of relevant and trusted research guided our reflection on the fact that the impact of COVID-19 in a context of nationalism rise and economic tension between China and many foreign countries might not have a big impact on China.

Although this analysis presents some limitations because it is partly based on subjective observation, it draws its inspiration from the above mentioned trusted literature.

Results

Impact of COVID-19 on Student Mobility Globally

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been detrimentally noticed on international students' mobility across the countries. It is still creating a global crisis and slowing down the courses of many activities, including the internationalization of higher education (Yang, 2020). Several international students are still stranded in their home countries and have not pursued their studies abroad since the 2019–2020 academic year due to many countries' border

closures. Similarly, receiving countries have been losing revenues from international students.

Scholars, students, and economic actors have been facing restrictions, bans, or strict inspection of operations (Helms, 2020). Moreover, early studies showed that many students have resigned to pursue their studies due to the psychological affectation, epidemiological restrictions, difficulties in obtaining visas, commercial flights, and economic deficiency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic's effects have already been tremendous due to the sanitary impasse. The *Times Higher Education* estimated that the impact of COVID-19 would have likely resulted in some 80,000 fewer Chinese students entering the US, 35,000 in the UK, and nearly 30,000 in Australia (UNESCO, 2020). As the world's largest destination country for studies, the closure of many US universities and the suspension of visa application for foreign students amidst the critical period of the pandemic have shown its impact on the US. A similar observation was made in Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. In Australia, for instance, where international education is the third-largest income of the country (UNESCO, 2020), a study based on a correlational and regression analysis revealed that there would be a loss of up to $19 billion in revenue by 2023 due to their reliance on tuition fees from international students, of whom many are incapable of traveling to Australia (Hurley & Van Dyke, 2020). Additionally, there is a decrease of 36,292 full-time equivalent employment positions at Australian universities (Thatcher et al., 2020). These sources revealed that many Australian universities are at risk of losing their top 100 world ranking since international students have not been able to enter Australia. The challenge is so big, due to limited support from the government, that even international students who are in Australia were advised by the federal government to "go home" if they were unable to fund themselves, stating that it is "lovely to have visitors to Australia in good times" (Nguyen & Balakrishnan, 2020). Hence, both from the international students' side and host countries, the effect of COVID-19 is widespread, with tremendous economic impacts on destination countries.

Impact of COVID-19 on Student Mobility in China

Like in many countries, the impact of COVID-19 in China is far-reaching. Both Chinese students studying abroad and international students in China have been facing traveling restrictions. Many international Chinese students could not go to their host countries to continue their studies. About 145,000 Chinese students have been unable to travel to the US, England, and Australia (UNESCO, 2020).

In the same way, since the outbreak of COVID-19, thousands of international students have not entered China because of the stringent measures put in place in the country. They include both regularly registered international students who went back to their home countries before and during the outbreak of the pandemic, and newly registered students for the academic years 2020–2021 and 2021–2022. In addition, those of 2023 intakes are still uncertain about entering China. Thus, since China is the world's largest sending country and an emergent destination country, the conflict and crisis uncontestably affect the mobility of many Chinese students studying abroad and international students studying in China (Ding, 2016; Wen & Hu, 2019; Zhang & Zhu, 2020). On both sides, students have no longer been able to continue their studies abroad due to the traveling restrictions Implemented in China and several other countries.

Apart from those immediate and negative consequences, studies revealed that Mainland and Hong Kong students have become less interested in studying abroad, even after COVID-19; which might have a long-term effect on international higher education worldwide (Mok et al., 2021). In a report entitled "The coming 'China crisis' in global higher education," Altbach (2019) predicted that "for both internal political reasons and as a reaction to foreign criticism, especially from the U.S., China is likely to become less open to international collaboration with top-tier universities." As a confirmation, Chinese authorities have warned Chinese nationals for studying abroad in some countries like the US and Australia (Prema, 2020). This implies that many students will study in their home country, which is an empowering factor for the Chinese higher education system because their contributions in terms of tuition and research will remain in and for the country. Being in China before, during, and after the critical period of the pandemic, we have noticed two major events; namely, the geopolitical conflicts and the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak that have altered Chinese people's sentiment about the western world. It is a situation that, without doubt, will affect the mobility of Chinese students in some western countries. The

experience of Chinese international students abroad during and after the critical period of the pandemic has not been easy. The psychological impact of the pandemic, that of the discrimination due to the pandemic, and the disruption in the pursuit of studies abroad are among other negative experiences that contribute to the trend of declining interest in studying abroad, but in favor of China in a long-term.

Moreover, since old and new variants of COVID-19 resurface from time to time in many countries, studies on recovery from the pandemic noticed that the best and most effective recovery regarding student mobility would occur in East Asia (China, South Korea, Singapore, Japan) and some European countries (such as Finland, Denmark, and Germany) because they have managed the pandemic well, and this will affect higher education (Marginson, 2020). One more reason that demonstrates a facility for these countries in terms of recovery from the pandemic and re-stabilizing higher education institutions, according to Marginson (2020), is that higher education institutions are largely public. Therefore, they benefit from strong government support to rapidly recover from the crisis and attract back international students. While in the US, for instance, it is unknown how many colleges and universities are prepared with enough resources to re-host international students and scholars since many of them are functioning remotely and running online classes, especially when fears are still high (Bista et al., 2022). As an emerging destination country that attracts many international students worldwide, with a large number of Asians and growing Africans, China's attractiveness is more likely to continue once the recovery is effective.

Discussion

Although COVID-19 has brought worldwide negative consequences, its impact on international student mobility across countries may have different effects. It may severely or slightly hit some countries but turn out to be a long-term opportunity for others. As for China, the focus of this reflection, a deep analysis of the situation, with all the consequences, shows that China could come out less impacted compared to its largest study destination. The example of the disinterest of Chinese students in studying abroad (Mok et al., 2021; Mok et al., 2022) is more likely to be beneficial to China. On the contrary, it may create a fatal blow in the largest destination countries that heavily rely on Chinese

students (Prema, 2020; Ross, 2020; Welch, 2022). Their top world university ranking and economic benefits from international students might be greatly affected or even lost. On the other hand, China's higher education is dramatically expanding (Altbach, 2019); i.e., Chinese students will find greater opportunities to study at home. In this perspective, Mok et al. (2021)'s survey about Chinese students revealed that 2,312 (84%) out of 2,739 of their respondents expressed any more interest in studying abroad after COVID-19. This decline of interest in studying abroad is mostly due to the anti-Chinese sentiment expressed in many foreign countries for spreading the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the fact that Chinese authorities have warned Chinese students for studying in some countries in a trade war with China (Prema, 2020) is an additional factor to discourage studying abroad. As a result of both, the discrimination resulting from COVID-19 and the warning of Chinese authorities, Mok et al. (2021) found that the post-COVID study destination of a few Chinese students, who are still interested in studying abroad, is increasingly oriented toward their East Asian countries such as Hong Kong (for Chinese mainland students), Taiwan, and Japan.

However, it is worth noting that these new directions do not seem very attractive like western countries in the pre-COVID era because one of the major reasons attracting Chinese students to consider their study destination is English language. As proof, Chinese top largest destination countries are all English-speaking countries. Moreover, recent studies revealed that non-western international students experience more discriminatory challenges in countries with similar race and cultural values than international students of different races and cultural values. Studies carried out in South Korea and South Africa showed that Asian and African students are not welcome in their respective region by local students of the same race and cultural values (Lee, 2017; Lee et al., 2016). This implies that, despite the interest of Chinese students to study in the Asian region, the trend of neo-racism (defined as a form of racism based on one's norms, values, and language in addition to the physical differences within the same region and race; Lee, 2017) will push many of them to prefer studying in China. Hence, the short-and long-term trends of COVID-19 are more likely to discourage Chinese students from studying abroad, which will undoubtedly be a strength and an opportunity for China.

Furthermore, the engagement battle China has been leading to keep the COVID-19 pandemic under control reassures (international) students to consider

China as rather a safe destination for their post-COVID-19 study plan. Shijian and Agyemang (2022) found in a study on the impact of COVID-19 on international student enrollment for higher education in China that the percentage increase in the confirmed cases and death rate of COVID-19 resulted in a decrease in the number of foreign students enrolled. The recovery rate revealed a positive relationship with international students' enrollment. For this reason, they have recommended that the Chinese government reinforce preventive measures to minimize COVID-19's spread rate to encourage potential students who wish to pursue higher education abroad to choose China as their study destination. Similarly, Mok et al. (2022) revealed that countries with better pandemic control, such as some East Asian countries, will become potential major destinations for international students after COVID-19 because health and well-being concerns become major factors influencing international students' destinations. Effective control of the pandemic is not only attractive for international students, but it is also a "keep factor" for Chinese students to study at home. In her study entitled "Student mobility in the wake of COVID-19: The Mainland Chinese parent perspective", Profatilova (2021) discovered that the pandemic has increased many Chinese parents' sense of national pride. She noticed that China's well-organized pandemic response and corresponding hostility from the West let them treasure their Chinese heritage more than ever.

While the pandemic is, unfortunately, still impacting many countries around the globe, China has, so far, managed not to experience the same catastrophe of the first wave. For a long time, most new cases have been imported. This is thanks to good management and strict respect of measures implemented throughout the country. Such good management gives trust to international students, both those who are already studying in China and those intending to study abroad, to consider China. Being in some WeChat groups together with those students, many of them, who were in China at the time of strong reaction of the Chinese government to curb the pandemic, have evaluated these responses as more effective compared to those of their home countries. Hence, COVID-19 has not yet jeopardized China as a destination country. But then, to keep its attractiveness, the country should think about how to readmit international students to China since the situation is progressively returning to normalcy.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The authors' analysis revealed that the impact of COVID-19 on student mobility amidst economic tension between China and some foreign partners is, so far, more likely to be advantageous to China as a host country as long as Chinese students show less interest in studying abroad in post-COVID. If the disinterest persists, they will empower the home country's higher education, and the contribution they were making abroad will be made at home. On the other hand, the effect of disinterest in studying abroad would have, unfortunately, a negative impact on the largest destination countries of Chinese students, as these latter have contributed a lot to the economic revenue through their tuition and other expenses. They have also contributed to their host country's universities to belong to the top world-class university ranking (Prema, 2020).

In this regard, the present reflection has strong policy implications, both for China and its largest destination countries. It suggests to China to be prepared with higher education infrastructures, human resources, and good quality education for hosting more Chinese nationals and international students. On the other hand, it recommends to the Chinese destination countries to also be prepared and look for alternatives to avoid sudden and big impact on their higher education system and economy. Apart from China and its largest destination countries, such as the US, the UK, Australia, and others, this reflection can also inspire any country engaged in the internationalization of education to take proactive measures against the effect of COVID-19 on student mobility and international education. For Crăciun and Gayardon (2021), the COVID-19 crisis is the perfect opportunity to rethink internationalization in the absence of mobility, to design activities and reconsider curricula to allow for internationalized education on the home campus, that is, internationalization at home.

The present reflection also contributes to the current scholars' debate on the future of international education and student mobility in the post-COVID era. It takes a clear position that even though the impact of COVID-19 impacts many countries differently, it is not without influence on student mobility and the future of international education. The study also alerts students, parents, and educators to be informed of what may happen as an upheaval. Hence, governments and other actors should be aware of and anticipate reducing the pandemic's negative impacts.

Since most studies carried out on the impact of COVID-19 on study destinations involving China mainly concern the Chinese students' intention toward their study destination, further empirical research might be needed to figure out what is the intention of international students toward China as a study destination in the post-COVID period. Such studies could shed light on the choice variation before and after the pandemic, as to whether or not China would lose its rank of the world's third destination for international students after the pandemic because, so far, studies are based only on the assumptions that China might be attractive due to its good management of the pandemic and a quick support from the government for recovery.

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